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## **English, French, and Polish Aliases of Criminals: Diversity of Inspirations in their Creation and Typical Nicknaming Schemes**

### **Abstract**

The present paper examines the topic of aliases of criminals, which seems to be understudied in linguistic research. Therefore, this article's primary goal is to describe how criminals' aliases are created and what are the differences and similarities in that process in English, French, and Polish. Firstly, the theoretical background concerning the topic of pseudonyms is presented. Then, the corpus gathered for this paper (available online: <https://cutt.ly/1TRefrK>), consisting of 206 pseudonyms (123 units in English, 42 in French, and 41 in Polish), is analyzed. In the analysis, four schemes are noted to be the most commonly used in creating pseudonyms of criminals. What is more, the inspirations behind the creation of criminals' pseudonyms are scrutinized, and nine typical inspirations are distinguished. The article constitutes not only a detailed linguistic analysis of a significant number of criminals' aliases but can also serve as an inspiration for other research on the topic.

*Keywords:* onomastics, alias, nickname, pseudonym, criminals, serial killers

### **Introduction**

Despite the undeniable popularity of crime-related topics in society (which is particularly noticeable in pop culture, for instance, in the growing number of true crime podcasts and documentaries, as well as consistently best-selling detective stories), pseudonyms of different types of criminals who commit various crimes have scarcely been the topic of a linguistic discussion. Hence this article examining the etymology of criminals' aliases.

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Pseudonyms of criminals may be created by the media, the police, or local communities for various reasons. For example, the media can use pseudonyms for shock value, in order to interest a bigger audience, and the police may decide to use a pseudonym to protect the suspect's personal data in an ongoing investigation. Furthermore, using pseudonyms in terms of criminals creates a certain psychological effect, i.e., it is easier to call someone who committed a terrible crime a *beast* than to fully accept that, in terms of their species, they are as human as we all are.

Nonetheless, one can wonder whether these pseudonyms are created accidentally, or somewhat automatically, without further reflection. That is why this study aims to discuss the etymology of pseudonyms of criminals, determine if specific schemes of their creation could be distinguished, and analyze the common inspirations for these pseudonyms. Therefore, 206 aliases in English, French, and Polish were gathered and submitted to the analysis.

This paper also aims to inspire research in other fields, for instance, in psychology or cultural studies, to which the proposed linguistic approach may be helpful.

## 1. Theoretical Approach

According to Room (2010: 3), the term 'pseudonym' can be defined as a new, fake name of a person. Such a name has to differ from the orthonym, which is a real name, and has to be popularly admitted and understood. Pseudonyms are given for particular purposes. For instance, they can be given to name an unknown person in order to make it easier to speak about them, or one can create a pseudonym for themselves to be more recognizable, among others.

However, the term 'pseudonym' is not the only one to describe *nomen falsum* (a false, fake name) in a broader perspective. English language speakers can use other terms, such as a 'nickname' or an 'alias', or less known term 'moniker' which are more or less synonymous. There are a few structural-semantic and functional similarities between these four words, which is emphasized among others by Barmina (2018: 41). In the search to explain each of these terms' differences and specific meanings, it is worth observing their lexical definitions. For that purpose, Cambridge Dictionary was used:

PSEUDONYM: a name someone uses instead of their real name, especially on a written work<sup>3</sup>.

NICKNAME: an informal name for someone or something, especially a name that you are called by your friends or family, usually based on your real name or your character<sup>4</sup>.

ALIAS: used when giving the name that a person is generally known by, after giving their real name<sup>5</sup>.

MONIKER: a name or nickname<sup>6</sup>.

3 <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/pseudonym> [date of access: 08.11.2020].

4 <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/nickname> [date of access: 08.11.2020].

5 <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/alias?q=alias> [date of access: 08.11.2020].

6 <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/moniker?q=MONIKER> [date of access: 08.11.2020].



According to the definition presented above, a pseudonym is a unit that substitutes the real name. The substitutive quality of the first term is confirmed by Aleksiejuk (2014: 249), who states that “[p]seudonyms do substitute – they are false names that play the role of the real ones and are used instead”. The second part of the first definition informs that the pseudonym is used especially among artists, which could lead to a conclusion that it is the context that makes the difference between the terms. Then, according to a nickname definition, it can be paraphrased that people assign it to a specific person and that it is based on a particular motivation or reason. Aleksiejuk (2014: 249) emphasizes that “(...) nicknames can be described as supplementary [name] – they supplement a selection of alternative identification devices”. In terms of an alias, this type of *nomen falsum* is simply defined as a word or wording by which a person is known. At the same time, a moniker is reduced to a synonym of a nickname or name; however, this term appears to be described as informal by some dictionaries<sup>7</sup>.

As the terms discussed above do not differ significantly one from the other and seem to be often used interchangeably, in this paper, the terms ‘alias’, ‘pseudonym’, and ‘nickname’ will be used as synonyms.

According to Aleksiejuk (2014: 245), pseudonyms can have two main functions: to secure anonymity, or, on the contrary, to provide recognition, or both. Nevertheless, it seems that there are more functions in terms of the type of pseudonyms discussed in the present paper, i.e., the criminals’ pseudonyms. Of course, criminals can nickname themselves to gain recognition, but they can also be nicknamed by the media, as a shocking name not only brings them more audience but also makes it easier to speak about often an unknown (at least for some time) perpetrator. Therefore, the shock value often present in criminals’ pseudonyms is a representation of other nicknames’ characteristics such as an affective anchor or emotional usage (Martin 2016: 80). Furthermore, criminals can be nicknamed by the police in order to provide them with anonymity (which may be an important factor especially during ongoing investigations), while nicknames created by various communities (local, online, *etc.*) usually serve for the sole communication purpose.

An essential factor in nicknaming is identity. According to Chauchat and Durand-Delvigne (1999: 62):

[t]he act of naming is the beginning of any identity. It is the starting point as is the act of naming of the subject that gives it its name. In our society, the subject’s name indicates its descent, that is to say his place in line. The noun is the first symbolic act, one that can have an identity, not only in the formal sense and administrative civil status, but also in the sense of inclusion in the symbolic order is that of language. Similarly, the identity of the group and its members originates in the name used to designate it. It indicates its origin, its history, its place in society<sup>8</sup>.

This quotation seems as crucial in terms of naming a child as it is in nicknaming a criminal. A criminal who creates a pseudonym for themselves often wants to create a new identity in order to present themselves as a particular person, while pseudonyms created by others (the media, the police, various communities...) may create this person’s identity in the mind of the listeners (however, such an identity is not always accepted by the criminals themselves).

What is sure and will be demonstrated in the following analytical parts of this paper is that pseudonyms of criminals are never accidental. Their creation can be compared to naming literary

7 For example, by the Merriam-Webster dictionary: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/moniker> [date of access: 08.11.2020].

8 Translated by Martin (2016).



protagonists, whose proper names can guide reading and interpretation of the text. In literature, a character's proper name can also become a symbol, with either positive or negative connotations (Logbi 2017: 53–54).

Nonetheless, for a long time, proper names were considered to be meaningless and designating only the person whose name it was. This tendency dominated in onomastic studies and was later replaced with the idea that, “[f]ar from being a simple label, the pseudonym (...) actively participates in a dialogical co-construction of meaning<sup>9</sup>” (Lecolle *et al.* 2009).

Having briefly discussed the theory, it is now possible to present the analytical part.

