JARRY'S UBU:
A STUDY IN MULTIPLE ASSOCIATION

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The class of proper names of fictional characters may be divided into two main categories: actually-occurring given names, and names which have been created solely for the purpose at hand. The study of real names used in fiction reveals that seldom, if ever, is their inclusion the result of an arbitrary choice, but rather that it follows from a principled scheme, thus giving rise to the field of literary onomastics. In the case of names invented for fictional purposes, the foregoing conclusion is almost self-evident, for the act of creating neologisms in the naming of characters presupposes some definite plan which cannot be accommodated by the presently available stock of names. One may therefore approach the study of fictional neologisms with a reasonable assurance that careful investigation will lead to the discovery of meaningful relationships and structures. The following brief discussion is a rudimentary attempt at displaying the structure underlying a certain coined name in a particular literary work, in order to illustrate a few of the numerous processes which may be employed to yield new formations. This particular example was chosen because of the rich potential for analysis which is afforded by a single, well-chosen name, which embodies a seemingly neverending series of symbolic references, associations, and other subjective impressions.

Among fictional writers who made use of neologisms, certainly no author created new words with greater enthusiasm, or with more effectiveness, than did Alfred Jarry, often hailed as the founder of the French *avant-garde* theater. Although his collected works fill many volumes, Jarry is perhaps best noted for the plays of the *Ubu* trilogy, and most specifically for the first play of the trilogy, *Ubu Roi*. This play, representing the paragon of Jarry's love of the absurd, is chaotic from start to finish, and the fantastic stage action is surpassed only by the language of the play itself. Throughout the course of *Ubu Roi*, a great number of neologisms is introduced, following sound linguistic principles, and involving puns, allusions, and plain obscenities, in addition to other more esoteric literary devices. To

complete the overall effect, Jarry provided his characters with colorful and significant names, which form an integral part of the structure of the entire play. While virtually every proper name contained in the play has its own unique and well-defined sphere of significance, a discussion of the complete cast of names would be voluminous; consequently, attention will be restricted to the single most prominent, and also most easily analyzeable, name.

It is fitting that a discussion of names in Jarry's work center around the name of his chief character, Père Ubu himself. The figure of Ubu recurs in much of Jarry's writing, and in his later life Jarry himself became the personification of this absurd figure.[1] As is well known, the prototype, for Père Ubu comes from Jarrys days as a schoolboy in the *lycée* at Rennes.[2] This school boasted a bumbling, incompetent physics teacher named M. Hébert, an object of ridicule for all the students, who was immortalized in various skits and sketches as *le Père Heb* or *le Père Hébé*. Jarry later revived the memory of Père Hébé by transforming him into the unforgettable Père Ubu, archvillain, comic hero, and surrealistic symbol. Ubu thus became an extension of Jarry, and the trademark of his literary endeavors; the visual[3] and vocal sign of *Ubu* became equated with the literary style to which Jarry devoted himself. Of central interest to the present discussion is the transition from the nicknames *Heb* and *Hébé* to *Ubu*. Clearly more is involved here than a simple case of 'changing the names to protect the concerned parties', for by the time Jarry published his *Ubu* plays, the memory of M. Hébert would have faded from the minds of all but a few

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[1] Perhaps the best description of Jarry is offered by Gide in *Les Faux Monnayeurs:* «Une sorte de jocrisse étrange, à la face enfarinée, à l'œil de jais, aux cheveux plaqués comme une calotte de moleskine...». It is at once ironic and appropriate that Gide chose to place Jarry among a cast of otherwise fictitious characters, for Jarry's own life often seemed more fictional than real. In Gide's novel, Jarry, showing Sarah some bits of glass in the bottom of a bottle, speaks not with the voice of an author, but with that of his chief character, Ubu: «Avec ces petits polyèdres tranchants, la gentille demoiselle obtiendra sans effort une perforation de sa gidouille».

