

ANALYSIS OF MALE BOXERS' NICKNAMES

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Abstract. *Nicknaming of individual athletes and sports teams is a multifaceted phenomenon the analysis of which reveals numerous reasons for choosing a particular name or nickname. The practice of nicknaming has become so embedded in the concept of sport that it requires exceptional attention by those who create these labels. The goal of this research was to analyse the semantic structure of boxers' nicknames, i.e. the possible principles of their formation. To realize the research aims 378 male boxers' nicknames, predominantly in the English language, were collected. The nicknames were allocated to semantic categories according to the content area or areas they referred to. Counts and percentages were calculated for the nicknames in each subsample created with regard to the number of semantic categories used to create a boxer's nickname and for the group of nicknames allocated to the miscellaneous group. Counts were calculated for all groups within each subsample.*

Key words: *hero, association, figurative language, figures of speech*

1. INTRODUCTION

Are nicknames only arbitrary formations of little account or are they coinages contrived meticulously and with a lot of prowess? Skipper (1989, 103) alleges that nicknames “often serve as a miniature character sketch”. When discussing nicknames in baseball, Gmelch (2006, 129) elucidates that sobriquets frequently communicate something about the players using them, e.g. a player's appearance, personality, unusual mannerisms, performance, weaknesses, geographical origin, etc. Abel and Kruger (2006, 243) claim that nicknames confer a player's identity and mirror the status of stardom. Gould (2003, 112, as cited in Abel and Kruger 2006, 244) asserts that nicknames reflect a connection among players participating in the same activity, and Skipper (1992) posits that nicknames help the public bond with players and vice versa. Nicknames are also believed to “convey potent meanings” (Fortado 1998, 13). As stated by Adams (2009, 81), in a particular social group nicknames are associated with power.

Nicknames are usually given to people (Mehravian and Piercy 2001), e.g. people of certain professions like teachers (Crozier 2010) and politicians (Felecan and Felecan 2016; Lieberson and Kenny 2007); students in schools (Starks Leech, and Willoughby 2012); people participating in Internet chat rooms (Szymański 2013); people living in certain places (Elezović 1991). They are further given to families (cf. Vidović 2010; Vrcić-Mataija and

Grahovac-Pražić 2006), places (Shumsky 2016), etc. As for sports, nicknames are given to athletes (cf. Abel and Kruger 2006; Awad 2012; Babane and Chauke 2015; Kennedy and Zamuner 2006; Skipper 1989, 1992), sports teams (Lawson and Phillips 1985; Ndimande-Hlongwa 2010), coaches (Skipper 1989), even the lines (three forward positions) on a skating rink (e.g. hockey lines or numberlines – Chernoff 2017). According to Ndimande-Hlongwa (2010, 90), it is the setting in which communication takes place that determines the usage of a nickname.

Mambwe and Da Costa's (2015, 54) statements that "nicknaming as a practice is part and parcel of sports" and that such a "practice is as old as sports are" justify the claim that nicknames of athletes or sports teams are immanent to language for specific purposes. A good example of such evidence for the claim that nicknaming is a very old practice in the domain of sports is the nickname by which one of the most famous Greek philosophers has become and has remained known since ancient time – that of Plato. What is less known of him is that he was also a wrestler (Isidori 2015, 101) who participated in the Isthmian Games (Penfield 1961, 173). Plato's real name was Aristocles (Penfield 1961, 173) and it was his wrestling coach who coined the nickname *Plato* (Skipper 1989, 103), which referred to Plato's muscular physique (Wilton 1965, 65). According to Wilton, it was the historians who later claimed that Plato's nickname was given to him due to his broad shoulders (Fajardo et al. 2009, 444; Isidori et al. 2016, 5) (from Greek *platys* meaning *flat* or *broad*).

As for sports teams, they represent groups of people who share the same goals, practices and possible expectations, so that consequently they may be said to develop their own culture. The devise of a sports team culture draws on three basic aspects – behaviour, values and beliefs as well as on assumptions, and the aspect of behaviour entails a set of facets like written and spoken language, jargon, heroes, rites, etc. (Lussier and Kimball 2014, 171-172). In other words, a type of specialized language lies at the very core of a sports team's culture.

1.1. The phenomenology of nicknaming in sports

Nicknaming of individual athletes and sports teams is a multifaceted phenomenon the analysis of which reveals numerous reasons for choosing a particular sobriquet. History and research have shown that oftentimes great athletes are regarded as heroes (cf. Peetz, Parks, and Spencer 2004, 142; Saint Sing 2003; Segrave 1993). Consequently, sporting heroes – be it members of a sports team or individual athletes – are often perceived as characters traditionally expected to embody (desirable) values and epitomize particular virtues (mostly masculine), although this is not always the case (Lines 2001, 286). Today's image of a sporting hero, although attempting to address the positive images as regards style, performance, excellence, skills, etc. (Lines 2011, 289) and to promote bravery and fair play is contrasted with the perception of a 'damaged' sporting hero as the result of an athlete's drug abuse, rule breaking (Lines 2001, 291), laddishness, wife beating, excessive drinking, etc. (Lines 2001, 286). In this latter case, i.e. the case of a 'damaged' hero, an athlete may be understood as the conceptualization of a recusant, destructive, i.e. pernicious anti-hero.

The practice of nicknaming has become so embedded in the concept of sport that it requires exceptional attention by those who create these labels. Thus, Kennedy and Zamuner (2006, 387) claim that nicknames of athletes are both a cultural and a linguistic phenomenon. Names of sports teams as well as nicknames of individual athletes fit well

into the concept of the sporting hero/anti-hero, i.e. the pernicious hero identity construction. According to Leslie and Skipper (1990), one characteristic of nicknames is that they are semantically transparent, which means that they reflect certain personal traits (de Klerk and Bosch 1996) or physical attributes (Leslie and Skipper 1990) of the people who bear them. Whether aimed at expressing certain features, at self-promotion or sensationalization, nicknames “carry important pragmatic meanings which colour and even shape the character of human interaction” (Wierzbicka 1992, 302).

1.2. Past research into nicknames of athletes

Analyses of nicknames in sports have been done from various viewpoints ranging from racial aspects of nicknames and mascots (Davis 1993; Heacox 2012; LaRocque, Freng, and Willis-Esqueda 2011; Williams 2007), to an analysis of nicknames in particular sports, e.g. football (soccer) (Awad 2012; Babane and Chauke 2015), baseball (Abel and Kruger 2006; Skipper 1984), American football (Skipper 1989), to a comparison of nicknames in various sports (cf. Kennedy and Zamuner 2006), etc. Kennedy and Zamuner (2006) analysed nicknames of professional hockey and baseball players, and divided them into Homeric or phrasal nicknames on the one hand, and hypocoristic nicknames on the other. Lawson and Philipps (1985) divided North American college and university sports team nicknames into several groups: human world, animal world, mythical and legendary including supernatural and imaginary, natural phenomena, weapons and ammunition, institutional names, created names, colours, inanimate objects, miscellaneous, and their multiple subgroups. Abel and Kruger (2006) complemented the divisions of nicknames proposed by Skipper (1989) and Abel (2004) – these divisions allocating nicknames to groups formed by the physical appearance of people (e.g. their body height, hair colour), their ability, demeanour, geographical or ethnic origin, and phonetic variation – and suggested their grouping according to internal formations stemming from rhyme, phonetic similarity and alliteration (246). Panić Kavgić discussed the nicknames of male (2016) and female (2017) tennis players at various levels of linguistic analysis, e.g. their structure and content features. On the subject of nicknames in boxing, Abel (2009) analysed a sample of female boxers' sobriquets, and allocated them into one of five categories: biographical, combativeness, femininity, miscellaneous and indeterminate, with further subdivisions in the first three categories.

As for past research into the nicknames of athletes, to the best knowledge of the authors of this paper, none has addressed the nicknames of male boxers in the way done in our research. Ultimately, the goal of this research was to analyse the semantic structure of male boxers' nicknames, i.e. the possible principles of their formation.

2. METHODS

To realize the research aims 378 male boxers' nicknames, predominantly in the English language, were collected. Juan Manuel Marquez's nickname *Dinamita* is an example of a nickname in the Spanish language, and some nicknames were translations into English from other languages, e.g. Denis Lebedev's sobriquet *The White Swan* is the translation of his nickname in Russian – *Belyy Lebed*. The nicknames were collected from numerous web sites providing lists of boxers' nicknames and those containing texts about boxers who excelled in this combat sport. However, the principle applied in comprising the sample was not *one boxer – one nickname*. Rather, it was the nicknames that were in the focus of our

analysis, and since some boxers had more than one nickname, there were cases when the same boxer's name appeared more than once in one or more than one nickname category. The nicknames were allocated to semantic categories according to the content area or areas they referred to. Nickname categories in this research were formed both by partially following and combining the methodologies of Lawson and Phillips (1985), Skipper (1989), Abel and Kruger (2006), Kennedy and Zamuner (2006), as well as Abel (2009) on the one hand, and by creating our original categories (e.g., boxing style, hyperbolic personality traits, etc.) on the other. Phonetic variations *per se* do not constitute a semantic category. Still, in our research we opted for regarding them as a separate group of nicknames due to their association-based implications that induce various semantic representations. In other words, we have considered phonetic variations in terms of phonetic associations (cf. Abel 2004, 260).

