

advance the limits of its lexicon beyond the classical set of performative functions, such as writing the paper, to the condition of being bound to take responsibility for the utterance. These accomplishments are meaningful and serve to reconstruct the container "authorship." As a result we now know who belongs in the box. But from a linguistic perspective, the contents of that box remain jumbled and messy because the revised definition, devoid as it is of philological sensibility, fails to account for the relational components within authorship.

The components are, of course, names: epithets (Miller), toponyms (Atwood), patronyms (Johnson) and sobriquets (Smiley). So once we have decided who is an author, how do we then decide in which order to arrange the names? Criteria need to be set for this unfinished task. In undertaking to complete it, I suggest that the Vancouver group appeal to linguistic principles such as those of onomastics, the study of the origins of names. With onomastic awareness, a meaningful order among authors' names often simply declares itself. Take, for example, Julia Twigg's landmark 1983 paper, "Vegetarianism and the meaning of meat,"² or Dale Speedy's recent contributions to articles on marathon running.^{3,4} There's also D.P. Speech's work on stroke rehabilitation.⁵

Are the observed references between the meanings of the authors' names and the contents of the articles mere coincidence? No. Onomastics tells us that these are historical derivatives, sobriquets. A more convincing example lies in experimentation. The epithet "weir" means a dam across a stream to back it up. When we run a MEDLINE search on the author name "Weir" and the keyword "urology," it's not mere coincidence that we discover Julie Weir has authored in this field.⁶

It's noteworthy that under the current definition of authorship, Weir is listed as author 7. Since many medical journals by convention list only the first

6 authors, the onomastic coherence between this author's name and the substance of the paper is pretty much lost. Were the Vancouver group to incorporate onomastic criteria in the definition of authorship, more than likely Weir would be acknowledged as one of the primary authors, history would be preserved and redundant MEDLINE searches that combine author names with keywords could be avoided.

Of course, the potential of involving a linguist in redefining authorship goes well beyond onomastics. Additional branches of linguistics that could also assist with the task of establishing order among author names include: genetic relationships, etymology and perhaps phonology. (Although I would be cautious about the latter. For example, to establish linguistic coherency between Dr. Achenbach and his article on pain,⁷ one runs the risk of reducing the authors to a set of phonemes and the criteria for authorship to a bunch of idioms. I believe this is what the Vancouver Group was trying to avoid in the first place.)

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[Editor's note:]

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