[2] For further discussion on the origin of Ubu, see I. Konigsberg, 'New light on Alfred Jarry's juvenalia', *Modern Language Quarterly* 27 (1966) 299–305; Roger Shattuck, *The Banquet Years* (2nd ed., London, 1968), pp. 181–191; a somewhat different view of the subject is offered by Luigi Gozzi 'Di Jarry e del personaggio', *Il Verri* 25 (1967) 14–33.

[3] Jarry was not only a writer but also an artist. He did the illustrations for the original version of *Ubu Roi*, and his curious and unmistakable drawings of Père Ubu have been reproduced in numerous editions of the *Ubu* plays. The image of Ubu obsessed Jarry at other points in his artistic career; for example, one of his paintings, depicting an otherwise typical pastoral scene, contains a small signpost off to one side bearing the name *Ubu*.

of his former students. Moreover, Jarry was not the sort of writer who would have avoided openly ridiculing a known figure, if this had suited his purpose. While the name *Hébé* provided the skeleton around which a new name could be formed, the motivation for the substitution of *Ubu* will have to be sought elsewhere.

Both *Hébé* [ebe] and *Ubu* [yby] are names that make use of phonetic reduplication or repetition of one or more sounds, in this case a vowel, thus following a well-established linguistic pattern in the French language. Morin[4] offers the following definition characterizing such reduplicated or 'echo' words: "echo-words are disyllables in which the first syllable is a partial copy of the second, obtained by truncating all postvocalic consonants". It may be seen that the words *Hébé* and *Ubu* are not true echo-words in the sense of Morin's definition, for the former are disyllables in which the *second* syllable is a copy of the *first*, minus postvocalic consonants. For reasons to be discussed below, however, this process of reduplication yields approximately the same results, and the overall impact on the French listener is that of a true echo-word.

Hébert, the original source for the nicknames, is phonetically [ebɛR], with two non-identical, although similar, vowels. The transition from *Hébert* to *Hébé* could then have been accomplished in one of two ways. First of all, while French exhibits a phonemic contrast between /e/ and /ɛ/ in open syllables, i.e. word-finally or followed word-internally by only a single consonant, in closed syllables only the variant [ɛ] is found in standard French as the realization of both phonemes. As a consequence, the [ɛ] of *Hébert* could be regarded as belonging to the phoneme /e/, and could reappear as [e] once the final *r* had been dropped, particularly if a reduplicated form was the desired result. Another possibility for the substitution of *Hébé* for *Hébert* is that Jarry and friends first started with the apocopated variant *Heb*, another one of their nicknames for M. Hébert, and simply added a duplicate of the first vowel. In any case, the end result, containing an instance of phonetic reduplication, was suited as the name of a nonsense-figure, either living or fictional.

The area of greatest interest centers around the transition from *Hébé* to *Ubu*, for herein lies the key to the analysis of Jarry's alter ego. As will become readily apparent, the name *Ubu* can be studied from a number of different perspectives, all contributing to the multifaceted structure by means of which this name is integrated into Jarry's writings. The discussion will therefore commence with the most obvious and uncontroversial aspects of the name, and proceed to more speculative areas.

[4] Yves Ch. Morin, 'The phonology of echo-words in French', *Language* 48 (1972) 97–108.