## 2. Methodology of The Research

This research is based on the trilingual corpus composed of 206 pseudonyms of criminals, with 123 units in English (Part I of the corpus), 42 in French (Part II of the corpus), and 41 in Polish (Part III of the corpus), made available by the authors on Dropbox<sup>10</sup>: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/vpv9dbexjmifko2/English%2C%20French%20and%20Polish%20Aliases%20of%20Criminals.%20THE%20RESEARCH%20CORPUS.pdf?dl=0>

Many sources were used to gather the corpus. Nicknames were therefore drawn from journalistic texts, academic works, i.e., books and papers, encyclopedias, and dictionaries. More than 80 references were used and can be found in the bibliography of the corpus. It has to be noted that English units come from various English-speaking countries, such as the United Kingdom (e.g. *Monster of Cannock Chase*), the United States (e.g. *Bluebeard of South Texas*), Canada (e.g. *Vampire Rapist*), the South Africa (e.g. *Beast of Atteridgeville*) and Australia (e.g. *Singing Strangler*), whereas French units come from French-speaking countries such as France (e.g. *Rambo*) and Canada (e.g. *Casanova de Montréal*). The fact that English has more speakers worldwide than French and Polish explains the disproportion in the number of units in the analyzed languages. Another factor that caused the difference between the number of English nicknames and nicknames in French and Polish is the degree of acceptance. As previously mentioned, the *nomen falsum* has to be popularly accepted and understood in a given language community, and only such units were taken into account in this research. Units that were used only once, nonrecurring journalistic suggestions, as well as pseudonyms appearing in creative writing pieces were not considered in the study. The nicknames refer mainly to male criminals (199), but there are also a few females (7). It should be stressed that there are 10 pseudonyms that refer to unknown criminals, however, they all point to males. The research list nicknames come from the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries, notwithstanding, already at the stage of preliminary observation, it was possible to state that there are not crucial differences, any impact of the specific time into creating pseudonyms. The corpus contains single (10) as well as multi-word aliases (196).

Thus, the study will first analyze the pseudonyms in search of typical linguistic schemes of their creation. Then, the diversity of inspirations in criminals' nicknaming will be presented.

9 Translated by Paweł Golda.

10 Short link: <https://cutt.ly/1TRefrK>

### 3. Typical Nicknaming Schemes

#### 3.1. The most frequent schemes

The first observation based on the corpus is that the structure of criminals' pseudonyms often follows repeatable constructive schemes. To be precise, 63.11% of multi-word aliases respect four schemes. For the purposes of the paper, they are called as follows:

- BASIS+PLACE\_INDICATION,
- BASIS+VICTIM\_INDICATION,
- BASIS+TIME\_INDICATION,
- BASIS+CRIME\_WEAPON\_INDICATION.

There are also cases of coexistence of two of these schemes, which will be further commented in this section<sup>11</sup>.

The term BASIS means the main and fundamental word of the multi-word pseudonym. In many cases, the basis describes the kind of crime committed by a nicknamed wrongdoer. It is evident that a *killer* killed, or that a *ripper* ripped, and numerous similar examples could be noted. Nevertheless, many bases are not as explanatory because pseudonyms are invented for different purposes. They can be created to shock, cause fear, or emphasize a mystery, among others. Apart from the BASIS, all patterns contain a second element which is either a PLACE\_INDICATION (which describes or indicates a place where the crime was committed), a VICTIM\_INDICATION (which consists of a specification of the victim of the crime), a TIME\_INDICATION (which specifies the time when the crime was committed) or a CRIME\_WEAPON\_INDICATION (which informs about the tool used to commit the crime). Therefore, Part 3.7 is entirely dedicated to the analysis of bases.

The regularity of these schemes in the corpus is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Typical schemes and their frequency

SCHEME	NUMBER OF UNITS	PERCENTAGE
BASIS+PLACE_INDICATION	113 <sup>12</sup>	54.85%
BASIS+VICTIM_INDICATION	10 <sup>13</sup>	4.85%
BASIS+TIME_INDICATION	5 <sup>14</sup>	2.43 %
BASIS+CRIME_WEAPON_INDICATION	5 <sup>15</sup>	2.43%
DOUBLE-SCHEME CASES	3 <sup>16</sup>	1.46%
TOTAL	130	63.11%

<sup>11</sup> See: 3.6

<sup>12</sup> 59 aliases in English, 24 in French and 30 in Polish.

<sup>13</sup> 4 aliases in English, 5 in French and 1 in Polish.

<sup>14</sup> 4 aliases in English and 1 in French.

<sup>15</sup> 5 aliases in English, 1 in Polish and 1 in French.

<sup>16</sup> 2 aliases in English and 1 in Polish.

These schemes, of which the most frequent one is the BASIS+PLACE\_INDICATION, need to be described in more detail, which will be done in the following subsections.

### 3.2. BASIS+PLACE\_INDICATION scheme

This kind of aliases contains the base and the name or characteristics of the place where the crime was committed. Table 2 presents the number and the percentage of frequency of nicknames that follow this structure scheme taking into account each of the languages separately.

Table 2. The scheme BASIS+PLACE\_INDICATION and its frequency in the corpus

LANGUAGE	NUMBER OF UNITS	PERCENTAGE
English	59 <sup>17</sup> (out of 123)	47.97%
French	24 <sup>18</sup> (out of 42)	57.14%
Polish	30 <sup>19</sup> (out of 41)	73.17%
Total	113 (out of 206)	54.85%

This structure is the most frequent in the Polish part of the corpus and the least frequent in the English part. Examples representing this type of criminals' pseudonyms are as follows:

- ENGLISH EXAMPLES: *Brooklyn Vampire* [I, 29]<sup>20</sup>, *Buffalo Ripper* [I, 30], *Butcher of Elmendorf* [I, 33], *Butcher of Times Square* [I, 35], *Cleveland Strangler* [I, 38], *Dallas Ripper* [I, 40], *Desert Killer* [I, 42];
- FRENCH EXAMPLES: *Barbe-Bleue de Gambais (Bluebeard of Gambais)*<sup>21</sup> [II, 3], *Bête de la Bastille (Beast of the Bastille)* [II, 6], *Boucher de l'Yonne (Yonne's Butcher)* [II, 7], *Dépeceur du canal (Cutter of the Canal)* [II, 9], *Empoisonneuse de Chambéry (Poisoner of Chambéry)* [II, 12], *Fantôme de Kehl (Phantom of Kehl)* [II, 13], *Forestier des Ardennes (Ardennes Forester)* [II, 14];
- POLISH EXAMPLES: *Bestia z Chełmży (Chełmża Beast)* [III, 1], *Morderca z Olszynki (Olszynka Murderer)* [III, 9], *Potwór z Osielska (Monster of Osielsko)* [III, 9], *Rzeźnik z Niebuszewa (Butcher of Niebuszewo)* [III, 18], *Szatan z Piotrkowa (Satan from Piotrków)*

17 Numbers of nicknames structured in this way in the English part of the corpus: 3, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 40, 42, 44, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 53, 55, 56, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 70, 79, 81, 90, 91, 92, 99, 100, 101, 103, 105, 107, 108, 109, 110, 114, 116, 120, 121, 123.

18 Numbers of nicknames structured in this way in the French part of the corpus: 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 29, 30, 34, 35, 37, 40, 41.

19 Numbers of nicknames structured in this way in the Polish part of the corpus: 1, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38.

20 For the integrality of the paper, the place of the presented examples in the corpus is noted in square brackets. Roman numerals point to the part of the corpus (as stated in the methodological part, the first part of the corpus contains English nicknames, the second part French nicknames and the third part Polish nicknames), while Arabic numerals specify the number of the row in the table. The short link of the online corpus is: <https://cutt.ly/1TRefrK>

21 French and Polish pseudonyms will be translated into English. Translations will be noted in parentheses. Throughout the article italics will be used for both pseudonyms and their translations.

[III, 23], *Tulipan z Kołobrzegu* (*Tulip of Kołobrzeg*) [III, 25], *Wampir z Zagłębia* (*Zagłębie Vampire*) [III, 35].

The examples presented above show that there are many different types of place indicators used in criminals' nicknaming. Some indicators precise cities, but there are also indications defining streets, various places in the city, provinces, and whole countries. Taking into account the fact that different countries have different administrative divisions, in this paper, the following terms will be used:

- PART OF A CITY<sup>22</sup>,
- CITY,
- AREA<sup>23</sup>,
- REGION OR STATE,
- COUNTRY,
- OTHER.