Since it is not always easy to trace the origin of a nickname (Potter 2007, 450) and since there were nicknames which could have been allocated to more than one category, their inclusion into a particular content area group was arbitrary. This arbitrariness of reasoning behind allocating a sobriquet to one of the semantic groups was also accentuated by Abel (2009, 143). Counts and percentages were calculated for the nicknames in each subsample created with regard to the number of semantic categories used to create a boxer's nickname and for the group of nicknames allocated to the miscellaneous group. Counts were calculated for all groups within each subsample.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The critical construct that has proven to be the common thread of a significant number of nicknames analysed in this paper was the one of the hero/anti-hero dichotomy. As pointed out by Goethals and Allison (2012, 186), *hero* literally means *a protector* or *a defender*. Such conceptualization implies a positive discernment in our minds. This is evidenced in the listing of a hero's features compiled by Goethals and Allison (2012, 194) which yielded eight attribute clusters: caring (compassionate, empathetic, kind), charismatic (dedicated, eloquent, passionate), inspiring (admirable, amazing, great, inspirational), reliable (loyal, true), resilient (accomplished, determined, persevering), selfless (altruistic, honest, humble, moral), smart (intelligent, wise) and strong (courageous, dominating, gallant, leader). In other words, the hero constituent of the hero/anti-hero nickname partition is the one that complies with the notion of a classical hero who aims at positive goals by means of his/her virtue. Consequently, nicknames such as *The Bible of Boxing* (Wilfred Benitez), *The Truth* (Carl Williams), *Sugar* (Ray Robinson) and all nicknames containing the signifier denoting noblemen and gentlemen focus on positive notions.

However, our analysis has shown that many of the boxers' nicknames prioritized features with implications completely opposite to those of a hero, namely, such associations that accentuate destruction and annihilation as the ways to achieve victory in a boxing match. This negative notion is what continues to challenge the inclusion of boxing into the set of desirable sports.

Nowadays the phenomenology of boxing splits into two juxtaposed facets. The first one is comprised of people who consider boxing "a work of art in the choreographed performance of ducking, feinting, footwork, and the rhythmic staccato of punches" (Gems 2014, xi). Thus boxing is frequently referred to as the *sweet science*. The term was popularized on a broad scale by A.J. Liebling's book *The Sweet Science* published in

1956 in which he attributed the creation of the phrase *a sweet science of bruising* to Pierce Egan, an English sportswriter who used it for the first time in one of his *Boxiana* articles published in 1824. The reasoning behind calling boxing a *sweet science of bruising* lies in perceiving boxers as tough and methodological athletes (boxing.isport.com 2017). Still, such conceptualization is by many fathomed as innately negative and undesirable, and is claimed to remain on the level of locution. The second one addresses the ethical aspect of violence and brutality in boxing and the reflections it has on culture on a broader scale (cf. Rutter 2007). Although attempts to ban boxing from official competitions are permanent (Gems 2014, xiv), the fact remains that it is still an Olympic sport, ever since its introduction to the 1904 Summer Olympics held in St. Louis (USA). Moreover, women's boxing was introduced to the programme of the Summer Olympic Games held in London in 2012.

The anti-hero impression becomes even more apparent when contrasted to the research by Pearson (1991, 1997). Pearson (1991) identified 12 stages in life (later researched further by Pearson and Marr, 2003) that are considered to be archetypal life themes – *caregiver, creator, destroyer, innocent, jester, lover, magician, orphan, ruler, sage, seeker* and *warrior*. To compare, C.G. Jung identified 12 primary archetypes as symbols designating a set of basic human emotions – *caregiver, hero, innocent* and *orphan* as ego types; *creator, explorer, lover* and *rebel* as soul types; and *jester, magician, ruler* and *sage* as the so called self types. Jung's hero, one of the four ego types, has many manifestations, e.g. a warrior, a soldier, a winner, a rescuer, etc. The comparison of Pearson's 12 life stages with Jung's 12 archetypes shows that nine are identical; these are *innocent, orphan, hero/warrior, caregiver, creator, lover, sage, magician* and *jester*. Three of Pearson's life stages – *warrior, destroyer* and *magician* – appeared under the same designation in some of the nicknames analysed in our research. However, when Pearson's (1991, 1997) conceptualizations of these three notions are scrutinized in more detail, it becomes clear that her apperception lists positive, i.e. constructive values and goals. A warrior is strong, which is a feature whose conception is neutral. What appends either a positive or a negative meaning to this underlying concept is the goal, i.e. the aim to which strength is utilized. Subsequently, the goal of Pearson's warrior is to win – however, winning means defeating a villain, i.e. the negative force. Contrary to this supposition, a boxer's victory over his opponent hardly entails triumph over a rascal. Thus, on the one hand, a boxer-warrior has features of Jung's ruler, in the sense of being a king or a boss, and on the other of Jung's rebel, in that he is passionate and tempestuous. What lies in the basis of Pearson's (1991, 1997) *destroyer* is a positive intent to remove anything that does not function properly, and the goal of a *magician* is to create (cf. Coetzee 2012, 695). However, the boxers' nicknames that contain the signifier of a destroyer betoken defeat, i.e. destruction of an opponent, and those invoking *magic* do the same. Further idiosyncrasies found to comprise the nicknames of boxers and to endorse the antagonistic aspect of the boxer-warrior-hero concept are *relentless, ferocious, bad, terrible, homicide*, etc. Nonetheless, if some mythological characters whose frenzy and ruthlessness in combat are well known and are still perceived as heroes, the boxers might be hypothesized not to deviate much from such images, be it only in their nicknames or be it also in the actual combat situation in the ring.

Boxers may thus be perceived as archetypal warriors, since the hero/anti-hero antithesis seems to fit into the conceptualization of archetypes – namely, archetypes possess a contradictory nature in that they combine opposites (Matthews 2002, 461).

Still, as the results of our research have shown, the hero/anti-hero dichotomy was not the only common thread underlying nicknaming in boxing. Some nicknames appeared to lack notions of either of the two poles in the hero/anti-hero division, and abode by some other principles.

Another essential feature of the analysed boxers' nicknames is their figurativeness which actually creates the basis of semantic categories of sobriquets included in our analysis. However, the nicknames were not analysed in terms of figurative tools, i.e. types of figurative language used in them, since the detailed scrutiny of such tools was not the primary research goal in this paper. To exemplify some types of figurative language used in the nicknames in our research, on the one hand some sobriquets are either metaphoric or metonymic expressions abiding by a two and by a one mapping precept, respectively. In other words, as clearly specified by Roldán-Riejos and Cuadrado (2015), there is only one mapping in metonymy (p. 274), whereas metaphor is characterized by two (275). Ingemar Johansson's nickname *The Hammer of Thor* is a metonymic example of an object-for-user substitution – Johansson uses his arms and hands as skilfully as Thor wields his hammer. Andrew Lewis's nickname *Six Heads* is a metaphor – at the age of seven he knocked down his opponent in an amateur tournament with such might that the other boy refused to continue the fight on the account that he saw 'six heads' in front of him. On the other hand, nicknames are inventive formations containing, and frequently also combining, various linguistic aspects, e.g. semantical, lexical, phonological, etc. Apart from referring to a fictional character, *Cinderella Man*, the nickname of James Walter Braddock, is an oxymoron. *The Tuamanator*, a nickname of David Tua, is a telescope blend combining his family name with his other two nicknames – *Tuaman* and *Terminator*.

3.1. One semantic category used to create a boxer's nickname

Upon allocating the nicknames into clusters, five nickname subsamples were created. The largest (n=201, 53.2%) was the group of 17 categories following a one semantic category nicknaming principle, and each category was created by addressing one content area (e.g., boxing style, demeanour, natural phenomena). *Boxing style; physical appearance* of a boxer; *zonyms; demeanour; fictional characters and magic*; as well as the group termed *warriors, strongmen and weapons* stood out as for their high(er) frequency compared to other categories.

As for the nicknames designating the boxing style of boxers – a category also indicated, for example, by Gmelch (2006, 129) under the common denominator *performance* – several benchmarks have been noted (Table 1). The first one draws on naming or describing a boxing technique, e.g. in Jeff Lacy's nickname *Left Hook*, then a boxer's individual style (e.g. in Chris Byrd's nickname *Rapid Fire* or in Bobby Watts's nickname *Boogaloo*) or a boxer's successfulness in boxing matches (e.g., Beryl *One Punch* Rossofsky). Wilfred Benitez received the nickname *The Bible of Boxing* because he fought 'by the book'. However, some nicknames convey the notion of boxers who might be considered as anti-puissant – Joe Grim was nicknamed *The Human Punching Bag* because he received a vast number of punches from his opponents, and Phil Scott received a sobriquet *Phaintin Phil* as the result of being frequently knocked down in the boxing ring. Such nicknames even point to the apprehension of these boxers as anti-heroes in a somewhat derogatory sense.

