

The Bookwork In The Appellation



by Steven Esthimer

The title of a book is more than just the name the book bears on its cover. It is a descriptive or distinctive appellation. We expect to learn something about the contents of a book from the superficial statement that first meets our eye. I have a room full of titles at home. I like books. O.K., I will be honest -- I like owning books. I have a lot of books which I have not yet read. Let me, none-the-less, share some of those titles and some related thoughts with you.

Most of my books are non-fiction and have direct and informative titles. There is no doubt as to what a book called *Hebrew Grammar* or *Classical Approaches to the Study of Religion* will cover. Equally clear are such titles as *History of Christian Thought*, *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason*, *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Astronomy*, and *How to Fix Your Chevrolet*. There is a plenitude (if not a superfluity) of "how to" books which are unimaginatively but informatively named.

Some titles are meaningful only if you know whose work they refer to. I am interested in *Selected Philosophical Essays* by Max Scheler. I am not interested in such a book by, let's say, Olivia Newton-John. Other titles are not merely general and in need of our acquaintance with the author -- they depend upon the reader's or buyer's real faith in the writer's work. Would you read books called *The Problem of Human Life* or *The Nature of Thought* if you were not convinced that the authors had both oars in the

water? How about *The Question of Being*, *The Meaning of Life*, or a three-volume work called simply *Ethics*? You know when you see titles like these that you had better find out who wrote the books before you put too much time or money into them.

Then there is the yawning space that is opened up for ambiguity by the move to include fiction. Is *The Passions* an adult romance, and *Scruples* an indepth exploration of moral considerations that act as restraining forces on people in our society? What is *The White Goddess* about? And who is *The Invisible Man*? Is *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* non-fiction or fiction?

For almost five years, I have worked parttime at a large book store in Durham. I have helped thousands of customers and seen a large number of them reach for one or another book because its title captured their attention. Packaging may help draw the eye to a book, but the title is its invitation, that is what beckons us to take and read, to share the author's findings or viewpoint. A large quantity of books is sold because of the appeal to their titles. I wonder if readers of *Walden Two* are disappointed?

There are titles for both fiction and non-fiction which I think do rather well at reaching out and grabbing us: *American Gold* (I like the rich and patriotic sound of this almost redundant title); *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*; *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Sex but Were Afraid to Ask*; *God's Other Son*; or *Delta of Venus-Erotica*. I would pull these off

the shelf to look them over. Tom Wolfe went through some grabbers in the 1960's: *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* and *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*. Which would you pick up first given a choice between *Billy Budd* and *The Naked and the Dead*? I rest my case.

And there are titles which seem to have been given with the intention of keeping us from reading some good books. Who would want to take up a hefty book called *Bleak House*? Houghton Mifflin even made the cover gray. If *Ordinary People* says anything about its characters, who would bother to find out more than the title tells us? Max Black's *The Labyrinth of Language* threatens the reader who would fear getting trapped in the book's own medium. Mortimer Adler's nearly 400-page *How to Read a Book* repels us with a glaring contradiction. And, there are, of course, numerous titles for textbooks which flatly state the field they purport to cover (*Theories of History*, *Economics*, *Constitutional Law*, and so on), and for that reason alone put us off.

Perhaps the most interesting titles along the above line are those which are intentionally obfuscating. We find these typically in the field of literary criticism where, unless one were to open the book to read the subtitle, no one would know what *Hateful Contraries*, *On Extended Wings*, *Pilgrim of Eternity*, or *The Grim Phoenix* had to say about whom. These books are written by scholars, published by university presses, and make contributions to a dialogue that is limited to include only the other scholars who write similar books. The titles keep out the rabble.

There are designations which, in and of themselves, tell us something about the books to which they apply. *Brave New World* and *Prometheus Unbound*, like many titles taken from lines or names of works that are

classics, give us insight into the works because of their reference to something well-known. And there are titles which might put us on guard for sexist views on both sides of the fence: *Man's Place in Nature*; *An Essay on Man*; *Beyond God the Father*; or *The Second Sex*. A book's title can also date the work. Guess when this freshmen English anthology was published: *Grooving the Symbol*.

On the other hand, there are book names which, strangely enough, have no apparent connection with the contents of the book. *Strange Peaches* is a novel about John Kennedy's assassination. Somebody help me on that one.

We react emotionally to titles. They are carefully created, designed, and applied to books to attract us to the commercial product as well as the material that resides on the printed page within. Directness, cuteness, allusion, and even aversion are all employed to allure us. And, of course, novelty is an effective if not essential device. There can be a hundred books over time called *Cultural Anthropology*, but only so many *Scarlet Letter*'s. It is ironic that Oxford Press, the publisher of the world's most respected dictionary of English, found it necessary to coin a new word (and to define it in a dictionary format on the book's cover, as a sub-title) for a sociology textbook: *Socguide*. It is possible for a novel title to find its way into our everyday speech. Joseph Heller coined the expression "catch-22" for his first book, in 1961. None of his titles since then have had that magic. In fact, his last book employs an existing expression as its title: *Good as Gold*. How unoriginal.

That a title has an effect on our treatment of the book may be seen in my own experience with a novel on which I wrote my Master's paper: Thomas Pynchon's

Gravity's Rainbow. That may not strike you as a particularly sublime nomenclature until you consider the manuscript's working title: *Mindless Pleasures*. I am not sure that I or my committee could have treated the same book by the second title as seriously.

