Cut-down puns

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Slang words in English: a rich resource

SLANG IS characterized by its capacity to shock, startle and amuse: often achieved by manipulating existing lexical material in a playful way. Indeed, this play instinct is at the core of language use at large: cf. Nilsen & Nilsen (1978:28–44), Redfern (1984:6), and especially Crystal (1998). It is however in the realm of informal discourse that all types of ludic word-forming – from malapropisms to homonymic puns – thrive most richly. One such way of manipulating existing lexical items is to expand them implicitly into longer forms so that the original does double (and often facetious) duty. This process is at work not only in such acronyms as *S.F.A.* – impeccably, *Scottish Football Association*, but facetiously both *sweet fuck-all* and its euphemistic variant *Sweet Fanny Adams* – but also in such elaborations as *do-re-mi* for 'dough' (US slang *money*), *Oswald* for 'an ounce' of a drug (expanding *oz*, the abbreviation of 'ounce'), and *Georgie* (after the late renowned footballer *George* or *Georgie Best*), for 'best' itself. The following article seeks to explore the curious realm of curtailed puns formed on the same principle as Georgie.

Introduction

However outlandish or trivial such cut-down formations may look, their lack of formal relationship with the words that inspired them makes them interesting as both a word-generating process and a unique linguistic product of *Homo ludens*, their ingenuity being almost unparalleled in other areas of lexical creativity. What follows is an overview of 'the cut-down pun', its structure, its most common patterns, and its relationship with other playful categories of word-formation that are based on sound-repetition. In order to provide a fuller insight into the incidence of this process in English, there is also a glossary of current and historical cut-down puns, some of which are too idiosyncratic or have had too fleeting an existence to achieve the immortality of lexicographical record.[1]

Speakers may create new words by elongating already existing items. For instance, in the slang of British drug users, *charlie* ('cocaine'), itself an expansion from the initial *c* of of the drug's name, is further hidden under the name of the fictional Chinese-Hawaiian movie detective *Charlie Chan*, while *whizz* ('speed') often mutates into *Billy Whizz*, the name of a character in the popular British children's comic the *Beano*, and then into *billy*. Given the abundance of first names and especially surnames which are homophonous or near-homophonous with common nouns, it is little wonder that slang users deploy them.

As often as not, some of these usages are minted in their shortened, one-word form, rendering them all the more zesty and sophisticated as a form of speech disguise. An illustration of this kind of coinage is the nickname *Eggs* (from the culinary phrase *bacon and eggs*), reportedly given to the British painter Francis Bacon (1909–92) by his long-time companion and heir John Edwards (*The Scotsman*, Glasgow, 11 Mar 03). Falling into the same cate-

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gory is the following, from Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*. Throughout this novel, the thuggish teenage protagonist punningly, and consistently, refers to the prison chaplain as *the charlie*, *the prison charlie* or *the charles*, coinages based on Charlie Chaplin[2] as in: 'And soon the prison charlie was asking them: "What's it going to be then, eh?"' (p. 84).

For all its unconventional make-up, this kind of punning formation is by no means only a twentieth-century phenomenon, nor has it been the exclusive province of neologists and wordsmiths like Burgess. Evidence that the process has been operating in English for quite some time can be found in the hunting term *charlie* ('fox'), after the Whig statesman *Charles James Fox*: first attested use in the *OED*2, 1857. Much the same pattern may partly account for the nineteenth-century euphemism *billy* ('cock' = 'penis'), possibly formed as a pun on *billycock* (*hat*), with an underlying layer of personification and metaphor (*billy* 'a truncheon').

However, it is in the past two decades or so that this process of word-formation has achieved some prominence in the UK, partly as a result of the popularity of rhyming slang among the young (cf. Thorne 1993:225). The development of two small sets of slang aliases – for classes of university degrees and measures of cannabis – may give a good idea of how *rhyming slang* (RS) has been complemented by *cut-down puns* (CDP).