The immediate point to be recognized is that, although sharing an overt similarity with other French words, the name *Ubu* will be judged by most French speakers as totally unacceptable as a proper name, except perhaps as a gross caricature. The apparent reasons for this unsuitability are many, and range from purely linguistic aspects to more far-reaching threads of allusion and association. Beginning therefore, with the concrete linguistic properties of the name *Ubu*, we may seek to discover the phonological factors which guarantee that the name will only be accepted within the context of a satire or burlesque. Taking a cue from the highly enlightening study by Paolo Valesio,[5] one may divide the criteria of phonological admissibility into at least two strata: a level of intersegmental phonotactics, and a level of morphological or lexical structure. From the standpoint of phonotactics, the word *Ubu*, while perhaps slightly unusual, is completely consistent with the phonological system of French. The vowel *u* is permitted both word-initially and word-finally, the combination *bu* is permitted in final position, *ub* appears word-initially in a few words, and even the entire combination *ubu*, although rare, makes its appearance from time to time, particularly in proper names (e.g. *Dubufe, Dubuque*). However, although no phonotactic rules *per se* have been violated, it may be seen that the name *Ubu* violates the p r o b a b i l i t i e s associated with these rules, to a sufficient degree as to render the name highly unusual. In communication theory,[6] the quantity of information contained in a message is, from the standpoint of the receiver, inversely proportional to the probability assigned by the listener to the occurrence of this particular message. Thus, for example, if Jarry had named his character *Charles, Henri, Jean-Paul*, etc., the information content of the name would not exceed that of a mere label identifying the individual; on the other hand, the name *Ubu*, due to its extremely low probability of occurrence, carries a high information content, and immediately, alerts the listener to the possibility of strange things to come.

Both the combinations *ub* and *bu* are relatively common in French, and are, taken by themselves, unworthy of further notice. However, in the context of the name *Ubu*, the rôle played by these combinations is of paramount importance. Word-initially, *ub-* is quite rare, being found only in latinized words such as *ubéreux, ubiquité*, and other derivatives of Latin *ubi*. In addition, we may cite a few cases of the homophonous *Hub-*, found

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[5] Paolo Valesio, 'Levels of phonological admissibility', *Linguistics* 106 (1973) 28–53.

[6] For a good survey of communication theory as applied to natural languages, see Petr Beckmann, *The Structure of Language: a New Approach* (Bounder, Colorado: Golem Press, 1972), esp. chap. 2.

in such proper names as *Hubert*. Thus, the relative scarcity of the word-initial configuration *ub-* provides the first clue that the word *Ubu* is a highly unlikely name.

Word-final *-bu* is somewhat more common than is *ub-* in initial position, being found in a number of frequently-occurring words. Moving the discussion up to the level of morphology, it will be noted that, in addition to certain preterite forms, word-final *u* most frequently occurs in the past participle of verbs in *-oir(e)*. This fact in turn, gives the word *Ubu* the overt appearance of a verbal participle, perhaps of the hypothetical verb **uboir*. Moreover, in view of the statistical prominence of *bu* as the past participle of *boire*, it is possible, from a phonetic standpoint, to consider the name *Ubu* as a conjugated form of *avoir bu*, by noting the obvious fact that the combination [yby] is homophonous to *eus bu, eut bu*, and *eût bu*, all variants on the meaning 'had drunk'. This possibility exemplifies the literary device which Freud describes in *Wit and its Relation to the Unconscious*:[7] "The technique of the witticism lies in the fact that one and the same word — the name — is used in a twofold application, once as a whole and once divided into its syllables like a charade". The potential allusion to drinking is particularly significant, since Père Ubu is a notorious drunkard, and large portions of the play are devoted to his drunken ravings. In this connection, a more subtle connotation arises from the French expression *soûl comme un Polonais* 'as drunk as a Pole', engendered by the reputation of Slavic people as being heavy drinkers. In Jarry's play, Ubu is not only a drunkard but also a Pole, thus adding to the phonetic aspect of the name's impact on a French audience, and increasing the comic effect of the play. In fact, the action of the play centers around Ubu's attempts to usurp the crown of Poland, and all the scenes are set in that country. Remaining within the phonetic dimension, another possible, although less likely, homonym is one pronunciation of the word *but*, meaning 'goal' or 'objective'. Throughout the *Ubu* plays, Père Ubu is always relentlessly pursuing a (generally ridiculous) objective, to the complete exclusion of considerations of common sense, and hence the concept of *but* may provide an additional reinforcement for the name. Thus, the overt resemblance of *Ubu* to a participial form adds to the low degree of probability that such a word could seriously function as a proper name, and enhances the purely phonetic impact of the name. Another morphological consideration in this regard is the fact that the combination *ubu*, found almost exclusively in proper names, generally occurs in combination with the definite article contraction *du*; consequently, the lack of a *d* in the

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[7] Citation from *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, translated and edited by A. A. Brill (New York: The Modern Library, 1938), p. 647.

name *Ubu* further increases the unlikelihood of finding the combination *ubu* in isolation.