All aliases following the BASIS+PLACE\_INDICATION scheme were analyzed through the prism of the six types of place indications. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Different types of place specification

TYPE OF PLACE INDICATION	ENGLISH ALIASES Number and percentage [Nos of nicknames in Part I of the corpus]	FRENCH ALIASES Number and percentage [Nos of nicknames in Part II of the corpus]	POLISH ALIASES Number and percentage [Nos of nicknames in Part III of the corpus]	TOTAL Number and percentage
PART OF A CITY	9 15.25% [29, 35, 56, 91, 99, 100, 101, 110, 114]	5 20.83% [6, 14, 22, 35, 37]	2 6.67% [19, 32]	16 14.15%
CITY	24 40.68% [13, 14, 16, 21, 25, 30, 31, 33, 34, 37, 38, 40, 48, 61, 62, 70, 79, 90, 92, 105, 107, 108, 116, 121]	8 33.33% [3, 4, 8, 13, 17, 12, 18, 21]	23 76.67% 1, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 18, 20, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 36, 38]	55 48.67%
AREA	1 1.69% [120]	8 33.33% [7, 20, 23, 24, 25, 30, 34, 40]	-	9 7.96%

22 For the purposes of this paper, the term PART OF THE CITY includes the meaning of English words such as 'borough', 'district' and 'neighborhood', French words such as 'quartier' and 'arrondissement', as well as Polish words 'dzielnica' and 'osiedle'.

23 In the present paper, AREA refers to English 'county', French 'commune' and 'prefecture', as well as Polish 'powiat' and 'gmina'. To paraphrase, it means the territory bigger than a city, but smaller than a region or state.



TYPE OF PLACE INDICATION	ENGLISH ALIASES Number and percentage [Nos of nicknames in Part I of the corpus]	FRENCH ALIASES Number and percentage [Nos of nicknames in Part II of the corpus]	POLISH ALIASES Number and percentage [Nos of nicknames in Part III of the corpus]	TOTAL Number and percentage
REGION OR STATE	4 6.78% [7, 22, 50, 109]	-	1 3.33% [22]	5 4.42%
COUNTRY	1 1.69% [3]	-	1 3.33% [14]	2 1.77%
OTHER	20 33.9% [11, 12, 15, 17, 24, 26, 39, 42, 44, 46, 47, 49, 53, 55, 58, 59, 60, 81, 103, 123]	3 12.5% [29, 9, 41]	3 10% [10, 12, 35]	26 23%

As shown, the most frequently used type of a place is the name of a city (48.67%), while the name of a country is used the least frequently (1.77%). 23% of nicknames contain a specific designation of place ("OTHER" in Table 3), the majority of which being in English. Namely, 32.2% of 59 language nicknames following the BASIS+PLACE\_INDICATION scheme are founded on a particular place specification, such as:

- words that emphasize the fact of movement: *Boxcar Killer* [I, 26], *Cross-Country Killer* [I, 39], *East Area Rapist* [I, 44], *Interstate Killer* [I, 60];
- names of streets or their types: *Highway Killer* [I, 55], *I-5 Killer* [I, 58], *I-5 Strangler* [I, 59], *Freeway Killer* [I, 47], *Baseline Killer* [I, 11];
- names of deserts, parks or forests: *Desert Killer* [I, 42], *Forest Park Serial Killer* [I, 46], *Gilham Park Strangler* [I, 49], *Hampton Roads Killer* [I, 53], *Monster of Cannock Chase* [I, 81];
- names of continents: *Borgia of America* [I, 24];
- words that suggest that a crime was committed in a residential building: *Bathtub Killer* [I, 12], *Bedroom Basher* [I, 15];
- words that refer to various public places: *Bird Man of Alcatraz* [I, 17], *Station Strangler* [I, 103], *Zoo Man* [I, 123];

Three French language aliases contain a specific indication of crime's place. The first is the *Dépeceur du canal* (*Cutter of the Canal*) [II, 9]. This pseudonym evokes the Canal de la Marne au Rhin, which is a canal in north-eastern France. It is a localization of crimes committed by Nadir Sedrati. Then, the *Sanglier des Maures* (*Boar of the Moors*) [II, 29] contains the name of a small mountain range in south-eastern France, located in the Var department, near Fraxinet and between Hyères and Fréjus. The last French pseudonym to be presented is the *Tueur des Trains* (*Train Killer*) [II, 41], indicating that the murders were committed in trains.





There are also three Polish aliases that need to be analyzed, with the *Morderca z Pikiety* (*Cottage Murderer*) [III, 10] being the first one. The word 'pikieta' derives from Polish gay slang and means a meeting place for people looking for fast and anonymous sex<sup>24</sup>, and the nickname refers to the murderer who killed homosexual men in Łódź. Then, the *Nadwiślański Landru* (*Vistula Landru*) [III, 12] is based on the adjective 'nadwiślański' that is used to describe something that occurs or is located around the Vistula river. Finally, the *Wampir z Zagłębia* (*Zagłębie Vampire*) [III, 35] is the last example to be observed. This criminal acted in Dąbrowa Basin (Polish: *Zagłębie*) in the Silesian voivodship.

### 3.3. BASIS+VICTIM\_INDICATION scheme

The following scheme to be discussed is BASIS+VICTIM\_INDICATION. This is the structure composed of the BASIS and the VICTIM\_INDICATION, which specifies the crime victim. Table 4 presents the number and percentage of the frequency of nicknames that follow this structure scheme in the research corpus, taking into account each of the languages separately.

Table 4. The scheme BASIS+VICTIM\_INDICATION and its frequency in the corpus

LANGUAGE	NUMBER OF UNITS	PERCENTAGE
English	4 <sup>25</sup> (out of 123)	3.25%
French	5 <sup>26</sup> (out of 42)	11.9%
Polish	1 <sup>27</sup> (out of 41)	2.44%
Total	10 (out of 206)	4.85%

This scheme is the most often used in the creation of French nicknames. All aliases respecting this structure scheme are demonstrated below:

- ENGLISH EXAMPLES: *Boston Woman-Murderer* [I, 25], *Brides-in-the-bath Murderer* [I, 28], *Granny Killer* [I, 51], *Granny Killer* [I, 52];
- FRENCH EXAMPLES: *Assassin des bonnes* (*Maid Killer*) [II, 1], *Assassin des servants* (*Maid Killer*) [II, 2], *Tueur à mamie* (*Granny Killer*) [II, 32], *Tueur de femmes* (*Killer of Women*) [II, 33], *Tueur de vieilles dames* (*Old Lady Killer*) [II, 39];
- POLISH EXAMPLES: *Morderca gejów z Łodzi* (*Łódź Gay Murderer*) [III, 8].

As it can be observed, 90% of these examples refer to female victims. 10% of nicknames refer to sexual minority members. Moreover, 40% of these examples were used to nickname killers of elderly people.

<sup>24</sup> <http://re-sources.uw.edu.pl/reader/w-kisielandzie/> [date of access: 19.11.2021].

<sup>25</sup> Numbers of nicknames structured in this way in the English part of the corpus: 25, 28, 51, 52.

<sup>26</sup> Numbers of nicknames structured in this way in the French part of the corpus: 1, 2, 32, 33, 39.

<sup>27</sup> Numbers of nicknames structured in this way in the Polish part of the corpus: 8.

### 3.4. BASIS+TIME\_INDICATION scheme

Another scheme that occurs is BASIS+TIME\_INDICATION. This structure is composed of a main word and of a specification of time when the crime was committed. Table 5 presents the number and percentage of the frequency of aliases formed in this way, taking into account each of the languages separately.

Table 5. The scheme BASIS+TIME\_INDICATION and its frequency in the corpus

LANGUAGE	NUMBER OF UNITS	PERCENTAGE
English	4 <sup>28</sup> (out of 123)	3.25%
French	1 <sup>29</sup> (out of 42)	2.38%
Polish	0	0%
Total	5 (out of 206)	2.43%

The four English aliases that were counted as units following this scheme are the *Black-out Ripper* [I, 19], the *Night Strangler* [I, 85], the *Original Night Stalker* [I, 86], the *Saturday Night Strangler* [I, 94]. These units demonstrate a day of the week or a part of the day. The only French pseudonym considered as belonging to this category is the *Tueur de l'ombre* (*Shadow Killer*) [II, 36]. In French, the word 'ombre' ('shadow') also means "[t]otal absence of light, night"<sup>30</sup>. The confirmation that in terms of this pseudonym the word 'ombre' refers to the night can be found in Bernand (1978: 172): "Thanks to the evocative power of the media he [Marcel Barbeault] will become, on January 30, 1969 (a week after the death of Mme A) 'the Shadow killer': the shadow of the falling night and that of his own body, which vanishes into the dark (...)"<sup>31</sup>.