As some of these examples suggest, it is not only the names of the famous that can be subject to ellipsis. The process can affect virtually any phrase or phrase-like form, sometimes even a whole chunk from a verse or a single word with two stressed syllables (see, for example, *tisket* and *desdy* in the glossary). Though the punning element is usually at the end of the phrase, instances are not uncommon where the pun is formed on the first element. A good case in point is the Australian slang *Baskerville* ('dog', i.e., an informer), which punningly relies on *hound* in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's novel *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Along the same lines, the British expression *partner* 'an Audi car', besides being a good illustration of the classic male love affair with cars ('Here's my partner. She really is a beauty'), plays on the first element of the American Western greeting *Howdy, partner!* (with the aitch dropped).

The going gets tougher, however, when the pun does not rely on homonymy or polysemy, but rather on some kind of partial similarity – whether it be near-homonymy or what may be termed 'suggestibility' (cf. Kahn 2001:108) between two lexical items. Thus, *chanel* takes on the meaning 'cocaine' in American slang through a play on the first element of *Coco Chanel* (perhaps with a nod to the expensiveness of the drug), the nickname *Coco* slyly suggesting *cocaine*. Likewise, the *ad hoc* form *Marlon*, as used by the Brummie (Birmingham) rapper Mike Skinner in one of his songs, acquires the meaning 'brandy' through a similarity between *brandy* and the surname of the late Hollywood star Marlon *Brando*.

Related processes of word-formation

Admittedly, once we recognise that partial formal identity can be used in making puns, it becomes clear that cut-down puns and rhyming slang are not entirely independent processes of word-making. Ultimately based on the principle of iconicity[3], both can best be seen as forming a continuum or cline, with a number of hybrid, overlapping specimens showing different degrees of approximation to, or divergence from, one type or another. A notable area of overlap on this continuum is so-called 'imperfect rhyming slang' (cf. Partridge 1985: s.v. *I should coco!*), an umbrella category that encompasses a variety of phrases built on weak – sometimes excruciatingly farfetched – rhymes. Into this category come: *Michael* 'car keys' (from the former Democratic nominee for the US presidency, Michael Du*kakis*); *Judas* 'carry-oot' (a Scottish slangism based on the Biblical figure *Judas Iscariot*, for takeaway drinks) and the more lacerating *Sandras* 'bollocks' (after the screen star Sandra Bullock), all three of which qualify as cut-down puns.

Beyond this, the close relationship between curtailed puns and rhyming slang can be seen in some items that result from the convergence or combined action of both processes. A prime example is the criminal slangism *bubble* ('to inform'), arising as an ellipsis of *bubble and squeak*, where *squeak* may mean either 'inform' (Tempest 1950) or 'speak', perhaps influenced by the old cant metaphor *bubble* 'cheat' (cf. Bailey 1737, Grose 1811, & *OED*2). A combination of punning and rhyming slang also accounts for the following two examples of

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Table 1: Classes of degrees

		Rhyming slang	Cut-down puns
1st	'a first'	*a Pattie Hearst* (also *Pattie*) *a Geoff Hurst* (also *Geoff*) *a Damien Hirst* (also *Damien*) *a raging thirst* (also *raging*)	*James* (from James I)
2:1	'a two-one'	*Attila the Hun* (also *Attila*) *Trevor Nunn*	*made-in* (from *made in Taiwan*); also *maiden* or *maid*
2:2	'a two-two'		*Desmond* (from *Desmond Tutu*); also *des* or *dezzy*
3rd	'a third'	*Douglas Hurd* (also *Douglas*) *Thora Hird* (also *Thora*)	*Richard* (also, less usually, *Richard III*; cf. its synonym George III)

