



“Let us not give them names; they have had so many other adventures.”

Alain Resnais, *Last Year in Marienbad*.

I remember a badly shot, cheap looking television programme that ran here from the late 70's to the mid 80's, called 'The Littlest Hobo'. The threadbare, though insistently compelling plot involved a highly intelligent German shepherd dog that “wanders Canada and the United States, befriending people in trouble and helping to remedy their situations.” Exhibiting a mild didactic moralism, the dog's interventions would involve ordinary folk who began to err on the wrong side of the law. By managing to provoke a moment of self-realisation in the characters, followed by a reflective form of guilt, the dog-therapist would return the 'Fallen' to a state of goodness that they originally dwelt in: Redemption courtesy of a wandering mut.

To name something or someone is to locate that thing in time, space and history by locating it within the field of language. IT IS AN ACT OF INCISION AND MARKING. A child enters in to the world at large the very moment it realises that it is an 'I'. This 'I' is its first name. Like the reflection in the mirror, the name 'I' signals for the first time, an estrangement between the subject and the representation of the subject. When the Littlest Hobo enters a new town and is temporarily adopted by a host family, it has no name. Each time, though, the host decides that the dog must be given a name (some of these monikers were *Roamer, Crusoe, and Ulysses*.) Problematically, though, whilst the humans find the Littlest Hobo's absence of a name unbearable, the Hobo is agonised by *being baptized*. This agony manifests itself as the dog's hasty exit when the conferring of the new name and the threat of a domestic existence are brought together at the end of each episode. As such it is unclear whether his itinerant existence is apriori or a result of this anxiety towards the Name.

'Toponymy' is the naming of places. When the Hobo enters a new town, his arrival 'names' the place by his involvement with it. Beckett once wrote, “The danger lies in the neatness of identification.” Any adventure requires there to be places that are not yet known, not yet named. For Ulysses, the residue of his adventure is the list of Names of monstrosities that he vanquishes. For the Hobo, his adventure is that *he is a continuously moving place*, a mobile body-place. According to the dictionary, 'Hobo' is defined as a “migratory worker.” This explains why in the title song, the Hobo divulges, “The world is my friend.” IN SUCH A SYSTEM OF MIGRATORY DESIRE, THE APPLICATION OF A NAME UPON SOMETHING ACTS AGAINST THE POTENTIAL OF BEING EVERYWHERE AND ANYWHERE. THE NAME WOULD LOCATE; THE NAME WOULD ACT AS A STOPPAGE. By evading any of the Names he is offered (masks hiding ownership), the cunning dog initiates a circuit that converts his *repression* into an *occupation*.

“Let us not give them names...” For the Hobo, the act of being named is equated with a form of death. In being un-Named, the subject fakes immortality, as a cycle of metempsychoses.² Each TV episode is a new life, newly baptized as “no-one”.

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1. From Kevin McCorry's detailed website:
www.members.tripod.com/kevinmccorrytv/hobo
 2. Metempsychosis : the passing of the soul at death into a
 another body; a cycle of resurrections.

The “swoosh”(unisex) irreverent symbol \$35. Paid to the designer, Carolyn Davidson. Impact: \$300 000 to \$4.8 million (1969-74)

Through the manipulation and continual re-presentation of the unified complex of word and symbol, Nike has instilled their product and its signification upon our individual and collective psyche. Nike is a naming machine.

You're not really buying a piece of leather with some rubber and foam; you're buying a part of modern culture, a part of some personality. You're buying a thought, a way to express yourself. (1)

You buy a name because winners wear nikes

We have the tendency to come in and be a little aggressive, whether that is good or bad its kinda what we do (2)

THIS PROCESS OF BRANDING IS, AS IT SUGGESTS, VIOLENT: AN AGGRESSIVE DEMARCATION OF OUR BODIES WITH A NAME OTHER THAN OUR OWN. You can see it coming at you from across the court, his name, the mark, the legend, brand Jordan. (3)

Air Endorsement, \$unknown

The dissociated name transfers its significance and characteristics to a product. The resultant name-product complex projects a series of meanings and associations on to the owner and to the exterior. We want to be winners so we need winner's shoes. The coalescence of Name-product-owner crafts an articulated, though ambiguous identity through our desire to accrue traits belonging to The Name.

Air Name Transfer: (\$ cost of Air Jordan shoes)

In these shoes you will be like Mike Nike

The complex that is Michael Jordan and Nike, Nike Jordan, presents a singular identity. In some way the displacement of Michael Jordan's name alienates himself from his own identity. The dissemination of the name-complex means that Michael Jordan will always signify Nike, even though Nike will not always signify Michael Jordan.

I don't want to make comparisons to the alcohol or tobacco industries but we want to get people to experience and build a relationship with the product at year one. (4)

After twenty years of branding the name symbol complex, Nike realised that the proliferation of its identity was so widespread that the complex could be disassembled. The swoosh now a heavily loaded insignia appeared on its own; the Name automatically present despite its representational absence.

Air script Name The absent script becomes re-configured as the company's wordmark. A CONJUNCTION BETWEEN A NAME AND A SYMBOL FORMING A WORD THAT MARKS, IT IS INTRUSIVE, AN ITINERANT HOBO ACTIVELY INSCRIBING TERRITORY AND MEMBERSHIP.

Air Teaser London NikeTown \$ bill posters

The name is ingrained so indelibly that it no longer needs to have a physical manifestation in order to be represented. No swoosh, no wordmark; the absent name is implicated through the choice of font, a swollen hieroglyph. The words are of course meaningless.

Success has no past. Just a future.(5)

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1. Tinker Hatfield, ex-architect, *The Guardian*, G2 Jan 19, 2000
 2. Beth Weller, interview Nike HQ Beaverton, Oregon Nov. 1999
 3. Wall inscription Nike Town Beverly Hills Nov. 99
 4. Robert Speltz, interview Nike HQ Beaverton, Oregon Nov. 1999
 5. www.nike.com