### 3.5 BASIS+CRIME\_WEAPON\_INDICATION scheme

The next scheme is BASIS+CRIME\_WEAPON\_INDICATION which consists of the basis and the name of the crime weapon. The frequency of this structure is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. The scheme BASIS+CRIME\_WEAPON\_INDICATION and its frequency in the corpus

LANGUAGE	NUMBER OF UNITS	PERCENTAGE
English	3 (out of 123)	2.44%
French	1 (out of 42)	2.38%
Polish	1 (out of 41)	2.44%
Total	5 (out of 206)	2.43%

28 Numbers of nicknames structured in this way in the English part of the corpus: 19, 85, 86, 94.

29 Number of nicknames structured in this way in the French part of the corpus: 36.

30 <https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/ombre> [date of access: 15.04.2021]. The lexical definition translated by Paweł Golda.

31 Translated by Paweł Golda.

The aliases structured in this way are:

- ENGLISH EXAMPLES: *Berrima Axe Murderer* [I, 16], *Brick Moron* [I, 27], *Scissors Man* [I, 95];
- FRENCH EXAMPLES: *Tueur à l'oreiller (Pillow Killer)* [II, 31];
- POLISH EXAMPLES: *Ręcznikowy dusiciel (Towel Strangler)* [III, 16].

The words 'axe', 'brick', 'scissors', 'oreiller' ('pillow'), and ręcznik ('towel') represent the objects used by the criminals to commit a crime. However, some of them can be considered not to be typical crime weapons, i.e., towels, pillows, or bricks are not usually associated with crimes.

### 3.6. DOUBLE-SCHEME CASES

As stated above (see: section 3.1), certain nicknames follow two of the proposed schemes. This group contains three English examples: *Boston Woman-Murderer* [I, 25] and *Berrima Axe Murderer* [I, 16], and one Polish example: *Morderca gejów z Łodzi (Łódź Gay Murderer)* [III, 8]. Both the first English example and the Polish one represent the fusion of specifying the place of the crime and its victim, whereas *Berrima Axe Murderer* [I, 16] merges the place and the crime weapon.

### 3.7. BASIS

Throughout this article, the BASIS is the main and fundamental element of the multi-word pseudonym. In many cases, it discloses the kind of crime which was committed by the nicknamed wrongdoer. Thanks to the observation of the trilingual corpus, it is possible to state that some bases are more typical for one language but may not exist in another. Table 7 presents bases observed in the corpus and some numerical information about their frequency. It must be stressed that this table contains only bases which are the foundation for the nicknames respecting the four schemes analyzed in this work.

Table 7. Bases

NO	ENGLISH Basis and number of occurrences [Scheme <sup>32</sup> : Nos]	FRENCH Basis and number of occurrences [Scheme: Nos]	POLISH Basis and number of occurrences [Scheme: Nos]	TOTAL
1	Angel of Death 1 [BPI: 37]	Ange de la mort 0	Anioł śmierci 0	1
2	Assassin 0	Assassin 2 [BVI: 1, 2]	<i>No distinct equivalent</i> <sup>33</sup> 0	2

32 In this table the naming of schemes was abbreviated for space reasons: BPI = BASIS+PLACE\_INDICATION; BVI = BASIS+VICTIM\_INDICATION, BTI = BASIS+TIME\_INDICATION, BCWI = BASIS+CRIME\_WEAPON\_INDICATION. Double-scheme cases are marked by the "&".

33 In English (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/assassin>; [date of access: 15.11.2020]) and in French (<https://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/assassin/5779?q=assassin#5753>; [date of access: 15.11.2020]) the words 'assassin' are perfectly equivalent. On the contrary, in Polish there is no term that would be a perfect equivalent. Polish

NO	ENGLISH Basis and number of occurrences [Scheme <sup>32</sup> : Nos]	FRENCH Basis and number of occurrences [Scheme: Nos]	POLISH Basis and number of occurrences [Scheme: Nos]	TOTAL
3	Basher 1 [BPI: 15]	<i>No distinct equivalent</i> 0	Napastnik 0	1
4	Beast 1 [BPI: 14]	Bête 1 [BPI: 6]	Bestia 1 [BPI: 1]	3
5	Bill(y) 2 [BPI: 7, 109]	Bill(y) 0	Bill(y) 0	2
6	Bird Man 1 [BPI: 17]	Homme-oiseau <sup>34</sup> 0	Ptasznik 0	1
7	Bluebeard 4 [BPI: 3, 21, 22, 105]	Barbe-Bleue 1 [BPI: 3]	Sinobrody 0	5
8	Boar 0	Sanglier 1 [BPI: 28]	Dzik 0	1
9	Borgia 1 [BPI: 24]	Borgia 0	Borgia 0	1
10	Buster 1 [BPI: 31]	Brigand 0	Drań 0	1
11	Butcher 4 [BPI: 33, 34, 35, 61]	Boucheur 1 [BPI: 7]	Rzeźnik 4 [BPI: 17, 18, 19, 20]	9
12	Casanova 0	Casanova 1 [BPI: 8]	Casanova 1 [BPI: 13]	2
13	Cutter 0	Dépeceur 1 [BPI: 9]	Rozczłonkowujący 0	1
14	Forester 0	Forestier 1 [BPI: 14]	Leśniczy 0	1

speakers use the word “zabójca”/“morderca” appearing below in this table, and qualify it with an appropriate adjective or with a description for updating the term to the proper context.

34 The pseudonym *Bird Man of Alcatraz* is translated into French as the *Homme aux Canaris of Alcatraz* (for instance, in terms of the Wikipedia article). However, literal translation of this alias would be the *Homme-oiseau of Alcatraz*.

## ENGLISH, FRENCH AND POLISH ALIASES OF CRIMINALS

NO	ENGLISH Basis and number of occurrences [Scheme <sup>32</sup> : Nos]	FRENCH Basis and number of occurrences [Scheme: Nos]	POLISH Basis and number of occurrences [Scheme: Nos]	TOTAL
15	Jack the Ripper 0	Jack l'éventreur 1 [18]	Kuba Rozpruwacz 0	1
16	Killer 15 [BPI: 11, 12, 26, 39, 42, 47, 50, 53, 55, 58, 60, 120; BVI: 51, 52; BCWI: 27]	Tueur 10 [BPI: 34, 35, 37, 40, 41; BVI: 32, 33, 39; BTI: 36; BCWI: 31]	Zabójca 1 [BPI: 38]	26
17	Landru 0	Landru 1 [BPI: 20]	Landru 2 [BPI: 12, 14]	3
18	Man 1 [BPI: 123]	Homme 0	Człowiek 0	1
19	Monster 1 [BPI: 81]	Monstre 2 [BPI: 22, 23]	Potwór/Monstrum 2 [BPI: 7, 15]	5
20	Murderer 3 [BVI: 28; BPI&BVI: 25; BPI&BCWI: 16]	Meurtrier 0	Morderca 5 [BPI: 1, 9, 10, 11; BPI&BVI: 8]	8
21	Mutilator 1 [BPI: 107]	Mutilateur 0	Okaleczający 0	1
22	Ogre(ss) 0	Ogre(ss) 2 [BPI: 24, 25]	Ogr(zyca) 0	2
23	Phantom 0	Fantôme 1 [BPI: 13]	Fantom 0	1
24	Pied Piper 2 [BPI: 91, 92]	Joueur de flute 0	Fletnik 0	2
25	Poisoner 0	Empoisonneur 1 [BPI: 12]	Truciciel 0	1
26	Ransacker 1 [BPI: 116]	Saccageur 0	Grabieżca 0	1
27	Rapist 1 [BPI: 44]	Voleur 0	Gwałciciel 0	1