Table 2: Measures of cannabis

	Rhyming slang	Cut-down puns
1 ounce (also oz)		*wizard* (from *The Wizard of Oz*)
¼ ounce	*bottle of water* (also *bottle*) *Janet Street-Porter* (also *Janet*)	
⅛ ounce		*Henry* (from *Henry VIII*)
1/16 ounce		*Louis* (from *Louis XVI*)

what may be called 'punned rhyming slang': *on one's sweeney* ('on one's own, alone') and *Wolver* ('penis'). The former has as its etymon *Sweeney Todd*, the name of the fictional 'Demon Barber of Fleet Street' in London, but also the common colloquialism *on one's tod* ('on one's own'), itself elliptical for *on one's Tod Sloan* (cf. Lillo 2004:283). The same process of chain derivation accounts for the Midland and Northern English euphemism *Wolver* ('penis'), whose etymon *Wolverhampton* plays on the common slang term *hampton*, itself an abbreviation of the rhyming-slang phrase *Hampton Wick* ('prick', slang for *penis*).

Sometimes, though, the formation of puns based on homonymy depends not on development from an iconic word which is removed (or *twice*-removed, as in the case of punned-rhyming slang), but on a whole network of linguistic and extralinguistic associations. This type of pun, which might well be dubbed 'multidimensional', differs from the cut-down variety in that it is linked to the target word through a combined process of homonymy and cultural association. For instance, the British slang term *Pavarotti* takes on the meaning of 'tenner (= a £10 note)', *tenner* being a homophone of *tenor*, and *tenor* being associated par excellence with the Italian singer Luciano Pavarotti. In tandem, a less common slang synonym is *Placido*, after the Spanish operatic tenor Plácido Domingo. An even more contrived example that also trades on popular culture is *McGarrett* ('a sum of £50'), from the surname of one of the main characters in the long-running TV police series *Hawaii Five-O* – whence also the cut-down pun *Hawaii* ('a sum of £50').

Some remarks on the glossary

The following glossary comprises cut-down puns I have culled from printed and oral sources. As with many glossaries that deal with linguistic ephemera, this collection cannot be comprehensive, but offers a fair idea of the productivity of the pattern and its most common variations across a broad spectrum of casual speech. For the sake of consistency, the glossary excludes some tantalizing items whose alleged punning origin can be dismissed out of hand as 'etymythology' (cf. Quinion

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Glossary

Baskerville a hound (= a dog, i.e. an informer). (CDS) *Australian*. From Arthur Conan Doyle's famous novel *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902). Partridge (1989) gives the plural form *baskervilles*, but that must be a misprint. Example of use (from J. McNeil's 1973 play *The Chocolate Frog*, cited in J. McNeil 1987:11): KEVIN: [*amazed*] *Me* take all the blame? But, you – I – Oh, that's stupid! [*Laughing nervously*] Why should I...? TOSSER: Ah, shut yer mouth, Baskerville. SHIRKER: Huh! Baskerville is right. [*Sneering*] You'd get a start at Wentworth Park, yer bloody hound!

billy[1] a bong (= a type of water-pipe used for smoking marijuana or other drugs). (DD, MASD) *Australian*. From the Aboriginal word *billabong* 'a water-hole formed by a broken meander of a river', but obviously also suggested by the time-honoured Australianism *billy* 'a tin with a lid and a wire bail used for making tea over a campfire'. Cf. the expression *Billy Bong Thornton*, borrowed from the US movie *Half-Baked* (1998), which is sometimes used facetiously in American and Australian slang to designate a huge bong, a play on the name of the actor Billy Bob Thornton (b. 1955). Example: Shut up and pass the billy, will you? (Reported by a colleague, Sydney, May 05)

billy[2] cock (= the penis). (CDS) *British*. Used in the 19th century; now obsolete. Probably from *billycock (hat)*, but also inspired by the personal name (in the same vein as other colloquial and slang euphemisms for 'penis') and the phallic image of *billy* 'a truncheon'. Cf. the colloquialism *willy*, first recorded by the *OED*2 in 1905.

