

The Stuff of Which Names are Made: A Look at the Colorful and Eclectic Namecraft of Lord Dunsany

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Lord Dunsany's prolific namecraft provides a rich field for study, but poses difficulties for traditional approaches to names in literature, which typically seek out the hidden meanings or symbolisms of isolated names. An alternative approach is to look for trends in the forms and substances of the author's inventions as a whole. To this end, Émile Souriau's threefold typology of neologisms proves useful. In the first category, Dunsany camouflages pre-existing vocables of diverse origins. In the second, he employs anglicized versions of forms identified with foreign languages and nomenclatures, though he does not introduce actual foreign sounds. In the third, he constructs names from morphological building blocks. Whether English or foreign, Dunsany divests his source materials of their original referents, yet retains traces of their idiomatic provenance. Colorful and eclectic, his inventions resonate within a mythopoetic encyclopedia of diverse literary, historical, and cultural traditions.

KEYWORDS Dunsany: Lord, onomastics, linguistic invention, literary onomaturgy, names in fantasy and weird fiction, twentieth-century literature, Anglo-Irish literature

Introduction

Lord Dunsany, one of the most influential fantasy writers of the twentieth century, is also among the most prolific and fascinating of namesmiths in modern literature. Born Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett, Dunsany belonged to an aristocratic Irish family that could trace its lineage back to the twelfth century. Associated with the Celtic revival, he was a popular figure in his time, a celebrated globetrotter, sportsman, and chess player, in addition to a best-selling author. He has left his mark on a long list of writers working in diverse genres, including H. P. Lovecraft, J. R. R. Tolkien, Ursula K. Le Guin, Neil Gaimon, and many others.¹ While Dunsany wrote in several genres himself, his works that have made the most lasting impact are

the fantasy writings of *The Gods of Pegāna* (1905), *Time and the Gods* (1906), *The Sword of Welleran* (1908), *The Dreamer's Tales* (1910), and *The Book of Wonder* (1912).² In assessing the extent to which these works have influenced several generations of writers, Le Guin claims:

The most imitated, and the most inimitable, writer of fantasy is probably Lord Dunsany [...] I have never seen any imitation Dunsany that consisted of anything beyond a lot of elaborate made-up names, some vague descriptions of gorgeous cities and unmentionable dooms, and a great many sentences beginning with "And." (1979: 88–89)

Most of Dunsany's commentators likewise focus on the writing itself, and all identify the Bible as being, in Le Guin's words, "the profoundest formative influence" on his style (88). As Darrell Schweitzer observes, Dunsany's writing is "thickly archaic, graceful, and reminiscent of the King James Bible" (1989: 8). Gaiman gives an even more striking description when he writes that Dunsany's "words sing, like those of a poet who got drunk on the prose of the King James Bible, and who has still not yet become sober" (1999: xii).

One of the opening passages from *The Gods of Pegāna* will suffice to give a taste of his intoxicating prose:

Before there stood gods upon Olympus, or ever Allah was Allah, had wrought and rested MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI.

There are in Pegāna — Mung and Sish and Kib, and the maker of all small gods, who is MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI. Moreover, we have faith in Roon and Slid.

And it has been said of old that all things that have been were wrought by the small gods, excepting only MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, who made the gods, and hath thereafter rested.

And none may pray to MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI but only to the gods whom he hath made.

But at the Last will MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI forget to rest, and will make again new gods and other worlds, and will destroy the gods whom he hath made.

And the gods and the worlds shall depart, and there shall be only MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI. (535)

Among the features that stand out in this passage are the writer's antique diction, as found in the use of archaic words and conjugations such as "hath," "whoso heareth," or "forsaketh"; the subjunctive in "all these be home gods"; anaphora or the repetition of clauses and sentences beginning with "and" (as mentioned by Le Guin); and lofty word orders, including the inversion of subject and verb in "had wrought and rested MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI." Punctuating these biblical incantations are the names of Dunsany's gods and their divine abode, which leap out at the eyes of his readers as much as at their ears, especially with the capitalized letters of the oft-repeated MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI.