NO	ENGLISH Basis and number of occurrences [Scheme <sup>32</sup> : Nos]	FRENCH Basis and number of occurrences [Scheme: Nos]	POLISH Basis and number of occurrences [Scheme: Nos]	TOTAL
28	Ripper 7 [BPI: 30, 40, 48, 56, 110, 121; BTI: 19]	Eventreur 0	Rozpruwacz 0	7
29	Satan 0	Satan 0	Szatan 1 [BPI: 23]	1
30	Savage 0	Sauvage 1 [BPI: 30]	Dziki/Dzikus 0	1
31	Scorpion 0	Scorpion 0	Skorpion 1 [BPI: 22]	1
32	Serial Killer 3 [BPI: 13, 46, 70]	Tueur en série 0	Seryjny zabójca 0	3
33	Shepherd 0	Berger 1 [BPI: 4]	Pasterz 0	1
34	Slasher 1 [BPI: 99]	<i>No distinct equivalent</i> 0	<i>No distinct equivalent</i> 0	1
35	Slayer 1 [BPI: 100]	<i>No distinct equivalent</i> 0	Pogromca 0	1
36	Slaughterer 0	Massacreur 1 [BPI: 21]	No distinct equivalent 0	1
37	Stabber 1 [BPI: 101]	Poignard 0	Nożownik 0	1
38	Stalker 1 [BTI: 86]	Stalker 0	Stalker 0	1
39	Strangler 9 [BPI: 38, 49, 59, 62, 90, 103, 108; BTI: 85, 94]	Étrangleur 0	Dusiciel 1 [BCWI: 16]	11
40	Svengali 1 [BPI: 79]	Svengali 0	Svengali 0	1



NO	ENGLISH Basis and number of occurrences [Scheme <sup>32</sup> : Nos]	FRENCH Basis and number of occurrences [Scheme: Nos]	POLISH Basis and number of occurrences [Scheme: Nos]	TOTAL
41	Tulip 0	Tulipe 0	Tulipan 2 [BPI: 24, 25, 26]	3
42	Vampire 2 [BPI: 29, 114]	Vampire 0	Wampir 10 [BPI: 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36]	12
43	Watchmaker 0	Horloger 1 [BPI: 17]	Zegarmistrz 0	1

By collating the bases in a table, it is possible to observe that these parts of aliases can be very diversified. Therefore, there are many various inspirations in terms of the creation of a nickname. A classification of nicknames' bases is proposed below:

- ANIMALS' NAMES,
- MYTHOLOGICALLY, BIBLICALLY OR FOLKLORICALLY-INSPIRED<sup>35</sup>,
- CONTAINING PROFESSION NAMES,
- DISCLOSING THE TYPE OF COMMITTED CRIME(S),
- INSPIRED BY HISTORICAL FIGURES,
- INSPIRED BY LITERATURE,
- OTHER.

The frequency of these types of bases is presented in Table 8:

Table 8. Types of bases and their frequency

TYPE	NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF BASES BELONGING TO THIS TYPE (OUT OF 43 BASES LISTED IN TABLE 7)  {Nos of bases in Table 7}	NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF NICKNAMES FOUNDED ON THIS BASIS TYPE (OUT OF 130 ALIASES BASED ON FOUR MAIN NICKNAMING SCHEMES)
ANIMALS' NAMES	2 (4.65%)  {8, 30}	2 (1.54%)
MYTHOLOGICALLY, BIBLICALLY OR FOLKLORICALLY- INSPIRED	7 (16.28%)  {1, 4, 19, 22, 23, 29, 41}	26 (20%)

<sup>35</sup> Classification in alphabetical order.



TYPE	NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF BASES BELONGING TO THIS TYPE (OUT OF 43 BASES LISTED IN TABLE 7)  {Nos of bases in Table 7}	NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF NICKNAMES FOUNDED ON THIS BASIS TYPE (OUT OF 130 ALIASES BASED ON FOUR MAIN NICKNAMING SCHEMES)
CONTAINING PROFESSION NAME	4 (9.3%)  {11, 14, 32, 42}	12 (9.23%)
DISCLOSING THE TYPE OF COMMITTED CRIME(S)	18 (41.86%)  {2, 3, 10, 13, 16, 20, 21, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38}	69 (53.07%)
INSPIRED BY HISTORICAL FIGURES	4 (9.3%)  {9, 12, 15, 17}	7 (5.38%)
INSPIRED BY LITERATURE	3 (6.98%)  {7, 24, 39}	8 (6.15%)
OTHER	5 (11.63%)  {5, 6, 18, 40, 43}	7 (5.38%)

As it can be observed from the data presented in Table 8, the majority of nicknames' bases disclose the type of crime committed by the nicknamed criminal. It can also be observed that biblical, mythological, and folkloric inspirations are important, with 16.28% of the bases representing this type.

Therefore, the following section discusses the examples of commonly used inspirations that can be distinguished in criminals' nicknames.

## 4. Nicknaming Inspirations

### 4.1. Mythologically, biblically or folklorically inspired aliases

As stated in the previous section, in the research corpus, it is possible to find nicknames based on biblical, mythological, and folkloric motives. In this subdivision of the paper, all these notions will be shortly presented, and the analysis starts with the *angel of death*.

#### ANGEL OF DEATH

According to Newton (2000: 276–277), there is a disturbing number of serial killers operating in hospitals, clinics, dentist offices, and other kinds of medical places. They are people working in medical professions for whom the patients are their victims. The choice of a career in medicine may be motivated by the ease that the person can kill. Medical murders are perpetrated by people in the ranks of licensed

physicians, dentists, nurses, and other hospital employees, such as nurses' aides. This is a diversified group including both males and females, people of different skin color. Newton (*Ibidem*) distinguishes four subgroups of medical murderers:

- *mercy killers* who end the lives and pain of suffering patients;
- *heroes* who precipitate life-or-death emergencies with the will of stepping in to save a patient;
- *profit-motivated medical killers*;
- *healers* who sexually abuse their patients.

The pseudonym which is often attributed to medical criminals is the *angel of death*. It happens that this fixed language unit is updated with, for instance, the name of the place where the crime was committed. According to Howarth and Leaman (2001: 16–17), angels are beings that often appear in the Bible. They are messengers of God, as He Himself does not communicate directly with people. In terms of the angel of death, this divine representative was ordered to take the life of all first-born males in Egypt except for Israeli men and boys, resulting in the Exodus of the Israelites taking place. Howarth and Leaman (*Ibidem*) write that the notion of the angel of death was secularized at the turn of the millennium like many other religious concepts. The secularization and trend of giving new meaning to biblical motives explain the appearance of this term in medical criminals' aliases. There are three examples of this alias in the research corpus. The *Angel of Death* is the pseudonym of Beverly Allitt [I, 5] and Efreñ Saldivar [I, 6], but there is also Donald Harvey's nickname, the *Cincinnati's Angel of Death* [I, 37], which was specified by the indication of the crime place.

### SATAN

The second inspiration to be discussed is *Satan*. This term first appears in the Old Testament and only refers to a function and not a person, while the impersonation of Satan starts in the New Testament, and then, the word begins to be spelled with the capital letter. Satan is considered the prince of evil and God's enemy (Davidson 1998: 273). It is worth noting that the word 'Satan' appears in various grammatical forms in the Old Testament 27 times and in the much shorter New Testament 36 times (Kościelniak 2002: 85). According to Russell (1981: 28), in the Aggadah, the stories that are a part of the rabbinical exegesis of the Bible and the Talmud, Satan does not exist independently from God who uses him to test hearts and verify faithfulness of the people. The word in question is present in the Polish pseudonym *Szatan z Piotrkowa* (*Satan of Piotrków*) [III, 23] found in the corpus table. Moreover, the French pseudonym *Docteur Satan* (*Satan Doctor*) [II, 11] constitutes another example.

### BEAST

The third and the last biblical motive found in the research list of aliases is the *beast*. Hinkelammert (1995: 100–102) acknowledges that the Beast appears i.a. in the Apocalypse of John. Zakrzewska (2018: 116) states that each beast is a symbol of fear inherent in the mentality of people of a given period of history. What the beast is and what its properties are, depend on what this fear is directed against. In the research corpus, there are three examples of pseudonyms based on this word, namely the *Beast of Atteridgeville* [I, 14], the *Bête de la Bastille* (*the Beast of the Bastille*) [II, 6] and the *Bestia z Chełmży* (*Chełmża Beast*) [III, 1]. Therefore, there is an example of a *beast* in each of the analyzed languages.