Brian, on the on the bru (= on the dole) *Irish (Belfast)*. From the Irish High King Brian Bórú (940–1014). The word *bru* ('service providing unemployment benefit') is a colloquial Northern Irish & Scottish rendition of *bureau*: variously spelled *broo*, *breau*, *brew*, *beroo, buroo*, *boroo*. In Ireland, *bru* is pronounced the same as Bórú. The Belfast man may also say that someone 'is on the Brian' (cf. Tomelty 1941:70). However, a Cockney on the dole may say that he is on the *How d'ye do*, evidently also rhyming with *b(o)roo*.

brownies busters (in the slang of dice gamblers, a pair of mis-spotted dice). (DM, SS) *American*. From Buster Brown, a comic strip character created in 1902 by Richard F. Outcault for the *New York Herald*. Cf. *Where's Buster Brown?*, a phrase which Maurer (1981:193) glosses as: 'an expression informing stickmen to switch crooked dice into or out of the game. (Used only around suckers.)'

Brussels a carpet (i.e., a three-month prison sentence). (CDS, DC, DSUE8, DU) *British*, used 1920–50s. From *Brussels carpet*: 'I was knocked off for sweeping the snow, and got a Brussels' (D. Hume 1935, *The Gaol Gates Are Open*, cited in Partridge 1950).

bubble to squeak (on a person): to inform the police (about someone) (DSUE8, LL, SC). *Also in full*: bubble and squeak. (DSUE8, DU, SC) *British*. Cf. *squeal*. Possibly a convergence of a curtailed pun and the rhyming slang *bubble and squeak* ('speak'). The term is often used as a noun in the expressions *to put the bubble in* (*for someone*) (Powis 1977; Partridge 1989; Ayto 2002:251) and *to put in the bubble* (= to put in the squeak) (Partridge 1989). Tempest (1950) also records the phrase *to put the bubble in the tube* 'to tell an officer of the illegal behaviour of a fellow-prisoner'.

Cecil a G (= a grand, i.e. £1000). (B) *British*. From the well-known clothing chain Cecil Gee. The word was heard in London in 2002.

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2002–4:33). These include: *Louie*, in the US expression *hang a Louie* ('hang a left' = turn left), derived from the name of the former New York State Attorney General, Louis Lefkowitz; and the well-known British colloquialism *the (Old) Bill* ('the police'), often etymologized as an abbreviation of *Bill Bailey* (from the popular music hall song 'Won't You Come Home, Bill Bailey?'), in turn a metonymic pun on *The Old Bailey* (the colloquial name for the Central Criminal Court in London).

Because of their very nature, few of the items in this list are, or have been, widely used. Some have been confined to small cliques or social milieux, others have a limited use as family or group in-jokes, and yet others may confidently be regarded as nonce coinages. By far the most often-heard pun in this compilation is the Americanism *Sherlock*, whose playful origin *<Sherlock Holmes <Holmes <homes <homeboy* has been camouflaged in the ironic exclamation *No shit, Sherlock* ('Is that true?'). Interestingly enough, the tongue-in-cheek interpretation of this phrase (as if uttered by Holmes's trusty companion Dr Watson) has not only served as an inspiration for the sarcastic

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Chanel cocaine. (SS) *American*. From the French fashion designer Coco Chanel (real name Gabrielle Chanel, (1883–1971): based on the similarity between *Coco* and *cocaine* (cf. *coconut* 'cocaine').

Charles James a fox. (CDS, CRS) *British.* After the British Whig politician Charles James Fox (1749–1806). *Also* Charlie. (CDS) The fox may also be called (Mr) Todd, in Wales and Scotland, and 'the Pilot': see the *Tactics Booklet* of the North West Hunt Saboteurs, Manchester, Spring 2002: 27. In the co-operative enterprise of the hunt, individuals rejoin the tribe, while the fox becomes the sacrificial representative of a sacred species. According to Scruton, a rider to hounds who praises Charlie's cunning is engaging in the atavistic practice of totemism (*The Scotsman*, 10 Feb 01).

