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Social Exclusion and Stereotyping through Food-Related Terms of Address in Shakespeare's Henriad and Twenty-first Century Society

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What's (in) a Term of Address?

“What, you egg!” shouts the murderer at Macduff’s son, a target he is supposed to eliminate.¹ This interjection, which may seem meaningless at first, actually conveys information about the status of the boy it is addressed to, and the role he plays in the plot. When aware of the cultural implications and meaning of food, a term of address coined after culinary commodities may reveal how Shakespeare made use of food symbolism to display the relationship between his characters through the way in which one is (re)defined by another. Terms of address are crucial elements to understand the early modern (and present-day) relation to food, but also to observe the tensions foodstuffs may lead to.

A term of address is closely linked to the notion of identity and identification. It may be defined as a “name or title that you give someone when you speak or write to them”, and we could also include nicknames and noun-phrases under this umbrella heading.² Shakespeare often invented “speaking names” or, to put it differently, appellations that reveal something about their bearers because of the “semantic motivation” of their components.³ An “egg” is an innocent enough term, but in *Macbeth* it embodies the threat Macduff’s lineage represents for the eponymous character, and it is also a way for the murderer to belittle the child. Nicknames are particularly interesting since they are given “as a supposedly appropriate replacement for or addition to the proper name,”⁴ and they usually emphasise a particular physical, psychological, or behavioural characteristic of the renamed individual.⁵ Joan Fitzpatrick states that “the early

¹ William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, *The Norton Shakespeare* Third Edition, Stephen Greenblatt et al., eds (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016) 2757, IV.ii.78. Unless stated otherwise, all subsequent references to Shakespeare’s plays follow this edition. Act, scene and line numbers are in parentheses in the text.

² “Term of address”, *Macmillan Dictionary Online*, Macmillan Publishers Limited 2009–2017 <<http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/form-mode-term-of-address>> 26 July 2017.

³ François Rigolot, *Poétique et onomastique : l'exemple de la Renaissance* (Genève : Librairie Droz, 1977) 12, 89.

⁴ “Nickname” n.1, *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford: OUP, 2018) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/126786> 30 Dec. 2017.

⁵ Jane Morgan et al., *Nicknames: Their Origins and Social Consequences* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979) 105-114.



moderns asserted their identity and the identity of others, through their attitudes to food and diet”.⁶ The imposition of a new appellation would thus show the need to add meaning to the initial name of a character in order to qualify or replace his/her original identity by exploiting the disparaging potential of food symbolism.

This paper will explore the social implications of certain foodstuffs in order to demonstrate how the strained relationships between characters/individuals are displayed through linguistic elements. Indeed, terms of address play a crucial role in interpersonal relationships and may even be described as crisis triggers because they exclude characters/people from the mainstream society/group and have the potential to bring about retaliation and thus cause a situation to escalate. In Shakespeare's plays, the semantic motivation of words hints at the (re)characterisation of a persona in order to show (or distort) the characters' (physical and mental) health, the most representative example being the case of John Falstaff. Shakespeare uses a large array of terms of address based on foodstuffs, and it is interesting to note that one may recognise some of his coinages in present-day nicknames and stereotypes. In the plays, these terms of address are often used to insult or mock a character, and one may see that food epithets – food being a constituent of one's identity – are a source of tension and exclusion between individuals since they are mainly used to belittle some character's dietary customs.

Prince Henry's Salad Days and Food Symbolism: The Marginalisation of Sir John Falstaff and the Ensuing Conflict

Tensions conveyed through or triggered by food-related terms of address are conspicuously noticeable in Shakespeare's first tetralogy.⁷ This fact should not surprise us when we know that the character addressed is John Falstaff, a guzzler of food and drink. John is constantly eating and drinking, and the sobriquets bestowed upon him by Edward Poins, Doll Tearsheet, and Henry of Monmouth all reflect the man's way of living and eating. He is constantly compared to food: he is called “my sweet beef” (*1 Henry IV*, III.iii.163), “roasted Manningtree ox” (*IH4*, II.iv.446),

⁶ Joan Fitzpatrick, “Diet and Identity in Early Modern Dietaries and Shakespeare: The Inflections of Nationality, Gender, Social Rank, and Age”, *Shakespeare Studies* 42 (2014): 79.