## GHOUL

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The *ghoul*, as Al-Rawi (2009: 43, 58) writes, is a demon-like being or monstrous humanoid born in the Mesopotamian civilization. However, Arabs were the ones responsible for popularizing this creature. The researcher states that the ghouls' mysterious nature is emphasized by the fact that there is no agreement about its characteristics and its features (similarly to the case of the beast). The author writes that "the ghouls are thought to be a kind of devil, genie, enchantress of genies, devilish genie, and spirit. However, most accounts mention this monster as an ugly and harmful female creature" (Al-Rawi 2009: 58). In the research corpus, the pseudonym *Human Ghoul* [I, 57] is based on this mysterious being's name.

## OGRE

The *ogre* can be defined as a cannibalistic humanoid with the malicious manner of behaving and reacting. This folkloric being may be described as stronger, bigger, and stockier than an ordinary human, but still smaller than a giant. Ogre's large head and hairiness are its characteristic features. The origin of the ogre may have its source in pre-Christian Scandinavian Vikings' folklore (Bane 2016: 121–122). This word is the foundation for two French nicknames in the research corpus which are the *Ogre des Ardennes* (*Ogre of the Ardennes*) [II, 24] and the *Ogresse de la Goutte-d'Or* (*Goutte-d'Or Ogress*) [II, 25].

## PHANTOM

According to Carola (2012: 65), the *phantom* can be defined as a shadow, a specter, or a supernatural entity often pervaded by something evil. Phantom may manifest itself visually or by making humans hear strange sounds or distorting the perception. In other words, the phantom affects sensory systems. These beings were mainly present in European folklore and culture. They were present in literature since antiquity, but the particular fame of this theme can be dated to the end of the 18th century (Sturli 2015). In the table of aliases, there is one French nickname based on this word which is the *Fantôme de Kehl* (*Phantom of Kehl*) [II, 13].

## VAMPIRE

In terms of the *vampire*, "the reanimated body of a dead person believed to come from the grave at night and suck the blood of persons asleep"<sup>36</sup>, Wolek (2012: 122–123) writes that the faith in their existence was based on two factors: on a belief in an afterlife and on a belief in the life-giving power of the blood. The researcher states that characters which could be considered as vampires do not appear in the Greco-Roman mythology, but there are a lot of mythological creatures who have vampire-like traits, such as drinking blood, night activity, extraordinary strength, and speed, being undead, hypnotizing abilities, etc., which might have resulted in introducing the vampire later on. In the nicknames' research base, there are 13 aliases founded on this motive. English examples are the *Brooklyn Vampire* [I, 29], the *Vampire of Sacramento* [I, 114], and the *Vampire Rapist* [I, 115], whereas Polish examples are the *Wampir z Bytomia* (*Vampire of Bytom*) [III, 27], the *Wampir z Bytowa* (*Vampire of Bytów*) [III, 28] and the *Wampir z Galkówka* (*Vampire of Galkówka*) [III, 29].

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vampire> [date of access: 15.11.2021].



## WEREWOLF

The word ‘werewolf’, meaning “a person transformed into a wolf or capable of assuming a wolf’s form”<sup>37</sup>, is used as a basis for creating criminals’ aliases too. This motive is present in several cultures and dates back to the beginning of human history. The first appearance of a werewolf as a literary theme is the Greek tale of Lycaon written by Ovid, but many older oral stories can be found in Norse, Scandinavian, Icelandic, and Teutonic traditions. Werewolves were violent, had ravenous appetites and the desire for destruction. There are many tales about a single werewolf that slaughtered an entire herd of animals on a single night (Bane 2016: 160). The example in the corpus representing this word as a pseudonym’s basis is the *Werewolf Killer* [I, 118].

## MONSTER

The last motive to be discussed is the ‘monster’. This is the most general term analyzed until now. Many researchers quoted before (e.g.: Bane 2016, Sturli 2015) used the word *monster* as a synonym or hyperonym to other kinds of legendary, mythical, unreal beings. This is a widespread and frequent foundation for criminals’ pseudonyms of which the examples found in the corpus are: English aliases the *Monster Butler* [I, 80], the *Monster of Cannock Chase* [I, 81], the *Monster of the Wedge* [I, 82], French pseudonyms the *Monstre de Montmartre (Monster of Montmartre)* [II, 22] and the *Monstre des Ardennes (Ardennes Monster)* [II, 23], as well as Polish pseudonyms the *Monstrum z Chorzowa (Chorzów Monster)* [III, 7] and the *Potwór z Osielska (Monster of Osielsko)* [III, 15].

### 4.2. Literature-inspired aliases

Another noticeable inspiration for nicknames’ creation is literature and culture. This kind of aliases’ inspirations will be discussed in this part of the paper.

## SVENGALI

In terms of literary inspirations, *Svengali* is often a literary hero’s name that started to be used to designate a crime perpetrator. This mystical creature was thought to be a kind of a demonic healer who mesmerized mostly women. The novel *Trilby* by George du Maurier from 1894 is the most important work on Svengali. Its title character is a young English model living in Paris. She is taken over by a pianist-hypnotist whose name is Svengali (Czeczot 2016: 335). In the research corpus, it is possible to find the nickname *Minneapolis Svengali* [I, 79] inspired by this literary motive. Interestingly, the man nicknamed this way, Harry Hayward, was thought to have hypnotic powers<sup>38</sup>.

## PIED PIPER

Other nicknames drawn from literature and being part of the corpus are the *Pied Piper of Staten Island* [I, 91] and the *Pied Piper of Tucson* [I, 92]. The source of the aliases’ inspiration is Brothers Grimm’s tale,

37 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/werewolf> [date of access: 15.11.2020].

38 <http://www.murderbygaslight.com/2010/05/minneapolis-svengali.html> [date of access: 27.11.2020].



the *Pied Piper of Hamelin*. The tale's title character took all children of the village of Hamelin away using a flute and then drowned them in the Weser. The reason for this act was that Pied Piper did the villagers a service, freed the village from rats, but he was refused to be paid. The disappearance of children was an act of revenge, resulting from debt not paid by the parents (Favereau 2013: 15-18). It is worth noticing that both the *Pied Piper of Staten Island* and the *Pied Piper of Tucson* were responsible for children's disappearances (Newton 2000: 397, 405).

### BLUEBEARD

*Pied Piper* is not the only fairy-tale inspiration that can be observed in the bank of nicknames constructed for the purposes of this research. It is possible to observe many pseudonyms with the word 'Bluebeard' among these nicknames. English aliases with this component are the *American Bluebeard* [I, 3], the *Bluebeard of Quiet Dell* [I, 21], the *Bluebeard of South Texas* [I, 22], the *Mail-ordered Bluebeard* [I, 77], the *Stockyard Bluebeard* [I, 105]. There is also one French alias which is the *Barbe-Bleue de Gambais* (*Bluebeard of Gambais*) [II, 3]. *Bluebeard*, according to Kaczyńska (2018: 14), was the most bloody and pessimistic Perrault's opus which narrates a story of a serial wife-killer.

### FANTOMAS

Another literary protagonist who inspired a nickname was *Fantomas*. French writers Pierre Souvestre and Marcel Allain created the bandit Fantomas in 1911 and published a series of 32 episodes of his adventures between 1911 and 1913. After the death of Souvestre, Marcel Allain continued to publish adventures of this character. It is worth adding that Fantomas was a master of the art of disguise and he was considered a crime genius (Barataud 2013). The *Fantomas* (*Fantomas*) [III, 4] is a Polish serial killer's nickname.

### FRANKENSTEIN

Another literary protagonist which inspired a Polish pseudonym is *Frankenstein* [III, 5]. The story of Victor Frankenstein is told in the 1818 Mary Shelley's well-known novel under the name of the protagonist. Frankenstein was a young scientist who created a sapient creature in a scientific experiment (Araújo, Guimarães 2014: 14–15).

### LORD OF THE FLIES

Another example of a literary title that inspired the nickname of a serial killer is William Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies* from 1954. Its Polish version was titled *Władca Much* and published in 1967. This translation and its publication year are significant as this title's Polish equivalent became a nickname of a Polish serial killer who perpetrated his crimes in 1966 and 1967 [III, 37].

