

On Being Polyonymous

I've been thinking about names recently, and how much I have an internal preference or desire to go by many names. I've talked with friends about having occasional but regular "name urges" where I am struck with the desire to have an additional name, despite liking and feeling well-suited by the one I use. It doesn't appear to be entirely a gender-based phenomenon, though I can't be sure that doesn't have some influence.

I remember being absolutely stunned when I read the book *Stargirl* as a child, and encountered a character who changed her name regularly. I didn't consider myself trans at the time (and the character isn't presented as such, the names are not gendered). But the idea of being able to change my name like a shed skin was profoundly appealing.

My birth name is not a deadname to me. It doesn't make me dysphoric or uncomfortable. Its meaning is important to me, and alludes to the complex circumstances of my birth. At this time, it has settled into the slot of a professional name. Friends can (and do) use it, but tend to use 'Vyt' more often. My birth name is the one I use in graduate school and work-related organizations, the one I have published papers under, the one most connected to my existence as a legal and professional being.

'Vyt' has a complicated history. Both of my grandfathers and one of my great-grandfathers all shared a name, so (the other-gendered version of) that name was always my 'what could have been' near-miss name. When I found out I could have absorbed a twin before birth (more common than one might think) I conceptualized having a twin brother with that name. I think in childhood it was a minor but substantial fantasy outlet for a masculine self. So, once in college I started having squiggly gender feelings, I considered a truncated and de-gendered version of that name, Vyt, as a new name. I tried it first as an online moniker for privacy, and found I enjoyed it so much I asked friends to use it in real life. It is, at the present, the most 'me' name.

Though Vyt originated as an edited variant of a family name/my "almost" name, it has come to take on other shades of meaning for me. It evokes the Vytis, the Lithuanian coat of arms, connecting me to my national heritage. It also makes me think of 'vyturys', meaning lark or skylark, a bird associated with morning. Though my animistic and faun identities, dawn is important to me outside of being Very Much a morning person.

I roleplay a lot as a hobby, meaning I've played characters with all sorts of names. In the last few months, I've found myself defaulting to 'Avery' as a generic name for multiple roleplay characters. It's often read as gender-ambiguous, and I like it phonetically. When I consider the option, I don't think I'd like to be called 'Avery' in real life, I still prefer 'Vyt' in that context; but it's become a sort of default roleplay persona (though even 'persona' feels wrong, as Avery is not an OC with consistent personality, just a recurrent name applied to very different characters), still a step removed from my actual self/identity, but something like a habit.

My daemon is named 'Lorian' because various combinations of the letters A/L/I/R kept showing up for various characters in roleplay and original writing (Altair, Alphonse, Lori, Arturiel). This isn't a "me"

name, per se. But considering Lorian and I are not strongly differentiated and are not typically separate entities/persons, it still feels like the name is covering a recurrent aspect of self.

I've been hit with a name craving mood again recently (as happens periodically). I think the issue is I now do have multiple names filling multiple niches (personal, professional, daemon, roleplay) and I find myself craving more. But I don't have a life-niche to fill with a possible new name. It's like I want to find, discover, or create a new aspect of self just to have the excuse to name myself again. I know I could change my name for any reason, but that's not the problem. Vyt is a great name that still feels right, I absolutely love it as my friends-and-loved-ones name. I just want More Names. There's a certain internal euphoria to it, not just to having a name that feels good or fits right, but to the concept of having multiple names in itself.