A colorful namecraft

As Le Guin observes, names contribute much to the aura of Dunsany's writing. But his namecraft is daunting from a critical point of view, due to the sheer quantity of

his inventions, together with the heterogeneity of his materials and methods of construction. The names moreover display high levels of what Yuri Tynianov calls “lexical coloring,” a property which holds an inverse relationship to the “clarity” of the meaning of a sign (1981: 105).³ In other words, the more opaque the signified is, the more colorful the signifier will be. Dunsany’s inventions are colorful vocables, indeed, opaque to interpretation in the usual sense, yet highly evocative. These qualities present a challenge to traditional literary onomastics, which tends to focus on the semantic contents of individual vocables, and to this end devotes much attention to the uncovering of lexical associations, etymologies, or symbolic sound patterns, an endeavor which Michel Grimaud once disparagingly referred to as “treasure-digging” (1989: 23). The names in Dunsany’s fantasy writings provide a rich vein of linguistic invention to mine, yet choice nuggets of meaning and symbolism are hard to find. One might therefore be led to conclude, as some critics have said of fantasy names in general, that such vocables cannot be studied, but only appreciated for their evocative or “magical” properties.⁴ There is an alternative approach to names, however, one that takes up the challenge where traditional onomastics leaves off. What I call literary onomaturgy, or the study of the craft and aesthetics of names in fiction, focuses less on the meanings of isolated vocables, than on trends and patterns that emerge in the construction of ensembles of names, which may range from simple pairings to the author’s output as a whole.⁵

Once we look beyond their exotic aspect and eclectic variety, the first thing we notice about Dunsany’s invented names is that they vaguely resemble pre-existing vocables, in part or in whole, of English or of foreign provenance. This combination of familiarity and novelty brings to mind a typology of invented names developed by Émile Souriau, who inventories three types of neologisms that appear in literature.⁶ He defines the first type as “the euphonious or expressive deformation of existing vocables, especially proper names” (1965: 26). The methods of transformation are varied: combinations, a change of spelling, the transposition or suppression of letters, and “the abnormal division of words” (37).⁷ The second type includes “any language that is by all appearances meaningless, but which is presented as belonging to a foreign language that really exists” (34). Souriau gives the example of fictive Turkish dialogues in French comedies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which were employed to comic effect. The third type includes words and names that are completely made-up, vague or uncertain in meaning, and volatile or explosive in sound and form (40). We shall see that Dunsany’s creation of names from scratch employs syllabic “bits and pieces,” in a method similar to what Claude Lévi-Strauss has famously dubbed *bricolage* in the genesis of myth (1962: 91).

Camouflage

Souriau is especially interested in how writers mask and modify pre-existing vocables, inviting the reader to indulge in treasure-digging. While there are such cases of “camouflage” in Dunsany’s fantasy writings, they turn out to be relatively few given the sheer abundance of linguistic inventions in his work. When we read of “the wine of Gorgondy” in the short story, “The Secret of the Sea,” there is little doubt that *Burgundy* is the source-word for the name of this imaginary vintage (458). This is not

only because of the resemblances between the sounds of the two names, but also because of the mention of wine. It is even possible to make a good guess as to how and why the original vocable was modified, with the initial *B* changed to *G* and the two intermedial vowels from *U* to *O*. For in the story, the wine is sold to the narrator by gnomes. Readers might also recognize a resemblance with *Gorgons*, the name of the well-known female monsters in Greek mythology. Nothing in the stories lends support to this association, yet this fact alone does not necessarily exclude the possibility that it had some influence on the way in which the primary source-word was camouflaged.

The example of *Gorgondy* makes it likely that some of Dunsany's other inventions are constructed after pre-existing words and names. But in the majority of cases, however, the textual indices that might support an association in sound and form are weak or lacking altogether.⁸ For example, *Nehemoth*, the name given to the pharaohs and kings in "The Fall of Babbulkund," resembles two biblical names. The first is *Nehemiah*, the name of a book in the Bible whose eponymic central figure is famous for having helped to rebuild Jerusalem. *Nehemoth* also resembles *behemoth*, the name of a monster in the Old Testament (Job 40: 15–24). Yet, the rulers are characterized in the tale as being, not monstrous, but noble and pious — though some foreign peoples consider the idols of the city, the mountain-high statue Annolith and the great dog Voth, to be "abominations."