We are all taught not to judge a book by its cover, though. It seems that we frequently do just that and more, in spite of our teaching. I am told that an interviewer for a school or job forms his or her impression of the subject in the first moments of the exchange, perhaps before a word is even spoken. We need to take the time for a closer, longer, deeper look at people and books. There is much that we will miss, and some lasting mistakes we will make if we do not.

Successful Shackelford Approach

by Foo Vaeth

Have the words up, lift, and push become a part of your regular vocabulary? Do you have the best looking set of quads on campus? If the answer to these questions is yes, you are obviously a Shackelford guinea pig. Having opened with only a \$7,000 investment, Elizabeth Shackelford in one year has increased her profits to ten times that figure -- a growth rate of 5000 percent. In an assembly presentation, she swore her system of adapted isokinetics would give you a high, but I can't say I experience feelings of euphoria while working out. Preferring my bet to any sort of exercise, I must admit they have me hooked. Shackelford says, "You get hooked because you can't help it." When the program began in September, very few students participated. Today, celebrity patrons include our Dean of Students, marshalls, and the Cold Cuts, and it even kept our assembly chairman quiet for an hour. Through the power of advertising and a method that produces results, Shackelford has clearly developed one of the most popular forms of exercise in the Triangle area.

N.C. Symphony To Perform

The North Carolina Symphony, featuring guest conductor Paul Polivnick on the podium, will present a program of Rossini, Ravel, and Brahms in Raleigh Memorial Auditorium Thursday, March 11 at 8:00 p.m.

Polivnick, associate conductor of the Milwaukee Symphony, and a candidate for the position of artistic director and conductor of the North Carolina Symphony, will lead the orchestra in *Rosini's Semiramide Overture*, *Ravel's Mother Goose Suite*, and *Brahms' Symphony No. 4* in E Minor.

Tickets range from \$4.50-\$7.50 for adults, \$2-\$5 for senior citizens and students, and \$2 for children. They may be purchased at the North Carolina Symphony Box Office in the basement of Memorial Auditorium (733-2750) or at the door on the night of the concert.

ST. MARY'S: THE NEW BLACK HOLE

by Frances Ellerbe

St. Mary's may soon find pippens in place of its once clean dormitory rooms because of the new strictly enforced vacuum cleaning policy. The policy, actually an old one, but new to students, will now be more rigidly executed according to Dean Marcia Jones. The policy allows the maids to use the vacuum cleaners only in the public parts of the dorm; students, through their own means, must maintain their private rooms. Dr. Jones says that in the past, the maid would relax the policy allowing students to use the vacuums. Now, however, due to damage and misuse of the machines, the true policy will be more rigidly enforced. The policy does not hurt students who live in uncarpeted residence halls; an inexpensive broom will take care of their cleaning needs. However, this will not do for students who live in carpeted rooms. Therefore, in the interest of sanitation, as well as storage space and student finances, St. Mary's should allow students to use the vacuums for cleaning their rooms.

If students have to purchase vacuums, the problem of finding storage

space would ultimately arise. More necessary furnishings (study desks, beds, lamps, etc.) already fill individual rooms to capacity. A big, bulky vacuum cleaner would only clutter already cramped living space. Also, quarrels would erupt between roommates; on whose side or in whose closet will the vacuum cleaner be stored?

One might suggest the attic as an ideal room in which to store the vacuum cleaners. However, several problems will inevitably occur with this idea. A student must lug the heavy vacuum up and down the stairs therefore risking both injury to himself and damage to the machine. In addition, the student who stores his vacuum in the attic makes it susceptible to frequent unauthorized use: "borrowing". Consequently, students who "borrow" the machines will not know much about their operation and they will damage the machines. Storing vacuums in the attic only creates more problems.

In addition to the problem of storage space, the "new" policy places an unnecessary financial burden on students. Students, few of which have part time jobs to supplement their incomes, must now re-adjust their tight budgets to purchase vacuum cleaners. Instead of spending money on

school supplies, books, and other essential items, students will now have to make cuts in their expenditures for those articles in order to accommodate the cost of a vacuum cleaner. The policy strains the wallet, as well as the mental temperament of a student who worries about where she will get the money to purchase a vacuum cleaner.

While a vacuum cleaner is a sound investment for a young couple or anyone "setting up housekeeping", the college student does not need to make such an investment at this time in his life. He will only live in his dorm for a short time before moving on to another room -- more than likely, an uncarpeted one. Admittedly the college student will need a vacuum cleaner later in life, but investing in one now would be comparable to an eight year old investing in a car for his future driving years.

Finally, the new policy threatens the sanitation of the rooms. Dirt, food crumbs, ashes, hair, and other sundry items litter the carpet; each day adds a fresh layer of garbage and potential health hazards. The residue must be cleaned soon or the school will have an emergency situation

with which to deal; infestation of insects and germs attracted

by the sloppy rooms. Many students have stayed this inevitable disaster by making do with broom and carpet sweepers. Far from adequate, however, these utensils barely get the surface dirt, much less the dirt deeply ingrained within the carpet shags. In order to thoroughly clean the rooms, and prevent bugs and ants from nesting in the carpet, the students need the suction power of the vacuum cleaner.

In summary, to avoid all of these problems, Dr. Jones and other appropriate authorities should permit students to use the school vacuum cleaners on their room floors. Rather than prohibiting their use, the school should require the maids' strict supervision of the machines. Students who damage machines would understandably have to pay for their repair. This arrangement would benefit the students and at the same time would not cost the school extra money. At any rate, be it the solution or not, the school must choose another alternative besides the current policy; students cannot be expected to live in filth.