Charlie a chaplain. (HDAS) *Also* charlie, charles. From the British film actor and director Charlie Chaplin (1889–1977). The attestation of this usage in US military slang (Lighter 1994) and in Anthony Burgess's novel *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) suggests that it has been independently invented several times. *Charley*...the Chaplain. (R. Lord 1917, *Captain Boyd's Battery, A.E.F.*, p. 24, cited in Lighter 1994) 'What's it going to be then, eh?' said the prison charlie.¶ [...] Then the charles screeched: 'Right, you lot. We'll end with Hymn Number 435 in the Prisoners' Hymnal. (A. Burgess 1965 [19621], *A Clockwork Orange*, pp. 79 & 81); Chaplain Charlie will tell you about how the free world will conquer Communism with the aid of God and a few Marines. (*Full Metal Jacket*, film directed by Stanley Kubrick, 1987).

David semen. (B, DCS) *British*. From the former England goalkeeper David Seaman (b. 1963), aka Safe Hands, Spunky and, more cryptically, H, from the well-known rhyming-slang phrase *Harry Monk* 'spunk' (see Honeyball 2004), a slang term for semen.

Denis the law (= the police). (B) *British*. From the Scottish international footballer Denis Law (b. 1940).

Desdy a moaner. (B) *British*. From the woman's name *Desdemona.*

Desmond a two-two (= a lower second-class honours degree). (B, BD, DCS, DSUE8, ODRS). *Also* Dezzy (DCS), dezzy, Des. 2. (*rare*) a two-two draw in football. (The third quotation below illustrates the punning potential of this word in other sporting contexts.) *British*. Based on the name of the South African archbishop and Nobel Peace laureate Desmond Tutu (b. 1931): (1) 'Bums are people like Jay, Mr Hall's stepson, who spends most of his time windsurfing and is hoping to "do fine art next year"; and Rob, who has just graduated from Bristol University with a Desmond (student rhyming slang for a 2-2) in theology' (*The Independent*, London, 7 Aug 92, 12); (2) 'At least they [*sc.* Arsenal football club] managed to get a Desmond with Bolton' (recorded, Croydon, Oct 2004); (3) 'It didn't take long for playing colleagues to come up with a nickname for Innes Smalburger, Rochdale's South African overseas amateur.¶ Soon after his second time at the crease for his new team he was dubbed "Desmond" as in Tutu, or, in Innes' case, as in TWO-TWO, the scores he had achieved against Radcliffe and Milnrow' (cricket column, *Rochdale Observer*, 10 May 05)

dianas doors. (DSUE8) *British*. Used in the phrase *mind the Dianas!*, which Partridge (1989) records in the slang of bus and underground train conductors (*ca*. 1950–70). From the blonde English actress Diana Dors (real name Diana Fluck, 1931–84), noted for her bosom.

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replies *Keep digging, Watson!* And *Dig deeper, Watson!*[4], but has also spawned a progeny of variants playing on the names of other fictional supersleuths: *No shit, Columbo!*, *No shit, Kojak!* and *No shit, Inspector Clouseau!*

In the glossary, each headword in bold type is followed by its implicit or 'disguised' target word, with a brief gloss where necessary, and the abbreviated title(s) of the source(s) in which it has been recorded. Then follows a geographical label indicating the specific variety or varieties of English where the word has been attested and a brief commentary on its origin and use. Wherever possible, each entry is supported with one or more citations, allowing the reader to form an idea of how the word is used. ■

Notes

1 I wish to thank Terry Victor for kindly providing me with some specimens he encountered in the course of his research for *The New Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*.
2 Cf. the following, from Derman (2004:138):

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elsie a tanner (slang = sixpence). *British*. Used in the 1960s–70s. From Elsie Tanner, a former character in the long-running TV soap opera *Coronation Street*.

Elton john (= a lavatory). (DPS, TV) *British*. From the British rock singer and pianist Elton John (originally Reginald Kenneth Dwight, *b.* 1947). Lewis (2003) dates this word 'circa 1980s'; Terry Victor remembers it being used by rock musicians in 1978.