⁷ A consequent number of food epithets do appear in the playwright's other works, but they are used in referential ways and do not correspond to the definition of “terms of address” used in this essay.



“chops” (*IH4*, I.ii.118; *2 Henry IV*, II.iv.194), “Bartholomew boar-pig” (*2H4*, II.iv.411); and when the Prince of Wales wants him to get in the tavern, he asks “I prithee, call in Falstaff [...] call in Ribs, call in Tallow” (*IH4*, II.iv.102). Beef and pork are prevailing in these phrases, and during Shakespeare’s times beef was not considered a good commodity for everybody. Indeed, the dietary author William Bullein warns his reader that only manual workers should eat meat since “[m]uch béefe customably eaten of idle persons, and nice folks that labour not, bringeth many diseases.”⁸ Labouring not being one of his hobbies, Falstaff’s lack of physical activity is bemoaned by those who try to get a reaction out of him. They coin insulting nicknames and in so doing isolate him from the rest of the group. Meat consumption is not the only thing for which John is mocked. Indeed, he is also called “Jack”, which refers to a tankard,⁹ and is addressed by the bitter sobriquet “Sack-and-Sugar Jack” (*IH4*, I.ii.99). The sack was a Spanish wine similar to Sherry and “sweetened sack was considered a drink for old people.”¹⁰ With the creation of this nickname, Falstaff is not only teased because of his age, but is also criticised for his alcoholism.

A servant suggests that this is not the first time Prince Henry has resorted to such terms of address to make fun of the knight. We are told that:

The Prince once set a dish of apple-johns before him, and told him there were five more Sir Johns and, putting off his hat, said, “I will now take my leave of these six dry, round, old, withered knights.” It angered him to the heart, but he hath forgot that.
(*2H4*, II.iv.3-7)

Hal plays on John’s name assimilating him to an apple-john, that is to say “[a] kind of apple said to keep for two years and having after this time a shrivelled, withered appearance.”¹¹ Indeed, Falstaff is recurrently described and addressed in ways that emphasise what he eats and drinks over his identity, as if his identity was reshuffled through sobriquets.

⁸ William Bullein, *The Government of Health: A Treatise* (London: John Day, 1576) 60, *Early English Books Text Creation Partnership* <<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/a17165.0001.001/135:A17165.0001.001:5?page=root;size=125;vid=7409;view=txt>> 25 July 2017.

⁹ “Hanap, ou tasse à boire”, Claude Hollyband, *A Dictionary French and English* (1593), *Lexicons of Early Modern English* <leme.library.utoronto.ca/lexicon/entry.cfm?ent=205-10102> 30 Dec. 2017.

¹⁰ William Shakespeare, *1 Henry IV*, *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition: The Complete Works*, Gary Taylor, et al, eds. (Oxford: OUP, 2016) 1285.

¹¹ “Apple-john”, *OED* <www.oed.com/view/Entry/9683> 25 July 2017.

These insulting terms of address indicate that Falstaff's diet is mainly based on meat and alcoholic beverages. One may conjecture that Hal and Poins, who both use food epithets for Sir John Falstaff, want to represent the latter as being in the Land of Cockaigne, an imaginary medieval place which was considered to be the utopia of the lower classes since it overflows with food and drink and nobody has to work. When looking at Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *The Land of Cockaigne* (see Fig.1) one may believe that Falstaff is one of the men depicted in that painting since, as Robert Willson notes, his body orientation is suggestive of Shakespeare's knight:

[W]e cannot ignore the picture of Falstaff, drawn frequently in the play [*IH4*], as lying in a horizontal position. Whether being flattened in the Gadshill double-cross, or sleeping in the Boar's Head Tavern, or counterfeiting death at Shrewsbury, Sir John is a literal depiction of fallen man, weighed down by his cowardice and gluttony.¹²



Figure 1: Pieter Bruegel the Elder. *The Land of Cockaigne*. 1567, oil painting, 52×78cm, Alte Pinakothek, Munich. © Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen.¹³

¹² Robert Willson, "Falstaff in *I Henry IV*: What's in a Name?", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 27.2 (Spring, 1976): 199-200.

¹³ *Bavarian State Painting Collections Online* <<https://www.sammlung.pinakothek.de/de/artist/pieter-bruegel-d-ae/das-schlaraffenland>> 3 Jan. 2018.