Hence, while there are marked resemblances in sound and form between this invented name and pre-existing vocables that would be familiar to anyone acquainted with the Bible, the textual indices that might support or confirm these possible source-words are at best tenuous and indirect. That said, if we accept for the sake of argument that the sound-shapes of *Nehemiah* and *behemoth* have influenced the namesmith's creation, we may draw two conclusions. First, Dunsany's name has divested these source-words of their original meanings or referents to create what I call blank associations. In such cases, an invented name imitates the "material features" of a pre-existing vocable, resulting in "a phonetic envelope emptied of its contents." Consequently, the resulting resemblances in sound and form are meaningless from a semantic point of view (Robinson 2010: 106).⁹ Second, even if the source-names have been divested of their original meanings or referents, the "phonetic envelope" of Dunsany's invention nonetheless retains traces of its idiomatic origin, and thus carries cultural, historical and literary connotations that fit the writer's biblical style and diction.

Foreign aspects

The possible use of biblical and other foreign source-words would help to explain in part the exotic aspect of many of Dunsany's inventions. The use of foreign models, however, does not necessarily mean the introduction of actual foreign sounds into his namecraft. Indeed, these names remain easy for English-speakers to read and say, and this indicates that the basic building blocks in their construction are not so much unadulterated forms taken from foreign tongues, but rather anglicized versions of exogenous materials. To use Paolo Valesio's terminology, they have high levels of "phonological admissibility," though many look and sound foreign, to a greater or lesser degree, in terms of morphology and the overall sound-shape.¹⁰ The only

exceptions are found in the following names, which use the digraphs *HL* in *Hlo-blo* (DTT) and *ML* in *Mlideen* (TG), *Mlo* (IDY), *Mloon* (IDY), *Mluna* (IDY), and *Zeroora Mlash* (QQT).¹¹ Both of these sounds, particularly in initial positions, are difficult for English speakers to pronounce. But these exceptions confirm the general rule in Dunsany's namesmithing, and all his other constructions remain within the constraints of the phonetic repertoire and phonotactic rules of English. They also conform to the familiar orthographical patterns of the language, and thus do not require the kind of cumbersome deciphering necessary to pronounce Lovecraft's teratonyms, such as *Cthulhu*, *R'lyeh*, *Pth'thya-l'yi*, or *Y'ha-nthlei*. Nor do they require recourse to pronunciation guides, as is required by many of Tolkien's invented names, such as *Adûnakhor*, *Eärrámë*, or *Nulukkidîn*. This ease of pronunciation and legibility in Dunsany makes sense. The author's intoxicating prose aims to create a melo-poetic effect in the reader, and the interruption of cumbersome and complex forms would only serve to counter this effect, interrupting the flow of words and breaking the spell or enchantment.¹²

Diacritical marks in Dunsany's namecraft contribute to this facility of reading, serving as cues to pronunciation and accentuation, rather than introducing foreign sounds. A macron (upper bar) in the following names indicates that a vowel is long as opposed to short: *Huhenuāzi* (IC), *Nitcrāna* (IC), *Nooz Wāna* (W), *Oonrāna* (FB), and *Pegāna* (GP). A dieresis (¨) is used in one of two ways. First, to indicate that two consecutive vowels represent, not a diphthong, but rather separate sounds as in *Zyni Moë* (TG). Second, to indicate that a final E is pronounced rather than silent, as with *Sombelenë* (BM). The purpose of acute accents is less clear. It may be that they indicate long vowels, as in Irish. The invented name *Bodrahán* (GP) lends support to this hypothesis, insofar as it resembles *bodhrán*, the name of an Irish drum. Why Dunsany would choose to use this accent in some names and a macron in others would then be a mystery, however. More importantly, its presence in some names would give rise to awkward pronunciations. In *Góndara* (IDY) and *Mológ* (QQT), for example, it sounds more natural to use short rather than long vowels. A more convincing possibility is that the acute accent indicates stressed syllables that do not fit the usual English patterns. In the absence of the mark, an English reader might be inclined to put the stress on these three names in the following manners: *Bódrahan*, *Gondára*, and *Mólong*, as in *Béthlehem*, *Gondóra*, and *óblong*.¹³