The greatest area of significance concerns the occurrence of the entire configuration *ubu*, which, as noted above, is extremely rare, being found only in a handful of forms. The extreme unlikelihood of encountering this combination further adds to the information content of the name, and serves as an additional attestation of Jarry's skill in linguistic creation. However, by far the greatest source of the verbal impact caused by the name *Ubu* resides in its status as a reduplicated or echo-word. As noted by Morin,[8] "The use of most echo-words is associated with non-formal situations, or with a non-noble, non-literary style". As a two-syllable reduplicated form, it is practically impossible to regard the word *Ubu* as anything other than a nonsense item, all the more so in view of the recipient of the name. Such reduplicated words are generally found in baby talk and highly coloquial situations, and almost never in a serious context; it goes without saying that no king would be named, or referred to, by such a word. Furthermore, reduplication involving the vowel *u* is comparatively rare, and the words that do exhibit this configuration are generally of a scatological or obscene nature,[9] with the noteworthy exception of *ululer* 'to hoot', an onomatopoeic form. From these observations alone it may be seen that Jarry succeeded in creating a pseudo-French word, completely consistent with the phonotactics of the language, which, by means of its actual phonetic configuration, is immediately recognized as a ridiculous and grotesque caricature of a proper name. It is this minimal degree of phonotactic probability which is largely responsible for the unique status of the name *Ubu*, and which renders translation of this name into other languages virtually impossible.[10]

In addition to cases of direct homonymy, it is possible to associate the name *Ubu* with other words through relationships of rhyme or general phonetic shape.[11] Associations of this kind are generally not as strong as

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[8] Morin, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 104–107, lists such reduplicated forms as *cucul* and *tutu*, with meanings or connotations which place them well within the scope of Jarry's works.

[10] Most translations, of course, have preserved the name intact, although most of the impact of the name is lost on non-French readers. One English translation, however, attempted the name *King Turd*, a highly unsuccesful rendition for obvious reasons. While perhaps colorful in English, this translation does a great injustice to the spirit of the original, where the novelty lies in the creation of a non-existant, but ridiculous-sounding, name.

[11] There is an obvious parallel here with the Cockney rhyming slang, in which a word is suggested by means of another word which rhymes with it; thus, for example, *apples and pears* means 'stairs', *cocks and 'ens* means 'tens', *tit fer a tat*

cases involving simple homonymy, and often depend more upon the imagination and inventiveness of the reader. Phonetic modifications or distortions do frequently occur, however, in the euphemistic suggestion of vulgar, obscene, or otherwise objectionable words. For example, French replaced *bougre* by *bigre*, during a time period in which the former word was considered undesirable. English exhibits many such modified forms, including *heck* for *hell*, *darn* for *damn*, *shoot* for *shit*, *cripes* for *Christ*, etc. Spanish is richly endowed with such phonetically-deformed euphemisms.[12] For example, vulgar *carajo* is frequently replaced by such variants as *caracho, caray, carijo, barajo, pispajo,* and simply *ajo,* while *pendejo* is replaced by *pen, pendolo, pendango,* etc. In view of the overall methodology employed by Jarry, therefore, it is unlikely that potential phonetic associations of *Ubu* to other French words are purely fortuitous, for Jarry's apparent objective was to conjure up as many images as possible within the space of a relatively short text. Considering the tone of *Ubu Roi,* as well as the vocabulary utilized throughout the play, it is possible to associate *Ubu* with at least the following words, all of which occur throughout the *Ubu* plays: *cul, foutu, cocu.*[13]