The terms of address thus verbally anchor him in another spatial area, excluding him all the more from the tavern that Poins, Hal, and Doll Tearsheet frequent. Furthermore, Falstaff's eating habits have a visual effect on the man: he is nicknamed "Sir John Paunch" (*IH4*, II.ii.58) and called "fat-guts" (II.ii.27), "round man" (II.iv.127), and "blown Jack" (IV.ii.44).¹⁴ In order to show the space Falstaff takes up when he is present, Fluellen uses the long circumlocution "the fat knight with the great belly-doublet" (*Henry V*, IV.vii.35) to refer to him, thus emphasizing with words a visual fact. This implies that the result of his gluttony can be seen on his body. In Renaissance books of emblems, gluttony is also represented as a male figure with a prominent stomach (see Fig.2).



Figure 2: The figure of Gula/Glouttonnie in Andrea Alciato's *Emblemata/les emblemes* (1584).
Reproduced by kind permission of the University of Glasgow Library, Special Collections.¹⁵

¹⁴ "Blown" meant "swollen".

¹⁵ *Glasgow University Emblem Website*, the University of Glasgow
<<http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/french/facsimile.php?emb=FALc090>> 04 Jan. 2018.



The Land of Cockaigne was actually more of a dystopia than a utopia for the early moderns; they feared excessive food and drink consumption and their consequences on health.¹⁶ Falstaff overindulges in meat and alcohol, and since his binges do not follow the norm, he is bullied and marginalised by his peers who overuse depreciative terms of address.

However, there is a bitter sweetness to them because they may also be a tool to acknowledge Sir John's presence in the group of tavern-enthusiasts. In *Nicknames: Their Origins and Social Consequences*, Jane Morgan explains that even if derogatory nicknames are used to tease, humiliate, or abuse people, their very existence serves to include the renamed individuals in one's social circle:

Being abused, they were at least noticed. [...] In giving them a derogatory nickname [the renamers] were able to [...] find a way of accepting [them] into the group. It might be a way of resolving a conflict between liking [them] as individual[s] but being required ritually to condemn [them].¹⁷

Morgan's arguments are all the more striking when we consider the relation between Prince Henry and John Falstaff. At first, the men seem quite close; they use diminutive forms of each other's names ("Hal" and "Jack") and, given their age difference, Falstaff may be seen as a father figure for the young man. However, John's behaviour – lazy and voracious – is utterly condemnable, especially from the point of view of the future king of England. As a result, Hal criticises his companion, coining sobriquets to both disparage Falstaff and distinguish himself from the knight whilst simultaneously giving Falstaff enough attention to show that he holds a significant place in his life. Mikhail Bakhtin's statement "[a]ll real nicknames contain a nuance of praise-abuse" aptly sums up this phenomenon.¹⁸

Jack is aware of this liminal situation, this "praise-abuse" relationship that he somehow tries to counterbalance. Indeed, after he is slighted by several terms of address and (rightly)

¹⁶ The term "dystopia" is used here as the opposite of "utopia", that is to say "[a]n imaginary place or condition in which everything is as bad as possible". "Dystopia", *OED* <www.oed.com/view/Entry/58909> 30 Dec. 2017. Although the Cockaigne has been interpreted by Karl Mannheim (*Ideology and Utopia*, 1929) and A. L. Morton (*The English Utopia*, 1952) as the true utopia of the people, a sort of compensatory dream that released them from work, in Shakespeare's *Henriad* its representation is rather negative.

¹⁷ Morgan, et al. 52.

¹⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984) 459.



accused of lying, Falstaff tries to retaliate, calling Hal: “you eel-skin, you dried neat’s tongue, [...] you stockfish!” (*IH4*, 2.iv.224-5). These foodstuffs (eel skin, beef tongue, dried cod) all have an elongated thin shape, thus allowing Falstaff to denigrate Hal by alluding to his slender appearance and, by extension, to his feebleness. Here, John makes an attempt to dodge Hal’s insulting forms of address which, even if they are only words, may have disastrous consequences. Indeed, the very etymology of the verb “to insult” shows the propensity of language to foster belligerent attitudes since “insult” comes from the Latin *insultare* meaning “to assail, to make a sudden leap upon.”¹⁹ To leap on someone by uttering a term of address would thus be tantamount to abusing someone, discharging an appellation on him as if it were a weapon. Falstaff’s injurious words against the Prince of Wales are a way for the knight to protect himself by attacking his “opponent”. Anna Pruitt, editor of the New Oxford edition of the play (2016), mentions that this defensive reaction was often represented as a joke on stage:

In early twentieth-century productions, Falstaff often used a sight gag involving the shield: he began to raise his shield to the verbal attack of the Prince, only to lower it slowly to deliver the first line of the speech as an obvious lie.²⁰

When Hal clearly states that he knows Falstaff has been lying, the latter’s counterblow is debunked. He indeed drops his metaphorical shields (slighting food-based jibes that he will not use to address the prince after this episode) and accepts the consequences which the very sentence he had previously uttered entails, that is to say: “I tell thee what, Hal, if I tell thee a lie, spit in my face, call me horse” (*IH4*, II. iv. 176-7). If the proverbial set phrase “call me horse” actually meant “call me fool,”²¹ Prince Henry does extend the food metaphor, insulting the knight with meat-related words. Despite Falstaff’s attempts at retaliation, his deceit allows Hal’s linguistic rejection to express itself abundantly through terms of exclusion, finally reaching its climax at the end of

¹⁹ “Insult”, *Online Etymology Dictionary*, Douglas Harper 2001-2018 <<https://www.etymonline.com/word/insult>> 30 Dec. 2017.

This surely explains why Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing* comments upon Beatrice’s jibes saying: “she speaks poniards and every word stabs” (II.i.220).

²⁰ William Shakespeare, *1 Henry IV, The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition: The Complete Works*, Gary Taylor, et al., eds. (Oxford: OUP, 2016) 1308.

²¹ Morris Palmer Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950) 136.

2H4 when the newly crowned king decides to turn words into action by banishing Falstaff from his presence.²²

From Shakespeare's Coinages to Present-day Food Epithets: Cultural Identity and Culinary Xenophobia/Racism

In the nineteenth century, Anthelme Brillat-Savarin wrote his now famous aphorism “tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are,”²³ which seems to be what the characters addressing Falstaff also think. Looking at Giuseppe Arcimboldo's painting *The Cook* (1570), one may consider this piece of art a suitable depiction of Shakespeare's John Falstaff. The Italian artist painted portraits using foodstuffs, depicting for instance a gardener with vegetables and a cook with meat:



Figure 3: *The Cook*, 1570, oil on panel, 53 × 41 cm, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.²⁴

²² This banishment can also be predicted through the diminutive form “Hal”: Falstaff utters it thirty times in *1H4* but only four times in *2H4*, which shows the gap that is gradually separating the men.

²³ “Dis-moi ce que tu manges, je te dirai ce que tu es” in Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *Physiologie du goût ou méditation de gastronomie transcendante* (Bruxelles: AD. Wahlen et Compagnie, 1836) 9.

²⁴ Wikimedia Commons <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Giuseppe_Arcimboldo_-_The_Cook_-_WGA00840.jpg> 08 Jan. 2018.



Figure 4: Giuseppe Arcimboldo, *L'Ortolano* (*The Vegetable Gardener*), 1590, oil on panel, 35.8 × 24.2 cm, Museo Civico “Ala Ponzzone”, Cremona, Italy.

Reproduced by kind permission of the Civic Museum “Ala Ponzzone”, Cremona, Italy.

What Brillat-Savarin and Arcimboldo indicate is that food does encapsulate one's identity: it is part of everyday life and it can reveal much about one's cultural, historical, and social background.

Irene López-Rodríguez explains and illustrates this concept in detail:

The food typical of the diet of a group stands for the people who eat it. This is a case of metonymy [...]. The food chosen to represent a particular group tends to fall into two main categories. On the one hand, there are foodstuffs which are part and parcel of the diet of an ethnic group [...], and on the other hand, there are foods which are seen with disgust by the community that coins the metonymy [...]. The French are seen as *cheese-eaters*, *baguette-eaters* [...]. Within the European borderlands, the British are called *roastbeefs* and *beef-eaters* [...]. [T]he Dutch are also *cheese-eaters* [...]; the Italians are [...] different types of pasta such as *calzone* or *macaroni*; the Greeks are *yoghourts* and *lamb chops* and the Germans are *sausage-munchers* and *kraut*.²⁵

²⁵ Irene López-Rodríguez, “Are We What We Eat? Food Metaphors in the Conceptualization of Ethnic Groups”, *Linguistik Online*, 69.7 (September, 2014) <<https://bop.unibe.ch/linguistik-online/article/view/1655/2798>> 4 June 2017.