Even if he does not introduce actual foreign sounds, Dunsany does imitate foreign patterns and morphologies in his namecraft, in a manner once described by Jean-Jacques Lecercle. Employing Souriau's typology in a discussion of a nonsensical letter by Edward Lear, Lecercle observes that the final syllables of the made-up words "amsky flamsky ramsky damsky" resemble Russian morphology, or at least "the conventional idea an English speaker has of Russian" (1990: 4). In other words, this type of invention is not a case of borrowing or modifying an actual foreign word or name, as in Souriau's first category, but rather of imitating the sound patterns or morphologies of a language or family of languages that non-speakers typically pick out and identify with the idiom in question. Dunsany's namecraft illustrates this type of invention with particular prefixes or suffixes that can be identified with specific lexicons and nomenclatures. Two of the *Pegāna* names, *Alhireth-Hotep* (GP) and, in an attenuated form, *Mynarthitēp* (TG), contain the suffix *-hotep*, which means "to

be satisfied or at peace” in ancient Egyptian names, such as *Amenhotep*, *Mentuhotep*, *Neferhotep*, etc.¹⁴ Then there are the prefix *kha-* and suffix *-ahn*, which recall the personal and place names of Eurasia, such as that of the Mongol emperors Ghengis and Kublai Khan or the Khazar Empire, also known as the Khaganate. In Dunsany’s inventions these forms appear in *Azrakhan* (TG), *Khamazan* (TG), *Khanagat* (TG), *Astabahn* (IDY), *Istabn* (TG), *Mahn* (TG), *MAI-DOON-IZAHN* (GP), *Oxuhahn* (B), *Ozahn* (TG), *Yahn* (TG), and *Zahn* (TG). In a final set of examples, we find compounds of monosyllabic or disyllabic forms — sometimes hyphenated, sometimes not — that recall names in Asian languages, such as *Chu-Bu* (CS), *Hian Min* (IDY), *Hlo-blo* (DTT), *Pen-Kai* (IDY), *Limpang-Tung* (GP), *Moung-ga-ling* (DTT), *Sajar-Ho* (SW), and *Ziman-Ho* (TG). The cultural and idiomatic associations of these constructions are reinforced by specific syllables that can be found in anglicized words and names of actual Asian provenance: *Chu* in *Chu-Bu*; *Ling* in *Moung-ga-ling*; *Hian* and *Min* in *Hian Min*; *Ho* in *Sajar-Ho*, *Ziman-Ho* and possibly *Hlo-blo*; and *tung* in *Limpang-Tung*.

Bricolage

These latter constructions are not necessarily taken from specific personal or place names used in their entirety. Dunsany’s basic technique is to use, not entire vocables, but rather syllabic building blocks. Some of these have been inspired by foreign languages and nomenclatures, as in the examples above. Others are identical to the basic sound combinations and familiar syllables of the author’s native language. This particularly stands out with shorter constructions: *Ag* (DTT), *Adro* (TG), *Arn* (C), *Asgool* (TG), *Droom* (IZ), *Glorm* (IDY), *Goom* (BM), *Haf* (QQT), *Hap* (B), *Har* (IDY), *Heth* (PAT), *Hish* (GP), *Hurn* (TG), *Kib* (GP), *Lek* (HOC), *Lel* (HOC), *Lo* (TG), *Lool* (QQT), *Lurth* (C), *Marn* (IDY), *Mindo* (GP), *Mush* (TG), *Noor* (IDY), *Norn* (C), *Nurl* (IDY), *Ord* (TG), *Pir* (IDY), *Poy* (LPT), *Rold* (SW), *Sippy* (PAT), *Sish* (GP), *Slig* (TG), *Slorg* (PAT), *Weald* (C), *Wosh* (IPP), *Ya* (TG), *Yo* (GP), *Yum* (GP), *Zid* (DTT), *Zith* (BM), and *Zoon* (TG). This method of construction makes it inevitable that certain inventions will closely resemble pre-existing words and names in English, as two of the names from *The Gods of Pegāna* illustrate. *Roon*, the god of “Going” (549), is identical to the word *rune* in sound; while *Slid*, the little god “whose soul is in the sea” (534), is identical to the past participle of *to slide* in both sound and spelling. Nothing in the texts, however, gives us reason to suppose that these resemblances are anything more than incidental. Most likely, they provide examples of a phenomenon called onomatopy, which signifies the production in different languages of two words that resemble one another, but hold no etymological ties.