Returning now to the purely phonetic properties of the name *Ubu,* we may leave the level of phonological admissibility and study some of the more impressionistic and subjective aspects of the name. Of interest here are the two occurrences, in the name *Ubu,* of the high front-rounded vowel [y]. It is at this point that the discussion treads on the thinnest ice, for it is necessary to broach the difficult and controversial subject of phonetic sym-

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(often shortened to *titfer*) refers to 'hat', and so forth. The equivalence in meaning of such rhyme-forms is indirectly noted in an example sentence by the philosopher H. P. Grice, 'Meaning', *Philosophical Review* 66 (1957) 377–388 [p. 377]: 'That remark "Smith couldn't get on without his trouble and strife" means that Smith found his wife indispensable'. Here *trouble and strife* is semantically equivalent to *wife.* For further remarks on Cockney rhyming slang, see Sydney T. Kendall, *Up the Frog* (London, Wolfe) and Willard P. Espy, *The Game of Words* (New York: Grosset & Dunlop, 1972), pp. 79–81.

[12] See, for example, Charles E. Kany, *American Spanish Euphemisms* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960).

[13] In Jarry's well-known poem "Tatane", we find the following stanza: "Sur le rivage/le Père Ubu/à la sauvage/montre son dû", with the obvious rhyme allusion to *cul* (cf. the popular euphemism *tu*) and possibly other words. In addition, *dû,* being the past participle of *devoir* 'to ought to' or 'to owe', could refer to Père Ubu's boundless greed and selfishness, thus possessing significance in its own right. Père Ubu's preoccupation with material wealth is hinted at by the word *dû,* a preoccupation which results in Ubu's sacking Poland and putting all the nobles to death. In the sense of 'ought to' *dû* could conceivably be an ironic reference to Ubu's overall behavior, which is of course in violation of all social norms.

bolism. Given the literally embryonic state of research into the empirical correlates of so-called phonetic symbolism, all considerations at this time must be regarded as highly tentative, and merely suggestive of possible areas of significance. It is, however, interesting to observe the degree of convergence which may, in many instances, be noted between remarks based on phonetic symbolism and data derived from other sources. In trying to collect data regarding phonetic symbolism, the easiest trap to fall into is that of circularity; i.e., attempting to place a symbolic value on a sound based on words containing this sound whose meanings are consonant with the value or connotation in question. Thus, for example, the French stylistician Marcel Cressot[14] notes that „Considéré isolément, un son n'a d'expressivité évidente que dans la mesure où il rappelle un bruit en rapport avec la chose évoquée".

Similarly, during a discussion of phonetic symbolism, the linguist and critic Charles Bally[15] declared himself in favor of a theory which admitted the possibility of certain sounds' f a v o r i n g phonetic symbolism in the presence of appropriate circumstances, but strongly enjoined against any absolute claims regarding phonetic symbolism. To illustrate his point, Bally noted that many Frenchmen believe that the verb *tinter* 'to ring' is phonetically symbolic of the ringing of bells, but find no such symbolic value in the completely homophonous *teinter* 'to dye'. Despite such warnings, however, many of the most detailed and well-researched studies of phonetic symbolism have foundered on precisely this point.[16] On the other hand, there have been experimental studies making use of nonsense items or similar techniques, in which definite tendencies indicative of phonetic symbolism have been established.[17] In any event, while no true consensus of opinion may be presented at this time, it is possible to consider various opinions, keeping in mind of course the rôle of circularity in any such undertaking.

Owing to the relative scarcity of the vowel [y], few data are available regarding the symbolic potential of this vowel. It is possible, however, to

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[14] Marcel Cressot, *Le Style et ses Techniques* (Paris, 1959), p. 19.

[15] Charles Bally, *Traité de Stylistique Française* (3rd. ed., Paris, 1951), pp. 54—5.

[16] A noteworthy example is the paper of Hans Marchand, 'Phonetic symbolism in English word-formation', *Indogermanische Forschungen* 64 (1959) 146—68; 256—77.

