



MOVEABLE FEAST

Eponymous Bosh

You can tell the people who were dags at school by their attitude to grammar and spelling. Those of us who preferred Art to Sport, who looked forward to English and who were rarely given lines (or strapped if they were boys) are the type of creature who grows up to hate the misplaced apostrophe, the colon standing where the semi-colon should be, and the errant full-stop appearing after quotation marks. While our groovier school-chums were sniffing glue and bonking behind the shelter sheds, the young pedant was re-reading *The Lord of the Rings* for the fifteenth time, or earnestly ploughing his or her way through *How to Decipher Secret Codes* or *1001 Interesting Matchboxes*.

Such persons have few options in life. They are destined to read with pen in hand, a small frown decorating the brow. I suspect that most readers of *ALR*, let alone its writers or editor(s), were unadulterated sucks at school. Let's face it, if you weren't given to unfashionable intellectualism, you'd be reading *Cleaning Kitchens Digest* or *Big Tits Monthly* or something else normal, with bright photos and shorter words.

The ultimate test of whether you were a bogan at school is your attitude towards dictionaries. Those who enjoy looking through dic-

tionaries were the real prize-winning teachers' pets, and I speak as one who has the word 'perspicacious' on her year 10 report card, so I should know. I even like Scrabble—probably because it's the one competitive game I invariably win. I didn't get called 'Butterfingers' or, less politely, 'Fuckwit' while playing Scrabble at Templestowe High, which will be my abiding memory of all officially sanctioned ball-sports. That's before I discovered the trick of avowed near-permanent menstruation as a means of opting out of Sports Days forever.

I purchased a dictionary the other day: *A Dictionary of Eponyms* by Cyril Leslie Beeching (Oxford \$14.95). This is the ideal present for the pedant in your family. It contains all sorts of words which I didn't even suspect were the names of actual people. For example, did you know that the word boycott, as in secondary, refers to Charles Cunningham Boycott (1832-97), a British officer targeted by the Irish Land League "who attempted to shut him off from all social and commercial activities"? I bet you didn't. Or that Jean Nicot introduced tobacco into France, hence nicotine and, I suppose, Gauloise. I have been totally unbearable since I found this useful font of trivia.

How do eponyms relate to the more recent phenomenon of famous people relying on their image in one area to sell goods in another? Elizabeth Taylor's image of worldly glamour sells White Diamonds perfume, for example. Paul Newman's venture into food products is less easy to explain. Perhaps fame in one field is now enough to carry over into any other, as there is nothing about Paul Newman that *immediately* brings salad dressing to mind. Who knows, perhaps the sentence 'Pass the Paul Newman' may remain current long after the actor has passed away, and an eponym will be born.

I received a rather strange example of the Famous Person's book for review the other day: Linda McCartney's *Main Courses* and Linda McCartney's *Light Lunches* (both by

Linda McCartney and Peter Cox, Bloomsbury, \$11.95). Both these small cookbooks are bowdlerised (Thomas Bowdler, 1754-1825) from her UK-bestselling *Home Cooking*. Linda McCartney has always been portrayed as a bit of a homebody in the media, not at all glamorous. Did the idea of Ms McCartney as not quite a real celebrity in her own right contribute to the success of her cookbook? After all, *Home Cooking* hardly reaches out and grabs you with a fatal attraction from shelves overwhelmed with excitingly named books of ethnic cuisine, does it?

Perhaps it was the exact conjunction of wifely, secondary fame with the rubber gloves-clad title *Home Cooking* which spelt success. After all, a well-dressed 'tart' image wouldn't fit in with the sweet domesticity conjured up by the title. One can't imagine Elizabeth Taylor producing a cookbook called *Home Cooking*, any more than a perfume called Chastity. But Linda McCartney, the person who could never quite move in time to the music, whose hair is so overwhelmingly straight...Somehow this makes sense.

The books themselves contain practical and easy vegetarian recipes. Occasionally they are so straightforward as to be almost silly, as in the case of *Vegetarian Sausage Rolls*: "Place a sausage across the centre of each strip of pastry and wrap the pastry around the sausage..." There is actually an illustration of the said sausage rolls in case you didn't understand the concept. These books would be useful for a person who is something of a virgin in culinary terms. They are respectable and non-threatening, decorated by images of Ms McCartney looking suitably modest and pleased, in a quiet sort of way. I am reminded of television advertisements where the mother or wife is congratulated for her choice of margarine, and her long-suffering face creases into a smile. Oh well, if the apron fits, I suppose one should at least make the effort to wear it.

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