### INJUN JOE

Then, one protagonist created by Mark Twain in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* inspired the creation of a criminal's pseudonym. French killer Guy Georges is also known as the *Joe le Killer* [II, 19], a French name of Injun Joe, Twain's character. This nickname resulted from the fact that the French criminal liked this literary hero (Bournoville 2003: 204).



**RAMBO**

*Rambo* is the next example of a literary protagonist and a nickname present in the research bank of aliases [II, 27]. John Rambo as a literary protagonist was created by the writer David Morrell, who published the book *First Blood* in 1972. Sylvester Stallone and three cinema films made between 1982 and 1988 participated in popularizing the personage of Rambo in culture (Zarębski 2008: 28).

**BLACK PANTHER**

Another example to be discussed in this category is the *Black Panther* which is both a comic superhero and a nickname of a crime perpetrator. Firstly, it has to be reminded that the Black Panther is a fictional superhero that appears in American comic books published by Marvel Comics. Creators of this protagonist were writer-editor Stan Lee and writer-artist Jack Kirby. This hero first appeared in the *Fantastic Four* #52 in 1966. Black Panther's real name is T'Challa. It is worth adding that this personage was a king of Wakanda, a fictional nation in Africa (Howard, Jackson 2013: 140-141). In the research table of aliases, there is the nickname *Black Panther* [I, 18], a pseudonym of Donald Neilson. He received this pseudonym since he acted very quickly and had dark clothes (Valentine 1976).

**4.3. Historical figures-inspired aliases**

Historical figures represent the next type of inspiration for wrongdoers' pseudonyms. Five historical people inspired aliases in the research corpus.

**BORGIA**

The first alias refers to Lucrezia Borgia whose name, according to Bradford (2005), has been used as a pseudonym of evil for five hundred years. For five centuries, her life has been the center of interests through the prism of the crimes committed by the Borgia family. Lucrezia Borgia was an archetypal villainess and became a motive in many branches of art. She appears on pages of books written by authors such as Dumas or Hugo. It is worth adding that her figure was popularized again by historiography in the second half of the 19th century. Therefore, in the research corpus, there is a pseudonym based on the proper noun *Borgia*. The alias in question is the *Borgia of America* [I, 24].

**CASANOVA**

The next historical personage who is an inspiration in criminals' nicknaming is Giacomo Casanova, a well-known European adventurer, traveler, and writer. He wrote his memoirs in which he described life in the eighteenth-century European capitals. Casanova's literary work contains numerous descriptions of love conquests, and thanks to this fact, his name became a synonym for a seducer in many languages. Furthermore, his surname became a founding word for criminals' aliases. In the research corpus, there are the following nicknames based on this name: the *Casanova Killer* [I, 36], the *Casanova de Montréal* (*Montreal Casanova*) [II, 8], the *Polski Casanova z Dziwnowa* (*Polish Casanova of Dziwnów*) [III, 13].



## JACK THE RIPPER

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There are a few particular examples of criminals whose surnames or nicknames created aliases for other wrongdoers. In the corpus, there is one example of a pseudonym based on another already well-known pseudonym, *Jack the Ripper*. This one was attributed to an unknown murderer whose crimes were committed in 1888. The fact that the Ripper's crimes became so popular may be influenced by their sexual nature (Błaszczuk 2018: 55–57). The alias based on this pseudonym is the *Jack l'éventreur de Marseille* (*Jack the Ripper of Marseille*) [II, 18].

## LANDRU

A similar situation took place in the case of three nicknames based on the surname *Landru*. French killer Henri Landru used personal advertisements to find victims among widows and divorcees. Between 1914 and 1919, this French murderer seduced two hundred and twenty-three women and killed an unknown number of them (Bournoville 2003: 40). Pseudonyms based on his family name are the *Landru du Val-d'Oise* (*Landru of Val-d'Oise*) [II, 20], the *Nadwiślański Landru* (*Vistula Landru*) [III, 12] and the *Polski Landru* (*Polish Landru*) [III, 14].

## TULIP

The *Tulipan z Dziwnowa* (*Tulip of Dziwnów*) [III, 24], a nickname of a Polish criminal and a womanizer Jerzy Kalibabka, became the source for creation of other pseudonyms. Therefore, in the research table pseudonyms such as the *Tulipan z Kołobrzegu* (*Tulip of Kołobrzeg*) [III, 25] and the *Tulipan z Wrocławia* (*Tulip of Wrocław*) [III, 26] can be found.

## 4.4. Aliases based on names or surnames

The next category of inspiration useful for creating nicknames for criminals contains surnames, given names, and diminutives of given names. Starting with surnames, in the corpus table, there are three pseudonyms based on this type of common nouns. Two of them are in English: the *Liver-Eating Johnson* [I, 69] of John Johnson and the *Stoudenmire the Buther* [I, 106] of Dallas Stoudenmire. The third pseudonym following this type is a French alias: the *Docteur Petiot* (*Doctor Petiot*) [II, 10]. In terms of given names, the research list contains two units based on them: the English pseudonym *Excell the Executioner* [I, 45] of Robert Excell White and the alias *Zimna Lucyna* (*Cold Lucyna*) of Lucyna D<sup>39</sup>.

Diminutive versions of given names are more frequently used as bases for criminals' nicknames. There are ten English aliases in the list of pseudonyms created for purposes of this study which follow this type: the *Bloody Bill* [I, 20] of William Anderson, the *Bonzai Bob* [I, 23] of Robert Wayne Vickers, the *Killin' Jim* [I, 64] of James Miller, the *Mad Dan* [I, 73] of Daniel Morgan, the *Mild Bill* [I, 78] of William Ernes Leasure, the *Mysterious Dave* [I, 84] of David Mather, *Owney the Killer* [I, 87] of Owen Madden, the *Texas Billy* [I, 109] of William Thompson, *Tony the Ant* [I, 111] of Anthony Spilotro and the *Wild Bill* [I, 119] of William Lovett. One similar French nickname is the *Pierrot le Fou* (*Pete the Mad*) [II, 26]

39 In some of the real names of Polish criminals only the first letter of the surname is known because according to the Polish law, the press cannot publish personal data of people involved in ongoing investigations without their consent.





of Pierre Bodein. In French, *Pierrot* is a diminutive of the given name *Pierre*. Furthermore, in the French part of the corpus, there is one pseudonym which contains the first letter of the criminal's given name and surname, and that is the nickname *G le Maudit* (*G the Damned*) [II, 15] of Guy Georges.

Another remark that can be made is that there are three examples of criminals whose identities remain unknown but who received nicknames containing given names. These examples are the *Arkansas Bill* [I, 7], the *Bald Head Pete* [I, 10], and the *Buster from Chicago* [I, 31]. It is important to stress that despite the identity of these criminals being unknown, their pseudonyms point to males.

#### 4.5. Aliases based on names of professions

Several nicknames in the corpus are based on names of various professions, of which the most frequent seem to be medical ones, which is visible in the examples the *Killing Dentist* [I, 65], the *Docteur Petiot* (*Doctor Petiot*) [II, 10], the *Docteur Satan* (*Doctor Satan*) [II, 11] and the *Zimny Chirurg* (*Cold surgeon*) [III, 41]. Twelve nicknames are based on the word 'butcher'<sup>40</sup>, for instance, the *Butcher of Times Square* [I, 35] and the *Kansas City Butcher* [I, 61]. One French pseudonym is based on the profession of a forester, and that is the *Forestier des Ardennes* (*Ardennes Forester*) [II, 14]. In many cases, the profession names that founded aliases are, in reality, professional occupations of the criminals. For instance, Michel Lambin also known as the *Berger du Caussols* (*Caussols Sheppard*) [II, 4] or the *Berger du Milieu* (*Local Shepherd*) [II, 5] really was a shepherd. Albert Pel AKA the *Horloger de Montreuil* (*Watchmaker of Montreuil*) [II, 17] really was a watchmaker. In the research corpus, there is also a nickname composed of two profession names which is the *Butcher Baker* [I, 32].