Table 1 Incidence of boxing style, demeanour, fictional characters and magic-related nicknames

BOXING STYLE (n=25)	DEMEANOUR (n=18)	FICTIONAL CHARACTERS and MAGIC (n=16)
Andrew <i>Six Heads</i> Lewis	Anthony Mundine <i>The Man</i>	Antonio <i>Magic Man</i> Tarver
Beryl <i>One Punch</i> Rossofsky	<i>Bad</i> Chad Dawson	<i>Apollo of the Ring</i> Jem Belcher
Bill Stephen <i>The Nailer</i>	Beryl Rossofsky <i>The Terrible</i>	Chris Joh <i>The Dragon</i>
Bobby <i>Boogaloo</i> Watts	Carl Williams <i>The Truth</i>	David <i>The Tuamanator</i> Tua
Bobby <i>No Dice</i> Chacon	Chris Arreola <i>Nightmare</i>	Dereck Chisora <i>Del Boy</i>
Chris Byrd <i>Rapid Fire</i>	Darnell <i>The Ding-a-Ling Man</i> Wilson	Eduardo <i>Tarzan</i> Lopez
Cory Spinks <i>The Next Generation</i>	Emanuel Augustus <i>The Drunken Master</i>	George Johnson <i>Scrap Iron</i>
Danny Swift Garcia	Erik Morales <i>El Terrible</i>	James Walter Braddock <i>Cinderella Man</i>
Henry Armstrong <i>Hammering Hank</i>	Jameel McCline <i>Big Time</i>	Jesse Ferguson <i>The Boogiemán</i>
James <i>Buster</i> Douglas	Jermain <i>Bad Intentions</i> Taylor	Lance <i>Goofie</i> Whittaker
James <i>Lights Out</i> Toney	John Ruiz <i>The Quiet Man</i>	Martin <i>Bigfoot</i> Everett
James <i>Quick</i> Tillis	Lamont <i>Havoc</i> Peterson	Matthew <i>Magic</i> Hatton
Jeff <i>Left Hook</i> Lacy	Montel <i>Ice</i> Griffin	Otis Grant <i>Magic</i>
Jessy <i>Hook 'em</i> Hadfield	Riddick <i>Big Daddy</i> Bowe	Paulie <i>The Magic Man</i> Malignaggi
Joe Grim <i>The Human Punching Bag</i>	Roman Karmazin <i>Made in Hell</i>	Rick <i>King Kong</i> Kellar
Karim <i>Hard Hitta</i> Mayfield	Ross Purity <i>The Boss</i>	Robert Guerrero <i>The Ghost</i>
Ken Norton <i>The Jawbreaker</i>	Tomasz <i>Highlander</i> Adamek	
Oscar Bonavena <i>Ringo</i>	Vernon <i>Iceman</i> Paris	
Paul Williams <i>The Punisher</i>		
<i>Peerless Jim</i> Jim Discoll		
<i>Phaintin Phil</i> Phil Scott		
Roy <i>Cut 'n' Shoot</i> Harris		
<i>Smoking</i> Joe Frazier		
Sonny Liston <i>Drummer Boy</i>		
Wilfred Benitez <i>The Bible of Boxing</i>		

Examples in the group comprised of nicknames under the common denominator *demeanour* addressed a boxer's conduct, not necessarily inside the boxing ring. Darnell Wilson's nickname – *The Ding-a-Ling Man* – designates an eccentric, but also a foolish person. Chad Dawson's nickname *Bad* is a litote, i.e. a figure of speech in which an expression is used that designates an opposite to the one meant (Bagić 2012, 183). Chad Dawson is known to be a very decent and kind man, a boxer who never offends his opponents in any way and who never performs a prohibited move during a match. Consequently, his nickname is aimed at creating an image that would make him sound dangerous. Unlike Dawson's nickname designating exactly the opposite of his real nature, John Ruiz's nickname – *The Quiet Man* – expresses his real (kind) nature.

Interestingly, in the subsample of nicknames referring to fictional characters or those designating magical concepts, the word *magic* was used as many as four times. James Walter Braddock earned his nickname *Cinderella Man* because after losing several bouts he had to collect social assistance to be able to support himself and his family.

David Tua's nickname *The Tuamanator*, as further analysis will show, is the so called *telescope blend* (also termed a *telescope*), i.e. a construction that comprises "mutually overlapping shared segments" (Bednárová-Gibová 2014, 4). To start with, the sobriquet *Tuamantor* triggers the image of a mighty character featured by Arnold Schwarzenegger – the Terminator – in a sequel of science fiction movies about a cyborg, an unbeatable killing machine, disguised as a human being. This association was the reason for allocating the nickname into the group that contains sobriquets referring to fictional characters. However,

the junction of overlapping segments, i.e. his family name *Tua* and the segment from the word *Terminator* with which it combines, does not produce the nickname listed here, although the association with the fictional character is correct and unequivocal. Even more so, *Terminator* was one of Tua's nicknames. The lacking *-ma-* segment has to be sought in Tua's second nickname – that of *Tuaman*. Subsequently, the byname *Tuamanator* is the telescope blend of three parts – his family name, i.e. *Tua*, the *-ma-* segment from the byname *Tuaman*, and the segment from another Tua's nickname, i.e. *Terminator* (*Tua* + *Tuaman* + *Terminator* → *Tuamanator*).

Derek Chisora earned the nickname *Del Boy* because he was fond of nicknames from the *Only Fools and Horses* TV series. In contrast to Abel's research (2009, 156) in which female boxers' nicknames containing the word *dragon* – Angel McKenzie *Dragon* and Ramona Kuehne *The Wild Dragon* – were allocated to a group of sobriquets in which a denotation of an animal has been used, Chris Joh's nickname *The Dragon* was preferably assigned to the group of nicknames enclosing a designation of a fictional character, thus typifying its surreal notion that is common to fictitious, fabricated characters and conjury.

Hyperbolic personality traits (Table 2) as a set of nicknames tend to assign a boxer a magnified, excessive, even exaggerated feature of his character. Adjectives *ferocious* and *relentless* point to the perception of frenzy. Jerry Halstead's nickname *Wimpy* – which designates to an extreme a feeble or a weak and cowardly person – may also be regarded as a litote, as was the case with Chad Dawson's nickname (*Bad*). Namely, Halstead has won 84 fights, and in 62 of them he knocked out his opponent. Hence, to describe him as being *wimpy* appears to be an understatement.

Table 2 Incidence of hyperbolic personality traits, hypocorisms, and ingestion and taste-related nicknames

HYPERBOLIC PERSONALITY TRAITS (n=3)	HYPOCORISMS (n=3)	INGESTION and TASTE (n=9)
<i>Ferocious</i> Fernando Vargas	Anthony <i>Aye Pee</i> Peterson	Alvin <i>Too Sweet</i> Hayes
Jerry <i>Wimpy</i> Halstead	Osumanu Adama <i>Ozzie Adams</i>	Eric Esch <i>Butterbean</i>
<i>Relentless</i> Lamon Brewster	Wilfredo Vazquez <i>Will</i>	Jose <i>Mantequilla</i> Napoles
		Marco Antonio Rubio <i>The Poison</i>
		Orlin Norris <i>The Juice</i>
		Pernell Whitaker <i>Sweet Pea</i>
		Reggie <i>Sweet</i> Johnson
		<i>Sugar</i> Ray Leonard
		<i>Sugar</i> Ray Robinson

In line with Kennedy and Zamuner (2006, 388) and in contrast to, for example, Abel (2009, 142) and Skipper (Skipper, 1989, 108), all hypocorisms – thus also those derived from boxers' names – were regarded as nicknames. Only three hypocoristic nicknames (Table 2) belonging to the one content area nicknaming subsample were found. In the English language these endearment terms may be formed in various ways. Anderson (2003, 371) mentioned adding *-y* suffix to a name, shortening a name, and the combination of shortening and phonological variation of a name. Using the initials of a combination of names, e.g. name and surname, is another type of forming a hypocorism. The nickname of Wilfredo Vazquez – *Will* – is an example of a name truncation. The nickname of a Ghanaian boxer Osumanu Adama – *Ozzie/Oussie Adams* – is a combination of two

formation processes. His first name *Osumanu* has been truncated into *Ozzie*, an *-ie* suffix-formed hypocoristic, and his family name has been phonologically varied to form a family name frequent in English. Additionally, the phonological similarity between Osumanu Adama's nickname *Ozzie Adams* and the name of *Oopsie Addams*, a relative of the Addams Family – a fictional household created by a cartoonist Charles Addams – is striking. Finally, Anthony Peterson's nickname *Aye Pee* is a hypocoristic formed by transcribing the initials of his name and surname.