[17] See, for example, the following papers and the references given therein: E. Sapir, 'A study in phonetic symbolism', *J. of Exp. Psych.* 12 (1929) 225—239; R. C. Johnson, 'Magnitude symbolism of English words', *J. of Verb. Learn. & Verb. Beh.* 6 (1967) 508—511; J. H. Weiss, 'Phonetic symbolism and perception of connotative meaning', *J.V.L.V.B.* 7 (1968) 574—576; G. Gebels, 'An investigation of phonetic symbolism in different cultures', *J.V.L.V.B.* 8 (1969) 310—311.

consider data relating to high front unrounded vowels, as well as to back rounded vowels, from which a composite picture may be obtained. Generally speaking, the vowel [i] has been considered to connote, in many instances, smallness and insignificance, while [u] conveys ideas of largeness, rotundity, and general heaviness. The eminent British neurologist Macdonald Critchley, while discussing phonetic symbolism,[18] cites Paget as stating that [u] connotes "something enclosed, full, tubular or elongated" (e.g. *room, tube, loop*), while [i] refers to "things high, forward placed or little" (*steeple, teeny, peak*). Hans Marchand, in the article cited above (fn. 16), feels that "/i/ is suggestive of the subjectively, emotionally small", while Otto Jespersen[19] also felt that [i] may refer to something "small, weak, insignificant, or on the other hand, refined or dainty". The literature on phonetic symbolism is too large to be cited in its entirety,[20] but the general opinions generally converge in the same directions. This fact suggests that there is a non-fortuitous basis for such feelings about phonetic symbolism, although the exact origin of the observable correlations is not yet known. Combining those convergent opinions which may be gathered at this time suggests that any potential symbolic value that [y] might have would lie along the lines of connoting a simultaneous mixture of insignificance or weakness and rotundity, heaviness, and great size. It can be seen that, while these results may still be quite coincidental, the ensuing description is admirably suited to the character of Père Ubu. Ubu is portrayed as monstrously fat and ugly; in *Ubu Cocu*, the second play of the trilogy, he describes himself as follows: "Plus parfait que le cylindre, moins parfait que la sphère, du tonneau radie le corps hyperphysique. Nous, son isomorphe, sommes beau". While large in stature, however, Ubu is small in spirit, acting in a mean, cowardly and debasing fashion throughout the trilogy of plays. In this sense, then, it may be possible to

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[18] Macdonald Critchley, *Aphasiology and Other Aspects of Language* (London, 1970), p. 101.

[19] Otto Jespersen, *Language, its Nature, Development, and Origin* (London, 1922), pp. 402–403.

[20] A number of references are given by Fred C. Robinson, 'Appropriate naming in English literature', *Names* 20 (1972) 131–137. In addition, one may consult the following works: Roman Jakobson, *Child Language, Aphasia and Phonological Universals* (The Hague, 1968), pp. 73–84; Charles Hockett, *A Course in Modern Linguistics* (New York, 1958), pp. 295–296; Seymour Chatman, 'Linguistics, poetics, and interpretation: the phonemic dimension', *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 43 (1957) 248–256; 'Comparing metrical style', in *Style in Language*, ed. T. A. Sebeok (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), pp. 149–172 [p. 151]; Iván Fónagy, *Die Metaphern in der Phonetik* (translated from the Hungarian, The Hague, 1963), reviewed by M. Mayrhofer in *Die Sprache* 10 (1964) 117f.; Luis Michelena, 'Color y sonido en la lengua', *Revista Española de Lingüística* 2 (1972) 83–102.

link Jarry's characterization of Père Ubu with the potential symbolic value of the vowel [y].