In literature, as in real life, culinary items are used as metonymic elements in order to depict a person. The appellation being linked with one's identity, it is no surprise that food-related terms are semantically motivated to coin a new name such as "Sack-and-Sugar Jack" (*IH4*, 1.ii.99), which shows both what John Falstaff consumes (sweet wine) and metonymically, what he is (an alcoholic). López-Rodríguez explains that food epithets are coined after dietary preferences, the latter being considered unusual or repugnant (the latter in Falstaff's case).

Food-related terms of address show that different dietary customs may lead to tensions because the semantic motivation of the name conveys a message with which the bearer does not want to be connected. This is the case in contemporary China where some family names have been altered in order to avoid a painful association: "[M]any Hui [a Chinese Muslim ethnic group] with the original Chinese surname *Zhu*, homophonous with the word for pig in Chinese, have changed their surnames to *Hei*."²⁶ Muslims cannot eat pork because of their religious faith and one can observe that Han people (the predominant ethnic group in China) cast a slur on this Muslim minority's diet calling them "pigs" through the homophonic manipulation of their names. Using nicknames is a way for the Hui ethnic minority to avoid being called "pigs" (*zhu*). In order to explain this phenomenon, Allan and Burrige use the term "gastronomic xenophobia" – which we should change into "gastronomic and ethnic racism" for the Han/Hui case – that is to say, the act of rejecting the other because of his/her special religio-national eating pattern.²⁷

A striking example of such intolerance can be seen through the food epithets the British and the French have been exchanging since the eighteenth century: the *blasons populaires* "roastbeef" and "frog". Literally meaning a "popular emblem," the *blason populaire* is a stereotypical characterisation of a group to which the re-namer does not belong. French people did not understand the way in which their northern neighbours would cook beef, a commodity they did not appreciate as much as the British did. Fitzpatrick gives us two explanations for this phenomenon:

²⁶ Jessica Chen, "Pigs, Purity, and Protection: Food Taboo in Hui Chinese and African American Muslim Minority Communities" <<https://apps.carleton.edu/curricular/religion/assets/Comps2.doc>> 27 July 2017.

²⁷ Keith Allan and Kate Burrige, *Forbidden Words Taboo and the Censoring of Language* (Cambridge: CUP, 2006) 188.



[I]t was thought that the cold English climate made English stomachs hotter than those of their Mediterranean neighbours and so better able to digest a cold and gross meat like beef, which was also more tender in England due to the manner in which the meat was produced.”²⁸

On top of that, French people would cook it “using indoor ovens and smaller cuts sautéed in pans rather than big cuts roasted in an open hearth.”²⁹ British people could thus be proud of their climate and their farmers/cooks, two things which galvanised their national pride.

From a strictly linguistic point of view, food metaphors are part and parcel of *nationalist discourse*. Spiering’s (2006) article “Food, Phagophobia and English National Identity” [...] states that although the connection between beef and nationalist sentiments in England can be traced back already to Shakespeare’s time, it is in the 18th century when this link is made stronger, precisely at a time of intense Anglo-French *rivalry*. Beef became a *national symbol* representing the *opposing values* of the French people. Hence in contrast to the Catholic French with their highly ornamented and sophisticated cuisine, beef embodied the virtues of Protestant simplicity that supposedly characterized the English people [emphasis added].³⁰

The initial insulting potential of “roastbeef” was thus turned into an almost honorific label – from the British point of view – which would be contrasted to the French one, “frog.” Irene López-Rodríguez makes clear that this food epithet derives from the unusual habit of eating this amphibian:

[F]rogs are seen as non-edible for the British but not for the French, who regard this dish as a delicacy. Aversion towards such food by the British has materialized in language in the metaphorical use of *frogs* to refer to the French.”³¹

²⁸ Joan Fitzpatrick, “Diet and Identity in Early Modern Diaries and Shakespeare: The Inflections of Nationality, Gender, Social Rank, and Age”, *Shakespeare Studies*, 42 (2014): 77.

²⁹ Joan Fitzpatrick, *Renaissance Food from Rabelais to Shakespeare* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010) 79.