The category termed *ingestion and taste* contained four nicknames that could also have been allocated to the set of *boxing style* sobriquets, due to the fact that they reflect a boxers' style of boxing. To be called *Sweet* means to be regarded as skilful and proficient. Hence, Alvin Hayes's nickname *Too Sweet* points to his flamboyant boxing style. The nickname *Mantequilla*, which is a Spanish word for *butter*, refers to Jose Napoles's smooth boxing style. *Butterbean*, the nickname of Eric Esch, refers to a situation in which he had to go on a diet which consisted mostly of butterbeans and chicken. Marco Antonio Rubio's nickname *The Poison (El Veneno)* connotes his success in many fights, i.e. that he is 'poisonous' to his opponents. As for *Sweet Pea*, the nickname of Pernell Whitaker, originally it was *Sweet Pete* – *Pete* being the hypocoristic of Whitaker's first name, and it is said to have been incorrectly understood as *Pea* by a sports reporter. Ray Robinson's nickname *Sugar* connotes the meaning of *sweet*, i.e. adept and skilled, and Ray Leonard is said to have emulated Robinson's nickname. Still, both nicknames have actually originated from the phrase *sweet science of bruising*, which, as previously explained, was used to refer to boxers as methodological athletes. Various texts accentuate that both Ray Robinson and Ray Leonard "used technical, adroit strategies to outclass opponents" (boxing.isport.com 2017), i.e. they were very skilled boxers. Barney Nagler, a sportswriter, even wrote about Sugar Ray Robinson: "He boxed as though he were playing the violin." (boxing.isport.com 2017)

As for the usage of words designating metal and rock, the latter, i.e. rock/stone, seems to appear most frequently in nicknames (Table 3). Metals symbolize solidified cosmic energy (Cirlot 1971, 208), stone represents strength (Cirlot 1971, 313) and rock is perceived as symbolizing permanence and solidity (Cirlot 1971, 274). Consequently, such attributes refer to a boxer's vigour and stamina. Golden Johnson's nickname *Golden Carat* stems from the measure of the purity of gold, also used as a unit of weight for precious stones. *Quicksilver*, Virgil Hill's nickname, represents the liquid metal mercury. Figuratively, when used as an adjective, *quicksilver* means "rapid or unpredictable in movement or change" (*Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged* 2014). Hence, Hill's nickname connotes him as being a fast boxer capable of performing unforeseeable moves in the ring.

The image repeatedly used in the nicknames containing an indication of a natural phenomenon (Table 3) is the one of a wind. In mythology, wind has been frequently perceived as an expression of struggle for power and of power itself, e.g. Enlil (the storm god) in Sumerian (Cotterell and Storm 2004, 278), and Adad (a weather god) in Babylonian and Assyrian mythology (Cotterell and Storm 2004, 253). *The Hurricane* appears to be a recurring nickname connoting a violent and dangerous performance, as is the case with nicknames *Thunder*, *Lightning* and *Desert Storm*. Their common denominator is that they are all perilous and alarming. In this way they are – to use the words used by Felecan and Felecan (2016, 191) to describe politicians' nicknames – "prolonged-release antidotes used to destroy opponents".

Table 3 Incidence of metal and rock; natural phenomena;
and noblemen and gentleman-related nicknames

METAL and ROCK (n=9)	NATURAL PHENOMENA (n=7)	NOBLEMEN and GENTLEMEN (n=8)
Golden Johnson <i>Golden Carat</i>	Arturo <i>Thunder</i> Gatti	Amir <i>King</i> Khan
Hasim Rahman <i>The Rock</i>	Henry Armstrong <i>Hurricane Henry</i>	Floyd Patterson <i>The Gentleman of Boxing</i>
Iron Mike Tyson	Lonnie <i>Lightning</i> Smith	James John <i>The Gentlemen Jim</i> Corbett
James <i>Hard Rock</i> Green	Paul <i>Hurricane</i> Brig	Jonathan Banks <i>Mr. Banks</i>
Michael Katsidis <i>Rocky</i>	Rubin <i>Hurricane</i> Carter	Jose <i>King</i> Roman
Roberto Duran <i>The Hands of Stone</i>	Sebastian Sylvester <i>The Hurricane</i>	Prince Naseem Hamed
<i>The Iron Man</i> Jim Jeffries	Timothy Bradley <i>Desert Storm</i>	Renaldo <i>Mister</i> Snipes
Tony Zale <i>The Man of Steel</i>		Tommy Morrison <i>The Duke</i>
Virgil Hill <i>Quicksilver</i>		

Although the nicknames containing the words designating courteousness and gentlemanly etiquette may be said to address the conduct of boxers, some do not follow this principle. On the one hand, the title of Floyd Patterson's biography – *Floyd Patterson: A Boxer and a Gentleman* – written by A.H. Levy (2008) best illustrates his style and professionalism. On the other, Tommy Morrison presumably got his nickname *The Duke* not because of his honourable conduct, but due to the claim that he was related to another famous movie star with the same nickname, namely, John Wayne.

Occupations and titles, as well as origins constituted the next set of sobriquets (Table 4). Such practices have also been previously reported for nicknames, for example, in baseball (cf. Gmelch 2006).

Table 4 Incidence of occupations and titles; origins; and phonetic variation-related nicknames

OCCUPATIONS and TITLES (n=8)	ORIGINS (n=10)	PHONETIC VARIATION (n=5)
<i>Bombardiere</i> Billy Wells	Garth Wood <i>From the Hood</i>	Brandon <i>Bam Bam</i> Rios
Calvin Brock <i>The Boxing Banker</i>	<i>Irish</i> Mickey Ward	Daniel Victor Kirkman <i>Boom Boom</i>
Dale Brown <i>Cowboy</i>	Joe Bugner <i>Aussie Joe</i>	DeMarcus <i>Chop Chop</i> Corley
Harry Wills <i>The Undertaker</i>	Johnny Dundee <i>The Scotch Wop</i>	Jim <i>Bang Bang</i> Harrison
Ike Ibeabuchi <i>The President</i>	<i>Mexican</i> Joe Rivers	Ray <i>Boom Boom</i> Mancini
James J. Jeffries <i>The Boilermaker</i>	Mike <i>Mile High</i> Alvarado	
Mike <i>The Bounty Hunter</i>	<i>Oakland</i> Billy Smith	
Ricardo <i>Matador</i> Mayorga	<i>Panama</i> Al Browne	
	<i>Philadelphia</i> Jack O'Brien	
	Randall <i>Tex</i> Cobb	

As for the origin-related nicknames in this paper, some require deeper knowledge of certain data. Thus, Mike Alvarado's nickname *Mile High* is actually a truncated nickname of his hometown of Denver (Texas) – *Mile High City* – which lies at an elevation of precisely one mile above sea level.

Concerning the array of phonetic variations in nicknames collected for our research, natural sound associates, i.e. onomatopoeias, produce a strong mental connection with a boxer who carries a nickname containing them, as in Brandon Rios's nickname *Bam Bam*, Ray Mancini's nickname *Boom Boom*, etc. Interestingly, *Boom Boom* was also the nickname of Boris Becker, the famous German tennis player (cf. Panić Kavgić 2016, 2017), but also of Jason Garrison, the Canadian ice-hockey player. Apart from being

Brandon Rios's nickname, *Bam Bam* is also the nickname of Bryce Harper, the baseball player, and of Daniel Rich, the Australian rules football player, as well.

Sobriquets designating a specific feature of the boxer's physical appearance (Table 5) were among the most frequent one semantic category nicknaming groups. Nicknames designating the height of a boxer were dichotomous – on the one hand, some referred to rather short boxers, e.g. Sharmba Mitchell *Little Big Man*, and others to tall ones (e.g., *Human Skyscraper* Henry Johnson). Apparently, *Kid* was a frequent selection for a nickname in this content area. However, some nicknames concerned other particularities. A teacher at school gave Jeff Mayweather the nickname *Jazzy*, because Mayweather used to dress up, i.e. he strove to look very neat.

Table 5 Incidence of physical appearance; vehicles, vessels and machines; and villains-related nicknames

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE (n=22)	VEHICLES, VESSELS and MACHINES (n=7)	VILLAINS (n=6)
<i>Baby Face</i> Jimmy McLarnin	Edward <i>Gunboat</i> Smyth	Alex Stewart <i>The Destroyer</i>
<i>Baby</i> Joe Mesi	Gerrie Coetzee <i>The Bionic Hand</i>	Bernard <i>The Executioner</i> Hopkins
<i>Big</i> George Forman	Harry Grab <i>The Human Windmill</i>	Henry Armstrong <i>Homicide Hank</i>
Brian Nielsen <i>The Boxing Teddybear</i>	Steve Cunningham <i>USS</i>	James <i>Bonecrusher</i> Smith
Charles <i>Kid</i> McCoy	<i>The Atlantic City Express</i> Bruce Seldon	Kermit Cintron <i>The Killer</i>
<i>Chrysanthemum</i> Joe Choynski	<i>The Fargo Express</i> Billy Petrolle	Mike McCallum <i>Body Snatcher</i>
Earnie Shavers <i>The Acorn</i>	Travis Walker <i>Freighttrain</i>	
Ed <i>Babe</i> Risko		
Gerardo <i>Kid</i> Gavilan Gonzales		
<i>Human Skyscraper</i> Henry Johnson		
Jack Johnson <i>Big Smoke</i>		
Jeff <i>Jazzy</i> Mayweather		
Kell <i>Kid</i> Brook		
Lance <i>Mount</i> Whitaker		
Lloyd Honeyghan <i>Ragamuffin Man</i>		
<i>Orchid Man</i> Georges Carpentier		
Meldrick Taylor <i>The Kid</i>		
Saul <i>Cinnamon</i> Alvarez		
Sharmba Mitchell <i>Little Big Man</i>		
Steve Forbes <i>Two Pounds</i>		
Ted <i>Kid</i> Lewis		
<i>The Matchstick Man</i> Johnny Owen		

Although not explicitly implying his physical appearance, Joe Choynski's nickname *Chrysanthemum*, i.e. the shock of white hair implied by a leaf of the flowering plant, was allocated to the group of nicknames designating the physical appearance of the boxer. The reasoning behind such a choice relied on its connotative association. The same reasoning was applied to another phytonym – an *orchid* – used in Georges Carpentier's byname *Orchid Man*. The nickname was given to him due to his elegance – namely, he wore tailored suits often decorated with a corsage in his lapel.