Some of the same basic blocks appear in multiple versions of Dunsany’s inventions, where they are subject to various methods of transformation, including substitutions of letters and syllables, altered spellings, transpositions, and combinations. This may involve pairs, as in *Roon* and *Zoon* (TG) or *Mondana* (TG) and *Mondath* (PBO). Or it may involve longer series, as with *Aghrinaun* (GP), *Gribaun* (GP), *Ilaun* (TG), *Imbaun* (GP), and *Rhistaun* (TG); or *Annolith* (FB), *Arb-Rin-Hadith* (GP), *Argun Zeerith* (CMT), *Hobith* (GP), *Karnith* (TG), *Linderith* (FB), *Monith* (TG), *Sidith* (GP), and *Zith* (BM). Some cases of paired and serial constructions are more complex,

as illustrated by *MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI* and *MAI-DOON-IZAHN*. These two share the distinction of being the only names in Dunsany's corpus to be written entirely in capitals. They are moreover tripartite in form and repeat certain sound combinations in the same positions, notably the *MA* in *MANA* and *MAI*, and the *OO* in *YOOD* and *DOON*. Closer inspection would reveal that *MAI-DOON-IZAHN* is practically an anagram of *MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI*, the only difference being found in the *Z* of the former and the *S* of the latter. This may be due to the fact that *MAI-DOON-IZAHN* belongs to another series, which it forms together with the names *Zahn* and *Ozahn*. In another example, *Peol Jagganoth* (B) and *Sheol Nugganoth* (IDY) form an obvious pair; but another name, *Neol-Hungar*, might also belong to this series. *Hungar* differs from *Jagganoth* and *Nugganoth*, yet *Neol* resembles *Peol* and *Sheol*, and the overall construction is a compound like the other two. Another series that involves variation is found in *Einandhu* (TG), *Gorandhu* (TG), *Zarkandu* (TG), and *Zornadhu* (TG). The latter two names introduce a slight perturbation, with the *H* of the suffix *-andhu* suppressed in *Zarkandu* and the *A* and *N* inverted in *Zornadhu*. But the sound remains unaltered in the former, and the visual aspect is extremely close in the latter. As these examples illustrate, Dunsany's bricolage of names follows a procedure similar to what Souriau describes in his first category of literary neologisms. Only here the basic materials and aims differ. Rather than use pre-existing words taken in their entirety, Dunsany employs syllabic blocks. In transforming these blocks he seeks, not to camouflage his source-materials, but rather to generate variations and thereby multiply constructions in an economical fashion.

The mythopoetic encyclopedia

The fact that Dunsany relies less on source-words taken in their entirety than on syllabic or morphological building blocks makes it difficult to draw one-to-one correspondences between his inventions and pre-existing vocables, in the hopes of uncovering a specific and precise set of allusions. A construction such as *Khamazan* brings to mind the days of empire in the steppes of Eurasia — or, what is more likely, literary works inspired by the legends of the Khans — but the overall form does not sufficiently resemble names of Mongolian origin for them to have served as specific source-models. Even where there is a sufficient resemblance, as between *Khanagat* and *Khaganate* or *Azrakahn* and *Astrakahn*, the lack of textual indices makes it possible that the resemblance is either one of blank association or even onomatopoey. In the former possibility, the pre-existing sound-shape may have echoed in the namesmith's ears at the time of creation, without necessarily calling up an allusion to a precise place or person. In the case of onomatopoey, a creative combination of syllables such as *azra* and *kahn* coincidentally turns out to resemble a real place name. Yet, Dunsany's inventions do conjure up vague connotations of an historical place and time that have since become the stuff of fantasy and legend. (One thinks, for example, of Coleridge's famous poem, "Kubla Khan.") So, rather than evoke a specific word, geographical location, or historical or literary personage, his names evoke entire languages, cultural landscapes, histories, and literary traditions to stir up a sense of exoticism or a sentiment of faraway enchantment. And it is evocations such as these that give his inventions their rich and varying colors, which blend so well with the author's antiquated style and diction.