#### 4.6. Aliases based on criminals' *modus operandi*

The next group to be discussed composes of the nicknames based on the killers' *modus operandi*, which are typical habits common for all of the wrongdoer's crimes. The first subcategory contains aliases inspired by the manner of finding victims by the criminal. For example, the *Mail-ordered Bluebeard* [I, 77] seduced his female victims by responding to personal advertisements<sup>41</sup>. A similar situation took place in the case of the *Tueur du Minitel* (*Minitel Killer*) [II, 42], who contacted his victims via Minitel<sup>42</sup>. The Polish *Zabójca z ogłoszenia* (*Killer from the Ad*) [III, 39] killed people found through real estate advertisements<sup>43</sup>.

This group of nicknames includes aliases based on crime weapons' names, to remind the *Brick Moron* [I, 27], the *Tueur à l'oreiller* (*Pillow Killer*) [II, 31] or the *Ręcznikowy dusiciel* (*Towel Strangler*) [III, 16]. The nickname *Queen Poisonner* [I, 93] also belongs to this category. Moreover, several nicknames emphasizing the fact that crimes were perpetrated in different places belong to this category too, e.g. the *Cross-Country Killer* [I, 39], the *I-5 Killer* [I, 58], or the *I-5 Strangler* [I, 59].

40 In English: nicknames number 32, 33, 34, 35, 61, 106, in French the nickname number 7 and in Polish: the ones with numbers 17, 18, 19 and 20.

41 <https://murderpedia.org/male.D/d/drenth-herman.htm> [date of access: 04.12.2020].

42 [https://www.liberation.fr/france-archiv/1996/06/29/le-tueur-du-minitel-condamne-a-perpetuite-remy-roy-etait-juge-pour-le-meurtre-de-trois-homosexuels-r\\_173025](https://www.liberation.fr/france-archiv/1996/06/29/le-tueur-du-minitel-condamne-a-perpetuite-remy-roy-etait-juge-pour-le-meurtre-de-trois-homosexuels-r_173025) [date of access: 04.12.2020].

43 <https://www.tvp.info/17444518/warszawski-zabojca-z-ogloszenia-nagral-sie-na-poczcie-glosowej-jednej-z-ofiar> [date of access: 04.12.2020].

There are also cases in which the source of a pseudonym is more diversified, for instance, the *Alphabet Killer* [I, 4] who murdered three girls near Rochester in the early 1970s. The killer received his nickname thanks to the fact that the first and last names of each girl began with the same letter and, what is more, the names of the places where their bodies were found started with the same letter (Thompson 2017: 34-43). Another example that may illustrate this observation is the *Singing Strangler* [I, 98]. This murderer confessed that the motive of his killings was a fascination with female voices, especially when women were singing. The killer claimed that he had killed them to “get at their voices” (Newton 2000: 370). In the research corpus, there are also aliases such as the *Times Square Torso Ripper* [I, 110] and the *Torso Killer* [I, 112], both describing the same person. These nicknames come from the fact that this murderer only left the torso of his victims (Leith 1993).

#### 4.7. Aliases based on criminals' appearance

In some instances, it is the criminal's appearance that explains the choice of an alias. The best example of such creation is the pseudonym *Elegancki morderca* (*Elegant murderer*) [III, 3]. It resulted from the fact that the nicknamed killer was always elegant and well dressed. Another Polish pseudonym motivated by appearance is the *Cygan* (*Gypsy*) [III, 2], which can be explained by the criminal's dark skin color. In the corpus, there is also the nickname *Babyface* [I, 8], which is believed to be self-explanatory.

#### 4.8. Aliases based on criminals' biographical elements

The biography of a criminal seems to be very important in some nicknames. It may occur that a biographical element not related to the crime would constitute an inspiration for the creation of an alias. A good example of such a situation would be the case of the *Alligator Man* [I, 2], a pseudonym of a person who owned alligators<sup>44</sup>. Another interesting history is behind Rodney Alcalá's pseudonym, the *Dating Game Killer* [I, 41], who in 1978 appeared on *The Dating Game* (a TV show). At the time, he was already a child molester known to the police, but the show's creators did not run a background check on him. Alcalá was presented in the TV emission as a successful photographer<sup>45</sup>. Then, Robert Stroud, the *Bird Man of Alcatraz* [I, 80], got his nickname because he lived amongst the canaries for 15 years and became an expert in birds and ornithological questions. He even wrote and published books on ornithology<sup>46</sup>. Finally, the *Happy Face Killer* [I, 54] sent letters to organs such as the police or the prosecutor's office signing his messages with happy faces (Newton 2000: 136–137).

#### 4.9. Aliases with wordplays

Many aliases are far from being accidental. The choices behind their creation are often deliberate, which is particularly noticeable in pseudonyms that contain wordplays. They are not very frequent as only two aliases represent this type, but they deserve to be noted. These pseudonyms have already appeared in this

44 <https://www.texasmonthly.com/articles/two-barmaids-five-alligators-and-the-butcher-of-elmendorf/> [date of access: 05.12.2020].

45 <https://www.biography.com/crime-figure/rodney-alcala> [date of access: 05.12.2020].

46 <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/the-birdman-of-alcatraz-is-allowed-a-small-taste-of-freedom> [date of access: 05.12.2020].



paper and were discussed in the part where names and surnames in nicknaming were presented (see: 4.4). For instance, *Tony the Ant* [I, 111] is a nickname of a criminal whose real first name was Anthony, which is a name that can be found in the two distant (and reversed) parts of this pseudonym. Another wordplay can be observed in the alias *Excell the Executioner* [I, 45], wherein two composing words start with the same syllables.

## Conclusions

The analysis conducted in this paper leads to a few essential conclusions on the topic of criminals' pseudonyms.

Firstly, it can be concluded that new pseudonyms are often built on schemes. 63.11% of the corpus' multi-word pseudonyms were created with the four schemes suggested in this article. Then, the most frequent one was BASIS+PLACE\_INDICATION. The place where a crime was committed can be described with more or less precision (the whole country or its region). That is why one can speculate whether the reason for this scheme being the most frequent was the possibility that the place of a crime is the most important factor to be taken into account.

In terms of particular languages, the analysis showed a few different patterns. For instance, the scheme BASIS+VICTIM\_INDICATION was quite popular in French (11.9%) but not so much in English (3.25%) or Polish (4.85%), and another scheme, the BASIS+TIME\_INDICATION, was not present in Polish at all. Furthermore, while English bases' lexicon was abundant (as it could have been foreseen due to the most considerable number of the units in the corpus), a few bases can be considered unique for the Polish language (e.g. a *tulip* or a *scorpion*) and for the French language only (e.g. an *ogre*).

This article proved that pseudonyms are not created accidentally. Even though the units of the corpus were diverse, it was possible to distinguish a few inspirations. This conclusion can be used for research on other types of pseudonyms too.

Furthermore, it was presented that many pseudonyms are based on notions closely related to culture. This is a fact that could be further investigated from the point of view of Translation Studies, as one cultural element that can be understood without the need for explanation in one culture can be entirely incomprehensible in another.

In all, the topic of criminals' pseudonyms appears to be a broad one and this paper by no means covers it fully. Further studies on the issue may involve research on other languages in comparison to English, French, and Polish already presented in this paper. Questions that remain to be answered are, among others, whether similar inspirations can be distinguished in oriental cultures and whether specific patterns are more common in some regions of the world than in others. Moreover, researchers can also investigate if there are any regularities in the way of criminals' nicknaming in specific discourses or literary genres. Then, in terms of etymology, an interesting study could investigate how often pseudonyms are given by other people and how often criminals name themselves. From a sociolinguistic perspective, the question worth examining covers the role of nicknames in building the criminal ethos and the image of a criminal in the society. Therefore, we hope our analysis inspires further studies and we encourage researchers to use the corpus of pseudonyms we gathered for the purpose of this study in their research, both in the field of linguistics as well as in others.

## Appendix

The corpus is available online:

- <https://www.dropbox.com/s/vpv9dbexjmifko2/English%2C%20French%20and%20Polish%20Aliases%20of%20Criminals.%20THE%20RESEARCH%20CORPUS.pdf?dl=0>

or:

- <https://cutt.ly/1TRefrK>

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