Steve Forbes weighed two pounds when he was born so that he kept his nickname *Two Pounds/2 Pound* to the time when he became a boxing titlist. Lloyd Honeyghan was referred to as *ragamuffin* (“a ragged, disreputable person” – *Random House Kernerman Webster's College Dictionary* 2017) by his opponent Donald Curry, and continued to be nicknamed *Ragamuffin Man*. Johnny Owen was nicknamed *The Matchstick Man* due to

his fragile physical appearance. Nicknames like *Kid*, *The Matchstick Man* and *Ragamuffin Man* might be perceived as referring to the notion of an anti-hero, since they deviate from features that portray a classical dignified, massive, triumphant hero.

Gunboats, ships and trains (Table 5) are all examples of powerful machines and craft, which imply strength and might. When used in a nickname, they signify the tallness and robust physique of boxers, thus creating an image mirroring great force. Although Harry Grab's nickname *The Human Windmill* addresses his boxing "style of throwing a constant barrage of punches" (Rocchi 2007, 77), it was prioritized to belong to the group of vehicles, vessels and machines.

Despite containing only six examples in the one semantic category nicknaming subsample (two more will appear in the two semantic categories nicknaming sample) termed *villains* (Table 5), this group stands out in terms of negative connotations of nicknames comprising it. *Killer* and *Body Snatcher* connote power by pointing to unfavourable features, i.e. to malicious persons, thus creating the notion of villains – they are pure evil and have no conscience. Although it might be argued that many nicknames allocated to the *boxing style* group might also be said to designate the notion of a villain, there is one basic distinction between those nicknames and the six nicknames in the *villains* group – the former act within the allowable limits, whereas the latter venture beyond the limits of sanctioned conduct.

Most of the nicknames in the group *warriors, strongmen and weapons* pinpoint the boxers as archetypal good warriors – they are strong, mighty, passionate characters who radiate energy and stamina (Table 6). The construct of a boxer-warrior extends to the features that function as those also characterizing a classical Jungian hero, i.e. they are perceived as honest, gentle, righteous and honourable.

What connects warriors and strongmen is power and control by force. Warriors carry weapons, and these in turn symbolize heroes and struggles they are engaged in, simultaneously signifying the enemy as well (Cirlot 1971, 367). The ultimate goal is to develop the construct of masculinity. Masculinity in sport is based on aggressiveness and competitiveness – two features that mark the traditional notion of a male athlete (Wellard 2002, 235). This substantiates the perception of "sport as a 'natural' arena for men" (Wellard 2002, 238). Further, Wellard (2002, 239) lists a point of view according to which sport is "a euphemism for battlefields, where men can channel their 'natural' aggressive instincts". According to Messner (1990, 207, 211), in today's sport the notion of masculinity in athletes is developed in such a way that they are taught to regard their bodies as weapons and machines.

Animal metaphors are sometimes used to designate a human personality and aspects of personality that are commonly symbolized by a particular animal metaphor (Sommer and Sommer 2011, 238). Panthers, tigers and lions, as well as snakes evoke images of jeopardy and threat. A tiger symbolizes cruelty (Cirlot 1971, 342), a lion depicts strength (Cirlot 1971, 190), a hawk represents victory (Cirlot 1971, 141) and a snake typifies energy (Cirlot 1971, 285).

Table 6 Incidence of physical appearance; vehicles, vessels and machines; and villains-related nicknames

WARRIORS, STRONGMEN and WEAPONS (n=16)	ZOONYMS (n=21)
Corrie Sanders <i>The Sniper</i>	Aaron Pryor <i>The Hawk</i>
Demetrius <i>The Gladiator</i> Hopkins	Andre <i>The Beast</i> Berto
<i>Dinamita</i> Juan Manuel Marquez	Carl <i>The Cobra</i> Froch
Edner Cherry <i>Bomb</i>	Cornelius Bundrage <i>K9</i>
Evander Holyfield <i>The Warrior</i>	Ellsworth Webb <i>The Spider</i>
<i>Hatchet Man</i> Curtis Shepard	Eusebio <i>Scorpion</i> Pedrosa
Herol <i>Bomber</i> Graham	Frank <i>The Animal</i> Fletcher
Ike <i>Bazooka</i> Quartey	<i>Game Chicken</i> Hen Pierce
Iran <i>The Blade</i> Barkley	William Landon <i>Gorilla</i> Jones
Mathew Macklin <i>Mack the Knife</i>	<i>Grizzly Bear</i> Jim Jeffries
Michael Dokes <i>Dynamite</i>	Joe Harris <i>Tiger</i>
Monte Barret <i>Two Gunz</i>	John <i>The Beast</i> Mugabi
Nate Campbell <i>The Galaxy Warrior</i>	Julian Jackson <i>The Hawk</i>
Rafael Limon <i>Bazooka</i>	Lennox Lewis <i>The Lion</i>
<i>Razor</i> Donovan Ruddock	Livingstone <i>Pit Bull</i> Bramble
<i>The Road Warrior</i> Glen Johnson	<i>The Big Cat</i> Cleveland Williams
	Theodore <i>The Tiger</i> Flowers
	Vasily Jirov <i>The Tiger</i>
	Vernon Forrest <i>The Viper</i>
	Vinny <i>The Pazmanian Devil</i> Pazienza
	Willie <i>The Worm</i> Monroe

Although Vinny Pazienza's nickname *The Pazmanian Devil* does not explicitly refer to an animal, its phonological similarity with the name of a Tasmanian devil, a ferocious marsupial nowadays found only on Tasmania, an island state of Australia, the origin is indisputable. Furthermore, a zoonym – Tasmanian devil – is an evident source of this sobriquet, thus justifying its allotment to the group of nicknames containing zoonyms. The same principle was applied for the allocation of David Tua's byname *Tuamanator* to the group of fictional characters and magic. The reasoning behind Pazienza's nickname is to be traced back to the features of Tasmanian devils, i.e. their muscular physique and capacity to develop high speed. The connection between the Tasmanian devil and Vinny Pazienza is to be found in Berkow's (1995) picturesque portrayal both of his fighting and living style in which he used such epithets as *aggressive* and *daredevil*. Additionally and according to Dirs (2016), "Pazienza went by the nickname 'The Pazmanian Devil', as much for his fast living outside of the ring as his uncompromising fighting style inside it". The allocation principle is not the only aspect that David Tua's and Vinny Pazienza's nicknames have in common. They also share the construction facet. Like Tua's nickname *Tuamanator*, *The Pazmanian Devil* is an example of a telescope blend. The word *Pazmanian* is the blend of a segment of his family name and a larger part of the zoonym *Tasmanian devil* (*Pazienza* + *Tasmanian devil* → *Tasmanian Devil*).

The common features of all the aforementioned animal species are might and speed. Consequently, the nicknames containing such zoonyms are aimed at creating images of boxers who have them as being fast, strong, energetic and victorious, the attributes that keep repeating themselves throughout the whole analysis.

3.2 Two semantic categories used to create a boxer's nickname

The second largest group of nicknames (n=135, 35.7%), but also the group with the largest number of varieties, was the one comprised of nicknames that, as for their formation, abode by the principle of combining two semantic categories of the previously mentioned 17 following the one semantic category nicknaming principle. Among them, *physical appearance/zoonyms*, *origins/warriors*, *strongmen and weapons* and *origins/demeanour* appeared to be the most frequently selected nicknaming combinations.

As many as eight groups of nicknames combined the notion of a boxer's origin with a variety of other content areas (Table 7). The first group was the one combining the boxer's origin and the designation of his boxing style. Of the five nicknames one – that of Chuck Wepner – connotes an anti-powerful feature. That his face was frequently bloodied has earned him the attribute of a *bleeder* (*The Bayonne Bleeder*). Two nicknames carry the meaning of speed (*Flash*) and one of might (*Puncher*), whereas one – that of Johnny Risko (*The Cleveland Rubber Man*) – relates to his capacity to absorb the punches that he had sustained.

The next group of nicknames combined a boxer's origins with his demeanour. Thus, Max Baer was nicknamed *The Livermore Larruper*, *larruper* designating a person who beats or thrashes his opponents. Muhammad Ali, a three-time world heavyweight champion, was born and grew up in Louisville. According to the *Encyclopedia of World Biography* (2015), Ali got the nickname *The Louisville Lip* when he started to write poems in which he predicted his victories in future boxing matches. Additionally, he was a loquacious boxer who frequently boasted that he was the best. Consequently, the metonymic nickname *lip*, designating imprudent talk, was rightfully deserved.