If there is anything that binds Dunsany's eclectic source-materials together, it is that they evoke a vast body of literature and knowledge that can be grouped together into an intertextual or cultural encyclopedia, part of what Umberto Eco would call "the treasury of the collective imagination" (1984: 88–89).¹⁵ Reflecting the western mindset at the turn of the twentieth century, with its interests in antiquity, comparative religion and ethnography, Dunsany's writing imitates in both style and substance the narratives of sacred texts, myths, and legends gathered from around the world, together with fairy tales and medieval romances of western Europe, as well as historical and even travel and scientific literature. One of Dunsany's stories actually illustrates this blending of eclectic sources. In the tale "Blagdaross," objects in a junk pile tell their poignant stories of past glory before they were unceremoniously discarded and thrown out. In the final narrative, the eponymous wooden horse speaks of his past adventures with a young boy, who is now too grown up to indulge in the life of the imagination:

I was Bucephalus when he was Alexander, and carried him victorious as far as Ind. I encountered dragons with him when he was St George, I was the horse of Roland fighting for Christendom, and was often Rosinante. I fought in tournaments and went errant upon quests, and met Ulysses and the heroes and the fairies. Or late in the evening, just before the lamps in the nursery were put out, he would suddenly mount me, and we would gallop through Africa. There we would pass by night through tropic forests, and come upon dark rivers sweeping by, all gleaming with the eyes of crocodiles, where the hippopotamus floated down with the stream, and mysterious craft loomed suddenly out of the dark and furtively passed away. (246)

This blending of history and legend that spans the continents provides a perfect illustration of the cultural encyclopedia that inspired Dunsany's namecraft. His invented names fit into this vast scheme, not necessarily by way of one-to-one correspondences with specific, isolated vocables, but rather by triggering associations that conjure up the encyclopedia as a whole, finding resonance within a rich and ancient body of linguistic and cultural traditions.¹⁶

Notes

¹ Despite his seminal importance to fantasy literature, Dunsany has received little critical attention. Joshi notes several likely reasons for this neglect, including the author's politically incorrect views (he was an Irish unionist), reverse snobbery (i.e., the belief it is not possible for a landed aristocrat to be a worthwhile artist), and academic contempt for the fantasy genre in general (1995: xii).

² These works form the corpus of my study. Dates given here are for the original publications. All quotes that appear in this paper, however, are taken from the omnibus edition published by Millennium in 2000.

³ Quoted in Vink (1991: 327). Tynianov's concept is not to be confused with tone color, phonosemantics, or sound symbolism, all of which point to specific links between sounds and sememes (basic semantic

units), which are usually established by way of opposed pairings. Hence, the vowels /i:/ and /u:/ are typically associated with the oppositions high/low, light/dark, fine/gross, etc.

⁴ See Algeo, who argues that the names in Le Guin's fantasy novels are "long thought on, carefully considered, exactly right," but "are not susceptible to clever analysis. They are magical names, and can be appreciated only with a sense of the magical, the fitness of name to thing" (1982: 65).

⁵ For a more complete description of this concept and its methodology, see my article, "Onomaturgy vs. Onomastics: An Introduction to the Namecraft of Ursula K. Le Guin."

⁶ Souriau gives these categories the names *charabia*, *baragouin*, and *lanternois*. In everyday French the first two are used in the same sense as the English

word “gibberish,” but the second is derived from a derogatory term employed by French speakers to designate the Breton language. The third is taken from the name of a nonsensical language in Rabelais. All translations from this text are my own.