Another aspect of the symbolic potential of French *u* concerns the manner in which this vowel is produced, namely with protruding rounded lips and the tongue in a far-forward position. Prolongued for a long enough period of time, this vocal gesture becomes an almost absurd parody of speech, thus the two occurrences of this vowel in the name *Ubu* may conceivably contribute to the ridiculous connotations which the name exhibits. In order to view the potential impact of such a sound on French listeners, it is instructive to consider the following passage from Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (Act 2, scene 4), where M. Jourdain is receiving a 'spelling lesson' from the Maître de Philosophie:

M. DE PHIL: La voix U se forme en rapprochant les dents sans les joindre entièrement, et allongeant les deux lèvres en dehors, les approchant aussi l'une de l'autre sans les joindre tout à fait: U.

M. JOURDAIN: Il n'y a rien de plus véritable: U.

M. DE PHIL: Vos deux lèvres s'allongent comme si vous faisiez la moue: d'où vient que si vous la voulez faire à quelqu'un, et vous moquer de lui, vous ne sauriez lui dire que: U.

The present writer is reminded of a picture once seen in a university phonetics laboratory, showing an ape grimacing with lips protruding. The students had attatched the following caption: „To make the French *u*, say an *i*, and then round your lips, like this . . ."

As another possibility for phonetic symbolism, it may be noted that the vocal gesture required to produce an [y] is nearly identical to that made when blowing across the mouth of a bottle to produce a resonance, and the vowel [y] in isolation, especially when prolongued, resembles in many ways the sound produced by blowing across small bottles. Acoustically, this appears to follow, at least in part, from the formant structures of the sounds in question. The vowel [i] is characterized by a low first formant, a high second formant, and a much higher third formant, while [u] exhibits a low first formant and a relatively low second formant, with a considerably higher third formant. In the case of the vowel [y], however, the second and third formants are very close together, and in a position intermediate between the second formant of [i] and that of [u], thus approximating the tone produced by a cavity resonator such as a bottle.[21] In the

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[21] See, for example, P. Delattre, 'The physiological interpretation of sound spectrograms', *PMLA* 66 (1951) 864—875; 'Un triangle acoustique des voyelles orales du français', *French Review* 21 (1948) 477—488; S. Belasco, 'The psychoacoustic interpretation of vowel color preferences in French rime', *Phonetica* 3 (1959) 167—182; for German see H. P. Jorgensen in *Phonetica* 19 (1969) 217—245.

name *Ubu*, the labial consonant *b*, occurring between the two vowels, close-
ly resembles the ejective sound generally produced when blowing across
a bottle, thereby enhancing the possibility of this line of approach. While
it is true this sort of phonetic symbolism appears rather far-fetched, it
should be remembered that much of phonetic symbolism in general prob-
ably originated from onomatopoeia and imitation. In view of Père Ubu's
great propensity toward drinking, as well as his oftentimes playful and
reckless attitude, one should not totally rule out the possibility of a phone-
tic association, perhaps on a subconscious level, of the sort suggested above.

While on the subject of phonetic symbolism, it is also interesting to con-
sider the word *gidouille*, perhaps Jarry's most successful neologism, the
word that refers to the enormous expanse of Père Ubu's stomach. Phoneti-
cally [židuj], the word *gidouille* begins with a palato-alveolar fricative
plus front high vowel [i], then rapidly transfers to the back rounded vowel
[u], followed by the off-glide [j]. In terms of phonetic symbolism, this
configuration may be felt to trace the outline of Ubu's pearlike figure,
from the small head (symbolized by the [i]) to the large stomach (suggest-
ed by the vowel [u]), and finally to the negligible remainder (represented
by the glide [j]). While such an interpretation is entirely possible, and
in fact quite plausible, a much more direct source of associations for the
word *gidouille* lies in potential rhyme-associations with other French words
ending in *-ouille*. While all French words ending in *-ouille* (from Latin
-uculam) are potential candidates, there are several words whose proba-
bility of association is significantly higher, and hence may be considered
together with Jarry's creation. The most obvious contender is *Gribouille*,
the French word for a fat and stupid character quite like the character of
Ubu, and a word which has evolved a variety of derivative forms. Most
relevant among such expressions is *une politique de Gribouille*, which quite
appropriately describes Père Ubu's reign as king of Poland. *Grenouille*
'frog' may, because of the shape and behavior of that animal, perhaps be
included among the list of associations, as may *gargouille* 'gargoyle'. In
view of Jarry's overall style, another probable association is with the vul-
gar *couille(s)* 'testicle(s)'. Another possibility is *andouille*, literally 'chitter-
ling', and frequently used as a pejorative reference to a stupid or offensive
person. One may also include *quenouille* 'distaff used in olden times for