The notion of a boxer's origin in the *origin/fictional characters and magic* group of nicknames shows several varieties. As for the first one, a nickname explicitly indicates either the town or the country of the boxer's birth, as in Mikke Gibbons *St. Paul Phantom* or *Barbados Demon* Joe Walcott, respectively. A part of a town such as Aldgate, which is an area of Central London, in the nickname of Ted Lewis (*The Aldgate Tiger*), and social origin, as is the case with Benny Leonard's nickname *The Ghetto Wizard*, were also taken into account when creating a nickname. A hypocoristic of a town's name – as in Thomas Loughran *Phantom of Philly* (*Philadelphia* → *Philly*) also appeared to have been a source for creating a nickname. As for the second aspect of this group of nicknames, *wizard* and *phantom* both appeared twice, and *demon* and *sphinx* each appeared only once. A wizard implies the notion of magic, and a phantom, a ghost and a demon all designate spirits, i.e. forces that cannot be seized are hence elusive and difficult to fight against. The same conceptualization applies to a sphinx, a mythological merciless but also perfidious creature.

The series continues with the notion of origins – countries, towns and social background – being combined with ominous natural phenomena such as a tornado and a thunderbolt, occupations and titles, and one example of a nickname – William Perry *The Tipton Slasher* – connoting a villainous character.

Table 7 Incidence of origin-combination nicknames

CATEGORY	No. of cases	Boxer
ORIGINS / BOXING STYLE	6	Chuck Wepner <i>The Bayonne Bleeder</i> Cleveland Rubber Man Johnny Risko Ezzard Charles <i>The Cincinnati Flash</i> Frank Moody <i>The Pontypridd Puncher</i> Kevin Kelley <i>The Flushing Flash</i> <i>The Casablanca Clouter</i> Marcel Cerdan
ORIGINS / DEMEANOUR	8	Jimmy Wilde <i>The Tyler Town Terror</i> <i>Kansas Rube</i> Jim Ferns Robert Helenius <i>The Nordic Nightmare</i> Sam Langford <i>The Boston Terror</i> Scott Le Doux <i>The Fighting Frenchman</i> <i>The Livermore Larruper</i> Max Baer <i>The Louisville Lip</i> Muhammad Ali <i>The Nigerian Nightmare</i> Samuel Peter
ORIGINS / FICTIONAL CHARACTERS and MAGIC	6	<i>Barbados Demon</i> Joe Walcott Benny <i>The Ghetto Wizard</i> Leonard Mikke Gibbons <i>St. Paul Phantom</i> Ted <i>The Aldgate Sphinx</i> Lewis <i>The Welsh Wizard</i> Freddie Welsh Thomas Loughran <i>Phantom of Philly</i>
ORIGINS / NATURAL PHENOMENA	6	Fritzie Zivic <i>The Croatian Comet</i> <i>Illinois Thunderbolt</i> Billy Papke Jesse James Leija <i>The Texas Tornado</i> Jock McAvoy <i>The Rochdale Thunderbolt</i> Sid <i>The Galloping Ghost of the Ghetto</i> Terris <i>The Whitechapel Whirlwind</i> Jack Berg
ORIGINS / OCCUPATIONS and TITLES	5	<i>Basque Woodchopper</i> Paulino Uzcudun Carne <i>The Upstate Onion Farmer</i> Basilio Ron Stander <i>The Council Bluffs Butcher</i> <i>The Bronx Barkeeper</i> Tami Mauriello <i>The Georgia Deacon</i> Theodore Flowers
ORIGINS / VILLAINS	1	William Perry <i>The Tipton Slasher</i>
ORIGINS / WARRIORS, STRONGMEN and WEAPONS	10	Danny Williams <i>Brixton Bomber</i> Jack Dempsey <i>The Manassa Mauler</i> Jerry Quarry <i>The Bellflower Bomber</i> John L. Sullivan <i>The Boston Strongboy</i> Nagy Aguilera <i>Dominican Dynamite</i> <i>The Bronx Bomber</i> Alex Ramos <i>The Celtic Warrior</i> Steve Collins <i>The Great Gun of Windsor</i> Tom Cannon <i>The Troy Giant</i> Paddy Ryan <i>The Viking Warrior</i> Mikkel Kessler
ORIGINS / ZOONYMS	7	Ad Wolgast <i>The Michigan Wildcat</i> Al Phillips <i>The Aldgate Tiger</i> Ezzard Charles <i>The Cincinnati Cobra</i> Jack Dillon <i>Hoosier Bearcat</i> Luis Firpo <i>The Wild Bull of the Pampas</i> Sergie <i>The Latin Snake</i> Mora <i>The Bronx Bull</i> Jake Lamotta

Among the ten nicknames that combined the boxer's origins with the image of warriors, strongmen or weapons, as many as three included the word *bomber*, accordingly connoting the barrage of punches sustained to the opponent's face. As for the notion of origins, this concept has been either explicitly (e.g., John L. Sullivan *The*

Boston Strongboy, Danny Williams *Brixton Bomber*) or implicitly (e.g., *The Viking Warrior* Mikkel Kessler, *The Celtic Warrior* Steve Collins) expressed.

The groups containing information about the origin of a boxer continue with the one combining this notion with the notion of an animal. Zoonyms designating snakes, big cats and a bull entered the nicknames such as *The Cincinnati Cobra* (Ezzard Charles), *The Aldgate Tiger* (Al Phillips) and *The Bronx Bull* (Jake Lamotta), respectively. In all such cases the notion of danger was implied, thus pointing to the perception of a boxer being precarious to his opponents.

The notion of physical appearance of a boxer was combined with seven other content areas, the set of nicknames containing a zoonym having the highest incidence (Table 8).

Table 8 Incidence of physical appearance-combination nicknames

CATEGORY	No. of cases	Boxer
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE / BOXING STYLE	3	Ruslan Chagaev <i>White Tyson</i> Selcuk Aydin <i>Mini Tyson</i> <i>The Pink Pounder</i> Charles Jones
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE / Demeanour	4	Grady Brewer <i>Bad Boy</i> John McDermott <i>Big Bad John</i> Primo Carnera <i>The Ambling Alp</i> <i>The Bull's Head Terror</i> John Flood
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE / INGESTION and TASTE	3	Eligio Sardinias <i>Kid Chocolate</i> George Dixon <i>Little Chocolate</i> Lou Del Valle <i>Honey Boy</i>
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE / METAL and ROCK	2	Ivan Calderon <i>Iron Boy</i> <i>The Golden Boy</i> Oscar De La Hoya
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE / NOBLEMEN and GENTLEMEN	2	Alexander Povetkin <i>Tsar</i> Peter <i>Black Prince</i> Jackson
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE / OCCUPATIONS and TITLES	1	Joey <i>Butcher Boy</i> Ancona
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE / VILLAINS	1	Nigel Benn <i>The Dark Destroyer</i>
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE / ZOONYMS	10	Archie Moore <i>The Old Mongoose</i> Bob Mirovic <i>The Big Bear</i> Clifford Etienne <i>Black Rhino</i> Denis Lebedev <i>The White Swan</i> Francois Botha <i>White Buffalo</i> Juan Diaz <i>Baby Bull</i> Lovemore Ndou <i>The Black Panther</i> Mickey Walker <i>Toy Bulldog</i> Roger Mayweather <i>The Black Mamba</i> Sonny Liston <i>Big Bear</i>

Of the ten nicknames comprising this group, some referred to a boxer's 'skin colour' (e.g., *White Buffalo*, the sobriquet of the South African boxer Francois Botha; *Black Rhino*, the nickname of the American boxer Clifford Etienne; etc.) – one of the physical characteristics in a scientifically and culturally refuted theory regarding the existence of biogenetically distinct races. Although the word *white* in the nickname *The White Swan* unambiguously evokes the notion of Lebedev's 'skin colour' in the sense of physical features within the previously explained abandoned concept of human races, it is the origin of his sobriquet that points to another association that lies in its foundation. Namely, *The White Swan* is also the name tag of a large, heavy, supersonic Russian

military aircraft Tupolev Tu-160 (*belyy* = white; *lebed* = swan > *Belyy Lebed* = White Swan), earned because it was painted white (again the reference to the 'colour of the skin'). However, the Russian word for a swan – *lebed* – is a part of Lebedev's family name – *Lebedev*. Subsequently, his byname may also be understood as a comparison with Tupolev Tu-160, thus ultimately connoting Lebedev's strong and powerful physique.

The heroic features are conveyed in Peter Jackson's nickname *Prince (Black Prince)* and Alexander Povetkin's sobriquet *Tsar* which both imply nobility, i.e. one of the common characteristics of an archetypal hero, namely, unusual circumstances of birth usually considered to be the ones of danger or those referring to a hero being born into royalty. The notion of nobility as comprehended in our research relates not to the actual birth into aristocracy, but to their noble conduct. Birth into royalty is even in contradiction with the fact that, according to Gems (2014, 43), most boxers throughout history, except for boxers in ancient Greece, have emanated from origins which Gems qualified as humble.

The pernicious, villainous nature of the anti-hero is apparent in the sobriquets containing the explicit notion of an occupation, e.g. *Butcher (Boy)* and *(The Dark) Destroyer*, the nicknames of Joey Ancona and Nigel Benn, respectively. The latter byname was classified as connoting the concept of a villain. As was the case with the indication of peril with zoonyms in the set combining the notion of an animal with boxers' origins, such an impression is also achieved here by zoonyms such as *rhino*, *bear*, *lion* etc. The notions of perilous animals such as a bear, a lion or a bull connote a boxer's bulky physical appearance.