⁷ One of Dunsany’s most ardent admirers, Lovecraft, provides a good example of this latter procedure with *Klarkash-Ton*, the name given to a high priest of Atlantis in the short story, “The Whisperer in the Darkness” (1963: 254). As Pearsall indicates, the invented name is derived from Lovecraft’s friend and fellow author, Clark Ashton Smith (2005: 249).

⁸ Contrary to literary onomastics, which seeks to provide a gloss or build up a more global interpretation of a text based on the possible meanings of a name, literary onomaturgy seeks out textual indices that provide clues to the source materials and construction of a name. While the procedure of treasure-digging can be similar in both cases, the end goals are different.

⁹ Blank association may involve unconscious processes of creation. Le Guin illustrates this possibility in an essay on the genesis of her Earthsea novels, in which she claims to have first heard the name of her hero, Ged, in her subconscious mind (1979: 51–52). She was apparently unaware of borrowing a name that she would have encountered in her youthful readings of Dunsany, whose tales inspired her to begin writing fantasy in the first place (25).

¹⁰ Using a tripartite scheme, Valesio attempts to account for why certain neologisms work in a given language, while others do not. At the first level of admissibility, each language has its own repertoire of sounds and a set of rules that govern the combinations of these sounds. At the next level, we find that, even if the specific sounds of an invented word are common in a given language, their combination into syllables and other morphologies may strike speakers as sounding or looking unnatural, or remind them strongly of forms in foreign tongues. At the last level, that of the lexeme, we find coinages that, even as they respect common patterns of sound and form in terms of phonology and morphology, nonetheless result in an overall sound-shape that sounds foreign to or unnatural in a given language.

¹¹ To facilitate the citation of the texts in which the names appear, I have employed the following abbreviations in parentheses:

- (B) “Bethmoora”
- (BM) “The Bride of the Man-Horse”
- (C) “Carcassonne”
- (CS) “Chu-Bu and Sheemish”
- (DTT) “Distressing Tale of Thangobrind the Jeweler”
- (FB) “The Fall of Babbulkund”

(GP) *The Gods of Pegāna*

(HG) “The Hoard of the Gibbelins”

(HOC) “How One Came, As Was Foretold, to the City of Never”

(IC) “The Idle City”

(IDY) “Idle Days on the Yann”

(IPP) “The Injudicious Prayers of Pombo the Idolator”

(IZ) “In Zaccarath”

(LPT) “The Long Porter’s Tale”

(PAT) “Probable Adventure of the Three Literary Men”

(PBO) “Poltarnees, Beholder of Ocean”

(QQT) “The Quest of the Queen’s Tears”

(SW) “The Sword of Welleran”

(TG) *Time and the Gods*

(W) “The Whirlpool”

¹² “Melopoeia” is the term Ezra Pound uses to describe how language can induce “emotional correlations by the sounds and rhythm of speech” (1960: 63).

¹³ Rules for stress patterns and accentuation in English are complex and sometimes confusing. Contributing factors include the number and placement of syllables, the type of suffix involved, full vs. reduced vowels, and so on. I am working on the assumption that most readers possess an innate rather than explicit knowledge of these rules, and will unconsciously fall back on familiar analogies when confronted with a new word or name.

¹⁴ Murray suggests that Lovecraft’s *Nyarlatbotep* is modeled after these two names from Dunsany (1991: 26).

¹⁵ I am using the term encyclopedia in the sense given by Eco in the context of semiotics. The encyclopedia is a broad, open network that appeals to the treasury of cultural knowledge. The dictionary, in contrast, establishes a one-to-one correspondence between a given word and a specific set of meanings or synonyms (1984: 46–86).

¹⁶ I have described a similar intertextuality and resonance at work in the fantasy literature of Le Guin, which reflects the Celtic and Norse literature that she read as a child: “Le Guin’s names need not allude to a specific item in the intertexts cited. Rather an invented name may represent a fragmentary manifestation in sound of an embedded genetic structure. This single manifestation will then point to others within the text [. . . A] name is felt to be right or fitting in the sense that it fits or resonates within an ensemble of like manifestations. It is in the coherent ensemble of its surface fragments that a resonant body of intertexts emerges through its very insistence, over and over again, in the echoes of names from childhood readings” (2010: 108–109).

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