³⁰ Irene López-Rodríguez, “Are We What We Eat? Food Metaphors in the Conceptualization of Ethnic Groups”, *Linguistik Online* 69.7 (September, 2014) <<https://bop.unibe.ch/linguistik-online/article/view/1655/2798>> 4 June 2017.

³¹ López-Rodríguez



“Roastbeef” and “frog” are linguistic tools that two nations have used to belittle one another. This onomastic denigration is also a way to make one feel superior to someone else, glorifying national values and customs. Massimo Sargiacomo bemoans the fact that Italians settling abroad are usually called “Maccaroni, Pasta-eater, [...] [since] it associat[es] Italian emigrants with a social class of poor consumers or identif[ies] them with members of the mafia families.”³² The immigrants are usually rejected because they do not share the same cultural values as the natives, and culinary nicknames are harmful terms of address the natives make use of to marginalise and belittle them.

Far from being solely jocular food-inspired sobriquets, these terms of address do not enable their bearers to exist as people with individual personalities; they are instead presented as a whole and turned into a stereotype. “A preconceived and oversimplified idea of the characteristics which typify a person” (n. 3.b) is the definition the *OED* gives us for the entry “stereotype,” thus emphasizing the superficiality of the stereotyping process. Accounting for *blasons populaires*, which are scornful epithets coined for a particular group, Geoffrey Hughes says that “[t]he role of language is crucial, [as it] serv[es] to endorse and reinforce a stereotype making it into a cliché.”³³ Terms of address are thus linguistic tools, not to say weapons, to build and spread over simplistic culinary *clichés*. Stereotypes based on food preferences or dietary customs have developed, at least since Shakespeare’s times, and are still existent today: during a football match between France and England, one will probably hear the food epithets “roastbeef” or “frog” on both sides of the stadium. In the same vein, the disparaging diminutive “fatty” and the label “pudding” applied to overweight children are very common.³⁴ This development and perpetuation of food-inspired forms of address was made possible through language whose malleability allowed such elements to freeze and become bynames for the addressed person.

³² Massimo Sargiacomo, et al., “Accounting and Management in the Pasta Industry: The De Cecco Case (1886-1955)”, *Accounting and Food: Some Italian Experiences*, eds. Massimo Sargiacomo, et al. (London: Routledge, 2016) 47.

³³ Geoffrey Hughes, *An Encyclopedia of Swearing: The Social History of Oaths, Profanity, Foul Language, and Ethnic Slurs in the English-speaking World* (New York: Armonk, 2006) 30.

³⁴ Morgan, et al. 55-6. Twenty years later, Ray Crozier and Patricia Dimmock acknowledge the same fact in “Name-calling and nicknames in a sample of primary school children”, *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 69 (1999): 505-16.



The Icing on the Cake: Stereotyping through Bittersweet Terms of Address

“Drinking like a fish” and “eating like a pig” are no assets in Shakespeare’s *Henry IV*: alcoholic or gluttonous characters, such as John Falstaff, are ostracised because they are deviating from the social norm of the play. The sobriquets he is given publicly condemn his excessive behaviour. He uses the very weapon he is attacked with to defend himself, thus engaging in a verbal fight with Prince Henry. Despite the visually striking terms of address he invents to weaken Hal, his coinages are debunked because of his big lies. No matter how hurtful forms of address may be, nicknaming someone also amounts to acknowledging John’s existence, which is better than being avoided or ignored as he is at the end of *2 Henry IV*. Sobriquets may be considered as attempts to put Falstaff back on the right track, which would explain the reason why his entourage uses such derogatory appellations.

From an onomastic point of view, stereotyping a person or group of people through the use of terms of address such as nicknames is what makes Shakespeare’s plays timeless: the identity of a foreigner/deviant can be altered through a form of address which emphasizes a single – and thus oversimplified – aspect of his/her culture: foodways. Religious tensions have also led to the coinage of food and ethnic epithets, calling Muslims “pigs”, which amounts to insulting and marginalising them since they are compared to a foodstuff they are not allowed to consume.

From being “called names” to being “called by a name,” it does not take much; and terms of address such as nicknames make it possible. Dietary stereotypes, or using food preferences or dietary customs as the basis for derogatory terms of address is illustrated with the example of John Falstaff in Shakespeare’s plays, and if we keep our ears open, we will find similar phenomena around us in daily life. Good or bad, food epithets have taught us something: the proof of the pudding is in the eating.



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