Although not frequent in boxers' nicknames, the hypocorisms used varied in type. Besides the already previously mentioned ones when discussing the nicknames created on the basis of one semantic category, another of Max Baer's nicknames – *Madcap Maxie* – draws on coalescing a signifier designating an impulsive and reckless person, i.e. Baer's demeanour, and the hypocorism *Maxie* (Table 9). This hypocorism belongs to the set of those that are longer than a person's actual monosyllabic name (either first or family name) to which the syllabic suffix *-ie* has been added. Such a finding complies with examples also found by Kennedy and Zamuner (2006, 389, 404), e.g. in the nickname of the ice-hockey player Jason York – *Yorkie*. Phonetic variations, combining with demeanour signifiers, identified in the set of six nicknames testify to the omnifarious capacity of acoustic variation. The rhyming effect, exemplified also by Abel and Kruger (2006, 246) is evident in Audley Harrison's nickname *Fraudley* (*Audley* → *Fraudley*), in Hector Camacho's nickname *Macho* (*Camacho* → *Macho*), in O'Neil Bell's nickname *Give 'em Hell* (*Bell* → *Hell*) and in Maxie Rosenbloom's nickname *Slapsie* (*Maxie* → *Slapsie*). Evidently, two varieties appeared – one in which a boxer's first name rhymed with his nickname, and the other in which it is a boxer's family name that cadenced with his sobriquet. *Rickster*, the nickname of Ricky Burns, and *Terrible*, Terry Norris's byname are designations containing the repetition of syllables – the syllable /rɪk/ in *Ricky* and *Rickster*, and the two syllables – /te/ and /rɪ/ – in *Terry* and *Terrible*.

Despite the fact that both the designation *Sailor* – as was the case with Jack Sharkey's nickname *The Sobbing Sailor* – and the designation *Marine* might be comprehended as referring to an occupation, Obed Sullivan's nickname *The Fighting Marine* was comprehended in the sense of denoting a soldier, and soldiers are envisaged as fighters, i.e. warriors. The series of demeanour-specific signifiers being combined with another content area ends with an example of Gene Hatcher's nickname – *Mad Dog*. His

brawling style and behaviour, as well as wild fighting style earned him a sobriquet that was well deserved.

Table 9 Incidence of demeanour-combination nicknames

CATEGORY	No. of cases	Boxer
DEMEANOUR / HYPOCORISMS	1	<i>Madcap Maxie</i> Max Baer
DEMEANOUR / OCCUPATIONS and TITLES	1	<i>The Sobbing Sailor</i> Jack Sharkey
DEMEANOUR / PHONETIC VARIATION	6	Audley Harrison <i>Fraudley</i> Hector <i>Macho</i> Camacho O'Neil <i>Give 'em Hell</i> Bell Ricky Burns <i>Rickster</i> <i>Slapsie Maxie</i> Maxie Rosenbloom Terry <i>Terrible</i> Norris
DEMEANOUR / WARRIORS, STRONGMEN and WEAPONS	1	Obed Sullivan <i>The Fighting Marine</i>
DEMEANOUR / ZOONYMS	1	Gene <i>Mad Dog</i> Hatcher

Boxing style signifiers amalgamated with three different content areas: hypocorisms, phonetic variations and notions of villains (Table 10). The hypocorism *K.O.*, a truncation of the term *knock-out*, combined with another hypocorism – *Bill* – a truncation of Schenck's first name *Wilhelm*, thus producing the only example of a nickname which was a combination of two hypocorisms. David Haye's sobriquet *The Hayemaker* may be regarded as an example of a polyptoton, i.e. the repetition of a word in a different form. The third sobriquet in this combination set is Herbie Hide's byname *The Dancing Destroyer*, a combination of the notion of a villainous character and his boxing style.

Table 10 Incidence of boxing style-; fictional characters and magic-; ingestion and taste-; and natural phenomena-combination nicknames

CATEGORY	No. of cases	Boxer
BOXING STYLE / HYPOCORISMS	1	Wilhelm Schenck <i>K.O. Bill</i>
BOXING STYLE / PHONETIC VARIATION	1	David Haye <i>The Hayemaker</i>
BOXING STYLE / VILLAINS	1	Herbie Hide <i>The Dancing Destroyer</i>
FICTIONAL CHARACTERS and MAGIC / HYPOCORISMS	1	Manny Pacquaio <i>Pac-Man</i>
INGESTION and TASTE / HYPOCORISMS	1	Enzo Maccarinelli <i>Big Mac</i>
INGESTION and TASTE / PHONETIC VARIATION	1	Rydell Booker <i>Rock N Rye</i>
NATURAL PHENOMENA / HYPOCORISMS	1	Willie Pep <i>The Will o' the Wisp</i>
NATURAL PHENOMENA / WARRIORS, STRONGMEN and WEAPONS	1	Jimmy Wilde <i>The Ghost with the Hammer in his Hand</i>

Another hypocorism, which is simultaneously the name of a famous arcade game, i.e. the principal character in it, was *Pac-Man* – the sobriquet of **Manny Pacquaio**. The nickname was formed by combining the initial syllables of his first and family names in reverse order.

Big Mac is a multiword hypocoristic used as a nickname of a Welsh boxer Enzo Maccarinelli. An identical byname was found by Kennedy and Zamuner (2006, 389), however, in their research it was the sobriquet of Mark McGwire, a baseball player. Apart from being a name of a cocktail, *Rock n Rye* is also the nickname of Rydell Booker. Two

types of repetition appear in it – alliteration, i.e. the consonant /r/ is repeated four times, once in the boxer's first name, once in his family name (/ˈbʊkəɹ/) and twice in his nickname, and the repetition of the syllable *ry /rai/* in *Rydell* and in *Rye*. Alliteration in nicknames, however, of baseball players was described by Abel and Kruger (2006, 246).

Apart from being a metonymy, *will-o'-the-wisp* is the name of an atmospheric flickering, a ghostly light which appears and recedes, i.e. it is elusory, and Willie Pep was known for his elusiveness in a boxing match. His nickname *The Will o' the Wisp* also contains a hypocorism – *Will* – of his first name (Table 10). The real reason for calling Jimmy Wilde *a ghost* – *The Ghost with the Hammer in his Hand* – was that he was extremely frail-looking. Hence, his nickname could also have been allocated to the group of sobriquets combining physical appearance on the one hand and warriors, strongmen and weapons on the other. However, we opted for the allocation of the signifier *ghost* into the group of natural phenomena. A hammer in the hand of a warrior is the resemblance of Thor, the Norse god of thunder and lightning, which is an image evoking perceptions of power and strength. Needless to say, these two attributes are imminent to boxer-warriors, as has been repeatedly pointed out throughout this text.

George Forman (Table 11) was known for being fond of cheeseburgers, which deservedly earned him the nickname *Captain Cheeseburger*. Vitali and Wladimir Klitschko's nicknames – *Doctor Ironfist* and *Doctor Steelhammer*, respectively – are a logical derivative of two facts. The first one is that they were both awarded a PhD in sports science, and the second one draws on their powerful punches implied by the labels *Ironfist* and *Steelhammer*. In Graham Earl's nickname *Duke of Earl*, the word *earl* is repeated thus pointing to another figure of repetition, namely, a conduplicatio – a figure in which a key word is repeated in adjacent phrases.

Table 11 Incidence of occupations and titles-; noblemen and gentlemen-; vehicles, vessels and machines-; warriors, strongmen and weapons-; and zoonym-combination nicknames

CATEGORY	No. of cases	Boxer
OCCUPATIONS and TITLES / INGESTION and TASTE	1	<i>Captain Cheeseburger</i> George Forman
OCCUPATIONS and TITLES / METAL and ROCK	1	Vitali Klitschko <i>Doctor Ironfist</i>
OCCUPATIONS and TITLES / WARRIORS, STRONGMEN and WEAPONS	1	Wladimir Klitschko <i>Doctor Steelhammer</i>
NOBLEMEN and GENTLEMEN / PHONETIC VARIATION	1	Graham Earl <i>Duke of Earl</i>
VEHICLES, VESSELS and MACHINES / PHONETIC VARIATION	1	Danny Green <i>The Green Machine</i>
WARRIORS, STRONGMEN and WEAPONS / FICTIONAL CHARACTERS and MAGIC	1	Ingemar Johansson <i>The Hammer of Thor</i>
ZOONYMS / PHONETIC VARIATION	1	Bruce <i>The Mouse</i> Strauss

The nickname of the Swedish boxer Ingemar Johansson, *The Hammer of Thor*, is again an allusion to the Norse god of thunder and lightning who yielded a big hammer as a weapon in his hand, as has been previously described for the sobriquet of Jimmy Wilde (*The Ghost with the Hammer in his Hand*). Consequently, the image of a hammer is associated with Johansson's powerful punches. The rhyming of Bruce Strauss's family name and his nickname *The Mouse* produces a somewhat humorous effect which is in

line with Strauss's frequent mockery of himself because of the fact that he had been knocked out by his opponents more frequently than many other boxers.