Georgie best. *Also used in full:* Georgie Best. *British*. From the late world-famous Northern Irish footballer George Best (1946–2005), the term commonly used in the complimentary close *all the Georgie* (*Best*) 'all the best'.

Hancocks half an hour. (B) *British*. Used in the 1950s. From the British radio and TV show *Hancock's Half Hour*, starring the actor Tony Hancock (1924–68).

Hawaii a sum of £50. (B, BD, DCS) *British*. From the popular US TV police series *Hawaii Five-O*. 'The 1980s, the decade that loved money, was a particularly fruitful era for money jargon. Puns continue to play their part too – from a "Placido" (tenner) through to a "Hawaii" (Five-O).' (*The Scotsman*, Glasgow, 11 Jun 02)

Henry, **henry** an eighth of an ounce of cannabis. (B,CDS) *British & Irish*. From the English king Henry VIII (1491–1547): 'Metric martyrs should rejoice at the new units created by our entrepreneurs (*Drugs law reform*, July 11). Buying in kilos, they sell in part ounces in the following: a teenth (16th of an ounce), a henry (eighth of an ounce), a Janet (Street Porter: quarter ounce), an Arfer (half an ounce) and a Bruce (an Oz)' (*The Guardian*, 13 Jul 02); 'The front door was wide open and he was sitting by a coffee table. On the table was a tin containing some of the cannabis and some scales. There was also a mobile phone with a text message asking him if there was any chance of a "Henry."' (*Leighton Buzzard Observer*, 4 Aug 04)

Hughie a piece of green phlegm. 2 (*pl.*) Greens (= vegetables). (B) *British*. From the English TV presenter Hughie Greene (1920–97).

Judas carry-oot (= takeaway drinks bought from an off-licence or a pub). *British (Scottish use)*. From Judas Iscariot, the Apostle who betrayed Jesus. According to Pauline Cairns (personal communication), the word has been in use at least since the 1970s.

Louis a sixteenth of an ounce of cannabis. (DPS). *Also* louie. (BD) *British.* After King Louis XVI of France (1754–93): 'Below are the most commonly used forms of new rhyming slang:¶ ...Henry: Eighth (of an ounce, measure of quantity of cannabis)¶ Louis: Sixteenth (of an ounce)' (*The Mail on Sunday*, London, 8 Feb 98, p. 45)

Marlon brandy. (TV) From the American film star Marlon Brando (1924–2004): Getting to the bar's going to be trouble / So the Marlons will to have to be doubles[.] (Mike Skinner – aka The Streets –, 'Too Much Brandy', from the album *Original Pirate Material*, 2002)

Michael[1] the car keys. (TV) *British*. From Michael Dukakis (b. 1933), the former governor of Massachusetts who was the 1988 candidate for US president from the Democratic Party. This usage was reported to Terry Victor by the Liverpool lexicographer John Williams.

Michael[2] a portable toilet. (B) *British*. From the British Conservative politician Michael Portillo (b.1953), whose Spanish surname sounds similar to *Portaloo*. Although Portaloo is a trademark of Portakabin Ltd., the word is widely used

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'Roscoe had a minor genius for creating inventively allusive nicknames for new people in FSG. His method was Cockney rhyming, an associative slang in which, for example, the number five is… "Lady" because Lady is short for Lady Godiva, and Godiva rhymes with "fiver," the colloquial term for the old British 5-pound note (as in "Can you lend me a fiver?"). In this spirit he dubbed a newly hired Pakistani programmer "Mander," because his true name was Salah, reminiscent of Salamander.'

3 As rhyme and homophony produce icons, and clipped forms are indexes of their corresponding full forms, elliptical rhyming-slang phrases and cut-down puns of the type we are dealing with here may both be regarded as iconic indexes. (cf. Anttila & Embleton 1995).