For some criticisms of the formant theory of vowels, see F.-W. Oeker, ‚Kritisches
zur Formenttheorie der Vokale‘, *Phonetica* 10 (1963) 22—33. In his book *Acoustic
Phonetics* (*Language* monograph no 23, 1948), p. 95, Martin Joos speculates that
part of the distinctive resonance of the front-rounded vowels is caused by a
weakening of the second formant, perhaps due to the additional filtering action
exercised by the rounded lips.

spinning'. As in English (e.g. 'on the distaff side'), French *quenouille* came to be associated with the work of women, and then to the presence of women in general. This led to the expression *tomber en quenouille* 'to fall under the domination of a woman', generally said of a royal succession, but also found in reference to other affairs. This expression is singularly appropriate in the case of *Ubu Roi*, for despite his blustering and rampaging, Père Ubu is dominated by his guileful wife, Mère Ubu, who knows how to manipulate her husband when the occasion demands.

As a final note on the name *Ubu*, one may suggest the symbolic potential of the written letter *u*, round but not complete.[22] An association of this sort would of necessity be secondary in nature, available only to people reading the play or material associated with it. However, since Jarry aimed for the fullest possible impact of the play on his audience, any symbolic value inherent in the written word, whether or not intended by the author, would serve to enhance the comic effect which the name was designed to produce.

The discussion of the various potential associations exhibited by the name *Ubu* could be prolongued indefinitely, but the general directions seem clear enough from the examples already given. To denote the protagonist of his writings, Jarry created a name of his own invention, formed on the basis of the interlocking action of several literary devices, and arrived at a form which, in one way or another, fitted into the satirical theme of his work, a name which, while obeying the phonotactics of the French language, could never be accepted as a serious name by a French audience.[23] Among the purely linguistic processes employed by Jarry may be noted his adroit use of the potential for phonetic symbolism and his manipulation of French phonotactics in order to achieve the desired poetic effect. More interesting, however, is the subtle net of phonological associations which suggest the theme of the play by suggesting other words intimately connected with the theme. As noted, for example, by the philoso-

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[22] An excellent study of the symbolic potential of written letters is offered in the essay by Yakov Malkiel, 'Secondary uses of letters in language', in the author's *Essays on Linguistic Themes* (Berkeley, 1968), pp. 357–398. On p. 362, Malkiel discusses the use of written letters in Rimbaud's "Voyelles", while on pp. 385–9 the effect of the general shape of letters is discussed.

[23] Just as an example, in the *Canadian Magazine* supplement to the *Edmonton Journal* of March 24, 1973, Maggie Grant [p. 21] listed some actually occurring English proper names which provoke similar reactions among English listeners. Among the surnames listed are *Glimp, Spoo, Tinkle, Kickback, Shrubsole*, and *Threewit*, while first names included *Krungy, Hideo, Exalton* and *Nesery*. To this list can surely be added further examples from each reader's personal experience, as evidenced by the frequent appearance of such lists in the newsletter of the American Name Society.

pher Paul Ziff:[24] "The use of an expression is determined by many factors, many of which have nothing (or nothing directly) to do with its meaning: acoustic shape is one such factor, length another". This characteristic of semantic expression was utilized by Jarry, not only in the case of *Ubu*, but whenever it was necessary to invent character names.

[24] Paul Ziff, 'On H. P. Grice's account of meaning' *Analysis* 27 (1967) 1—8 [p. 8].