3.3. Three and four semantic categories used to create a boxer's nickname

The eight nicknames (2.1%) created by combining three semantic categories pointed to the complex content structure underlying the nicknaming scheme (Table 12). These intricate semantic combinations were supplemented by rhyme and various figures of repetition, thus producing a captivating effect. Although rhyme and figures of repetition have already been discussed in some previous examples, their incidence – in relative terms – in the examples in the subsample in which the nicknames were created by combining three and four semantic categories seems to be much higher.

Table 12 Three content areas used to create a boxer's nickname

COMBINATION OF CATEGORIES	No. of cases	Boxer
ORIGINS / DEMEANOUR / PHONETIC VARIATION	1	Juan Lazcano <i>The Hispanic Causing Panic</i>
ORIGINS / METAL and ROCK / PHONETIC VARIATION	1	Rocky Marciano <i>The Rock from Brockton</i>
ORIGINS / NATURAL PHENOMENA / PHONETIC VARIATION	2	Kosta Tszyu <i>The Thunder from Down Under</i> Barry <i>The Clones Cyclone</i> McGuygan
ORIGINS / PHYSICAL APPEARANCE / ZOONYMS	1	Jimmy Barry <i>Chicago's Little Tiger</i>
ORIGINS / ZOONYMS / PHONETIC VARIATION	1	Gregg Zion <i>Lion</i> Edelman
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE / VEHICLES, VESSELS and MACHINES / PHONETIC VARIATION	1	Wayne McCullough <i>The Pocket Rocket</i>
ZOONYMS / ORIGINS / PHONETIC VARIATION	1	Nikolai Valuev <i>The Beast from the East</i>

Nikolay Valuev's nickname *The Beast from the East* combines the repetition of the definite article, then assonance – i.e. the repetition of the vowel sound /i:/ in the words *beast* /bi:st/ and *east* /i:st/ – as well as the repetition of the consonant sound pattern –st in these two words as a rhyming device. Figures of repetition are further apparent in the nicknames *The Rock from Brockton* in which the voiced consonant sound /r/ is repeated, *The Thunder from Down Under* in which the vowel sound /ʌ/, the voiced consonant /d/ and the short vowel schwa /ə/ in combination with the /r/ consonant sound in American English (/ər/) are used, and the syllable /klʊn/ or /klɒn/ in the sobriquet *The Clones Cyclone*. Rhyme was also found in Juan Lazcano's nickname *The Hispanic Causing Panic*, in Gregg Edelman's sobriquet *Zion Lion* and in Wayne McCullough's sobriquet *The Pocket Rocket*.

Only one nickname (0.3) was found to have been created by combining four semantic categories – *origins*, *physical appearance*, *demeanour* and *phonetic variation*. It was Lew Jenkins's nickname *The Sweet Swatter from Sweetwater*. As was the case with the nicknames created by combining three semantic categories, repetition and rhyme appeared to contribute to the enthralling effect of the only nickname in this subsample.

The unvoiced consonant sound /t/ appears as many as four times, whereas the combination of the unvoiced /s/ and the voiced /w/ consonant, as well as the vowel sound /ɔ/ reiterates three times. Ultimately, the long vowel sound /i:/ is repeated twice as is the combination /əɪ/ at the end of the words *swatter* and *Sweetwater*. Additionally, the rhythmic alternation of short and long phonemes might be assumed to resemble the sound of punches delivered in a boxing match, thus producing the onomatopoeic effect. However, the interpretation of Jenkins's nickname continues with the fact that the word *swatter* is used as a metonymic expression referring to a fighter, i.e. a swatter is synonymous with the word hitter. The adjective *sweet*, carefully selected to act as a repetition of the first part of *Sweetwater*, a town in Texas in which Jenkins resided when he was a child (i.e., Sweetwater was not his birth place; however, origins in terms of residence is still implied) draws on a metaphoric name sometimes used to refer to boxing, namely, *sweet science*. Subsequently, *sweet swatter* is a metaphor of a boxer.

3.4. Miscellaneous

Since they could not be allotted to any of the previous categories, the remaining 33 nicknames (8.7%) were allocated to the category termed *miscellaneous* (Table 13). Michael Nunn's sobriquet *Second to Nunn* containing his family name is a homophonic pun /nʌn/ to the phrase *second to none* /nʌn/, which means "the best; without rival" (*Farlex Dictionary of Idioms*, 2017), ultimately pointing to his success in performance.

Table 13 Miscellaneous

MISCELLANEOUS (n=33)		
Adrien <i>The Problem</i> Broner	Jimmy Wilde <i>The Mighty Atom</i>	Muhammad Ali <i>The Greatest</i>
Amir <i>The Pride of Bolton</i> Khan	Juan Urango <i>Iron Twin</i>	<i>No Mas</i> Roberto Duran
Andre <i>The Son of God</i> Ward	Kevin <i>Kingpin</i> Johnson	<i>Nonpareil</i> Jack Dempsey
Ben Tackie <i>Wonder</i>	Lateef Kayode <i>Power</i>	Owen <i>What the Heck</i> Beck
Clinton Woods <i>Super Clinton</i>	Mark <i>Too Sharp</i> Johnson	Ronald <i>Winky</i> Wright
Daniel Geale <i>Real Deal</i>	<i>Marvelous</i> Marvin Hagler	Henry <i>Sugar Poo</i> Buchanan
Davaryl <i>Touch of Sleep</i> Williamson	Michael <i>Double M</i> Moorer	<i>Super Zab</i> Judah
Devon <i>The Great</i> Alexander	Michael Katsidis <i>The Great</i>	<i>The Brockton Blockbuster</i> Rocky Marciano
Frank Bruno <i>True Brit</i>	Michael <i>Second to Nunn</i>	<i>The Living Death</i> Lew Jenkins
<i>Idol of Fistiana</i> Jack Dempsey	<i>The Powerful</i> Mike Anchondo	<i>The Powerful</i> Mike Achondo
Ivan <i>Mighty</i> Robinson	Mitch <i>Blood</i> Green	<i>The Pride of Wales</i> Joe Calzaghe

An example of an oxymoron is found in Lew Jenkins's nickname *The Living Death*, and an example of rhyme was Owen Beck's sobriquet *What the Heck* (*Beck* → *Heck*). Devon Alexander's family name elicits the nickname *The Great* carried by a famous Greek – Alexander the Great – a king of the ancient Greek kingdom. Strangely enough, but Henry Buchanan's nickname *Sugar Poo* draws on the association of sugar and sweetness, thus connoting boxing (a *sweet science*) and a pet name allegedly given to him by his mother when he was a child. The bizarreness of Buchanan's byname points to the variety of sources from which many of the collected nicknames evolved.

The multitude of various semantic categories of boxers' nicknames analysed in this paper displayed the creativity and imagination that produced memorable labels by which some of the boxers will always be remembered. To paraphrase the title of J. Campbell's book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), these nicknames together with the sobriquets from other groups within the previous two subsamples have shown that boxers really are (anti-)heroes with a thousand faces.

4. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the semantic structure and of the nicknaming principles of boxers' sobriquets has yielded several principles. The first one addresses the semantic structure of the analysed nicknames. The sobriquets were most frequently structured as stemming from only one semantic category. Within this subsample, boxing style was the dominant source followed by physical appearance and zoonyms. The boxers were usually portrayed, either explicitly or implicitly, as strong, vigorous, gargantuan figures possessing skill, celerity, valour and dominance, thus entailing the image of a classical Jungian archetypal hero but also incorporating traits deviating from this classical image and pertaining to the contradictory nature of archetypes. The second most commonly applied principle was the origination of a nickname from two semantic categories. The nicknames stemming from the combination of physical appearance and zoonyms had the highest incidence, followed by those blending the message regarding a boxer's place of birth and the notion of warriors or weapons yielded by such combatants. The third most recurrent principle conjoined a piece of information on a boxer's nascence and the depiction of his conduct.

The second principle referred to the ratio of semantic complexity, i.e. the number of semantic categories serving as a source of sobriquets, and incidence of nicknames. It was noted that the simpler the semantic structure, in the sense described, of a nickname, the lower the incidence of such nicknames and *vice versa*. It seems that shorter nicknames are more frequently opted for by those who have them or those who devise them, thus trying to make them more compelling and consequently more unforgettable.

The third characteristic of boxers' nicknames was the recurrence of figurative language. In contrast to the high incidence of metaphors and metonymy, phonetic variation was not frequent; however, it reappeared thus proving itself to be a rightly selected categorization criterion. Various figures of speech contributed to the expressivity of the scrutinized labels.

Ultimately, the analysis incurred two prevalent inferences. One indicated the hero/anti-hero dichotomy as the common thread that dominated the semantic structure of boxers' nicknames. The other has shown that the analysed sobriquets were devised in such a way as to portray a boxer in the most efficient possible way by expressing his attributes, (even) regardless of their positive or negative connotation. Efficacy in this sense implies the realization of goals at which nicknames in boxing are aimed, i.e. to attract the attention both of other boxers and of the public, and to affect both in such a way as to impress them and contribute to the boxer's image as a combatant figure.

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