4 Thence the chat-room acronyms *NSS* 'No shit, Sherlock!' and *KDW* 'Keep digging, Watson!'. Another, much cleverer acronym derived from *No shit, Sherlock* (in the sense of 'too bad') is *NS*[2], pronounced N-S-Squared, which Eble (1996:37) has recorded in US college slang.

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(often with a lower-case initial) to denote a portable or makeshift toilet cubicle.

Oliver, **the** the twist (= a dishonest trick). (DSUE8, DU, SC). *Occasionally in full*: Oliver Twist. (DU, SC) *British*. From Charles Dickens's novel *Oliver Twist* (1838): used by bookmakers in the phrase *put the Oliver on it/that/this* 'to put an incorrect entry in a ledger'. Partridge (1950) records this usage in a 1938 source (also cited in *OED*2: s.v. *twist*, n.1) and notes that it has been in use since *c*.1910, but both Green (1998, 2000) and Ayto (2002) date it to the 1970s. Unlike Partridge, who regards *Oliver* (*Twist*) as a pun, these authors etymologize it as a figurative use of the rhyming slang *Oliver Twist* 'fist', the hidden word *fist* being metonymically associated with the notion of handwriting. A dishonest bookmaker might, when taking a bet, say to his equally dishonest clerk, 'Put the oliver on that,' meaning that the entry (which might win handsomely) must be altered. (D. Powis 1977, *The Signs of Crime*, p. 195)

oscar wild (= out of control). (DCS) *Occasionally used in full:* Oscar Wilde ('How completely Oscar Wilde to invite someone to lunch at the Singing Fig.' *The Sunday Times*, South Africa, 15 Sep 2002). Thorne (1997) reports that the abbreviated form *oscar* was used by commune dwellers and hippies in the late 1970s. As an example of usage, this author gives the phrase *to go completely Oscar*.

partner An Audi car. (TV) *British*. From the American Western greeting *Howdy, partner!*

Richard A third (= a third-class honours degree in Britain). (BD, CRS, DCS, ODRS) *Also, less frequently,* Richard III. (CRS, DCS, ODRS). From the English king Richard III (1452–85).

Rio A grand (= £1000). (B) *British*. From Rio Grande, the river that forms a large portion of the boundary between the United States and Mexico.

Salvador In the slang of the US film industry, a dolly (a small wheeled platform which carries the camera in order to film moving shots.) (JD). From the Spanish surrealist painter *Salvador Dalí* (1904–89). The term relies on an identical American pronunciation of *Dalí* and *dolly*. Example: Bring in *Salvador* for this shot. (J. Dunn 1997, *Idiom Savant*, p. 76)

Sandras Bollocks (= testicles). (B) *Also used in full:* Sandra Bullocks. (ODRS) *British*. From the American film star Sandra Bullock (b. 1964).

scooby A doo-doo. Only used in the phrase *not to give a scooby* 'not to care at all'. *Also* scoobies. *British*. From the US cartoon character *Scoobie Doo*. The expression *not to give a scoobie* puns on the phrase *not to give a doo-doo*, a jokey euphemism for *not to give a shit*. The variant *not to give a scoobies* is based on *the Scoobies*, the nickname for the gang of 'Slayerettes' (aka 'the Scoobie Gang') in the American TV show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*: 'Well, that's another reason why I don't give a scooby about the results' (recorded, Edinburgh, Mar 03); 'But she doesn't give a scoobies what you do' (recorded, London, Jan 04).

Sherlock Holmes (= one's friend): usually as a term of address, as in 'What's up, Sherlock?' or in the ironic phrase *No shit, Sherlock!*, used to express contemptuous acknowledgment of the obvious ('So you had to pay for it, didn't you?' – 'No shit, Sherlock!'). (CDS, SAS) *Also* sherlock. *Originally American*. From the detective Sherlock Holmes, created by the Scottish author Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930). *Holmes* is a variant of *homes*, a shortening of *homeboy* 'a male from one's hometown': 'The critics say the effect dissipates over the years. No shit, Sherlock. Is that ➳

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supposed to be surprising?' (*The Village Voice*, New York, 13 Apr 99, p. 59).

Sir Alec A Guinness. (B) *British*. From the British actor Sir Alec Guinness (1914–2000): 'Mine's a pint of Sir Alec, please' (recorded, Norwich, Mar 01)

Steves Hearts (in playing cards). (P) *Australian*. From the Australian outlaw and bushranger *Steve Hart* (1859–80). As noted by Laugesen (2002), only attested in A.G. Pretty's *Glossary of Slang and Peculiar Terms in Use in the A.I.F.* (1921–1924), contributed to this unpublished gem by Arthur Bazley. Both the original ms of this glossary and the annotated version edited by Laugesen (2002) are silent on the origin of *Steves*.

sweeney, on one's On one's tod. (BS) *British & Irish*. From Sweeney Todd, the name of a fictitious barber who murdered his customers in George Dibdin Pitt's play *A String of Pearls, or the Fiend of Fleet Street* (1847), later known as *Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. The phrase *on one's sweeney* derives from rhyming slang through a process of chain derivation: *on one's sweeney* < **on one's Sweeney Todd* < *on one's tod* < *on one's Tod Sloan* 'on one's own'. Cf. the rhyming slang *the Sweeney* (*Todd*) 'the [police] Flying Squad'. In Ireland 'on your tod' is taken to refer to the legendary Sweeney Todd, so 'on your tod' becomes 'on your sweeney' (R. Marsh, RTÉ Radio, *Sunday Miscellany*, 21 Jul 96, cited in Share 2003).

tisket Basket (a euphemism for *bastard*). (B, DRS, DSUE8) *British*. A World War II coinage inspired by the nursery rhyme 'A tisket, a tasket, a little yellow basket' (see Lillo 2001:338). The rhyme gained world-wide popularity in the 1930s/40s through its use in Ella Fitzgerald's first big hit 'A Tisket, A Tasket'.

tuckerbox A dog (= an informer). (CDS, DSUE8) *Australian*. From the Dog on the Tuckerbox, a legendary Australian icon celebrated in the bush ballad 'Nine Miles from Gundagai' by Jack Moses and the song 'Where the Dog Sits on the Tuckerbox (Five Miles from Gundagai)' by Jack O'Hagan. A *tuckerbox* is a box for storing or carrying food.
SHIRKER: [*throwing up his hands*] I can stand no more! [*Pointing at* KEVIN] Stand up, you!
[TOSSER *pulls* KEVIN *up by the scruff of the neck*.] Mr Tuckerbox! Are you ready for the court's verdict? (J. McNeil 1973, *The Chocolate Frog*. In J. McNeil 1987, p. 15)

veras, the The Vice Squad. (PP) *British*. From *Vera Vice*, a corrupted form of *vice versa* inspired by *the vice* 'the Vice Squad'.

Wimpy A Wellington Bomber. (WGW) *Also* Wimpey (OED2), Wimpie. *R.A.F. slang used during World War II*. After Popeye's hamburger-loving sidekick J. Wellington Wimpy: 'Our Airmen know even their planes by nicknames, many of which are merely abbreviations, but they are slang. A Spitfire is known as a "Spit". The Hurricane is a "Hurrybox"! "Wimpie" is a Wellington; "Daffy" is a Defiant; and the Lysander craft are called "Lizzies"' (J. Lumsden, *The Nongqai*, South African Police Force Magazine, Nov 1944, p. 1317).

wizard An oz (= an ounce of cannabis) *British*. From *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), the popular musical film adapted from L. Frank Baum's classic fairy tale *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900). Another pun based on the homophony between *oz* and *Oz* is the word *Australia*, currently used to refer to an ounce of marijuana (Terry Victor, personal communication).

Zoes Balls (= testicles) (RP) *British*. From the British radio and TV presenter *Zoe Ball* (b. 1970).

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