



Editorial

I. M. Nick

For many of us, some of our earliest and fondest memories involve story-time, when we discovered tales that had the power to inspire, calm, or chill the spirit. Over the years, the exact details of those stories may fade from our memories. However, the names of the fictional characters and imaginary places they inhabited often survive. In the spring of 2021, the American Name Society issued a call for papers for a special issue of *NAMES* on children's literature, names, and naming. Onomastic scholars and names enthusiasts were invited to submit paper proposals that explored names and naming in literature intended for children and/or adolescents. From the names of places, people, animals, and plants to the monikers of faeries, goblins, witches, and Hobbits—any type of name, from any period of time, and in any language was welcome. Papers examining author names, be they real or pseudonyms, were also invited. The primary works examined could be works of fiction or non-fiction. The only stipulation was that the primary intended audience had to be underage readers.

In response to the call, *NAMES* received a wide array of submissions from onomastic investigators from around the world. Each proposal received was subjected to a double-blind review process in which an international team of independent onomastic scholars judged each submission on questions of grammar, style, research methodology, innovation, and potential to make a substantive contribution to the field. At the end of the review process, the authors whose proposals had been awarded the highest ratings were invited to submit an article for possible inclusion in the *NAMES* Special Issue. The completed drafts were then submitted to another rigorous evaluation process and the articles deemed to be the best were selected for publication.

The first article that appears in this Special Issue was contributed by the Independent Scholar, Dr. Anne Anderson. An alumna of the University of South Florida, where she taught writing development and children's literature, she is currently the accessibility coordinator at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida. Anderson

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has researched and published extensively in the area of children's and young adult literature. Her work has been featured in academic journals such as *Children's Literature in Education* (2018) and scholarly books such as *The Early Reader in Children's Literature and Culture* (2016, Routledge [ISBN-10: 1138547638]). For this Special Issue of *NAMES*, Anderson examines *The Name Jar*, a children's story published in 2001 by the Korean-born children's book author and illustrator, Yangsook Choi.¹ As Anderson demonstrates in her investigation, Choi's award-winning story sensitively and powerfully encourages young readers to explore the ways in which personal names and naming relate to central questions of personal and cultural identity.

The issues of diversity and identity are taken up once again in the second contribution to this Special Issue. This article was co-authored by doctoral candidate Carrie Anne Thomas and Dr. Blessy Samjose, from Ohio State University's Department of Teaching and Learning Literature for Children and Young Adults. With MA degrees in Comparative Education and Applied Linguistics, Thomas's current area of research interest is in linguistic pluralism and cultural diversity in children's literature. Her co-author, Dr. Samjose, holds an MA in English Studies and just completed her doctoral studies in Children's Literature with a specialization in South Asian Studies. In their article, these two emerging onomastic scholars combined their interdisciplinary background to provide a sophisticated content analysis of twelve picturebooks featuring characters with culturally and linguistically diverse names. Using this analytical approach, Thomas and Samjose identify six common narrative types of name negotiation. Their research offers an innovative theoretical framework for analyzing names and naming in other works of fiction aimed at underage readers.

The third contribution in this Special Issue comes from French Independent Researcher Dr. Mary Bardet. With a PhD in Translation Studies from the University of Birmingham (UK) and an MA in Children's Literature from the University of Roehampton (UK), Bardet's primary area of research centers on examining children's literature in translation. For this issue of *NAMES*, her work examines the translation challenges presented by the 20th century classic of English children's literature, *The Psammead Series*. Published from 1902 to 1906, this trilogy was written by the celebrated English author Edith Nesbit (1858–1924)² who delighted generations of young English readers with fanciful tales featuring the magical beast, the Psammead. As Bardet details in her article, the early French translators of this series not only faced the daunting task of tackling one of the most beloved book series in the English literary canon, they also faced the sociolinguistic challenges posed by the often diametrically opposed gendered concepts of the mythical beings that inhabit English and French folklore. As Bardet's work shows, young people's world of make-believe was far from immune to cross-cultural conflicts of adults.

As we have been reminded by recent public debates over the decision to select non-White actors to play the merwoman *Ariel* in Disney's *The Little Mermaid* and the Elf *Arondir* in *The Lord of the Rings* spin-off *Rings of Power*³, children's fantasy is by no means a politics-free-zone.⁴ In a 2022 interview, the Black British actor who plays the Hobbit *Sadoc Burrows* in *Rings of Power*, Sir Lenworth George Henry CBE, discussed the backlash he and other actors of color in fantasy films have received. As Sir Henry wryly observed, there is a certain degree of irony in the fact that some audience members seemingly have no difficulty in accepting dragons, but balk at the idea of a Black Hobbit. However, as the acclaimed actor is quick to point out, in his opinion, the future positives far outweigh the current negatives: "Maybe some kid will be watching this one day and they'll see [co-stars] Ismael Cruz Cordova and Sophie Nomvete and they'll see me and go, 'Yeah, I can wield a sword. Yeah, I can rock a bow and arrow'. This is a groundbreaking moment" (Allen 2022, para. 3). These modern debates over issues of cultural (mis)representation are, of course, nothing new.⁵ Historically, media that is aimed at children and adolescents has frequently served as the real-life battleground where adults wage war for the hearts and minds of the next generation. The abuse of children's literature as a platform for political propaganda is the subject of the fourth and final contribution in this Special Issue.

Written by *NAMES* Editor-in-Chief Professor I. M. Nick, this article examines how the anti-Semitic genocidal agenda of the National Socialists was spread with the aid of the hate-inspired children's book, *Trau keinem Fuch auf grüner Heide oder keinem Jud bei seinem Eid!* [Trust no fox on a green heath nor a Jew upon his word!]. This article details the historical background of the book, its largely forgotten author-illustrator, and its infamous promoter, the Nazi publicist Julius Streicher. This article examines how the names of the fictional characters featured in the book helped to reinforce anti-Semitic stereotypes by borrowing the names of real-life persons—many of whom were targeted by the Nazi Party.

The four articles presented in this Special Issue examine different languages, cultures, time periods, and primary works. They use a wide range of research methodologies and employ a diversity of analytical approaches. It is hoped that the resulting breadth of research reflected in this Issue will help to inspire more

onomastic scholarship into media produced for underage audiences. As these studies both collectively and individually show, this is an area that is richly deserving of more onomastic investigation. With that goal in mind, a heartfelt thanks goes to each of the contributors and all of the blind reviewers who helped to make this Special Issue come to fruition.

Endnotes

¹ For more on the author-illustrator Yangsook Choi, see <https://www.yangsookchoi.com/>

² For more on the life and work of E. Nesbit, see (Briggs, 2000; Fitzsimons, 2019).

³ For more on the backlash faced by these and other actors in fantasy films, see (Dickson, 2022; Nero, 2018; Rosenblatt, 2022; Rothstein, 2022).

⁴ Similarly negative reactions were registered when *Star Trek: Discovery* featured non-binary characters and a loving gay married couple (Vary, 2020). And of course, diehard Trekkies will remember the firestorm that erupted when African-American actress Nichelle Nichols and White Canadian actor William Shatner shared a kiss in the 1968 *Star Trek* episode “Plato’s Stepchildren”. Although viewers had happily watched Shatner’s character, Captain Kirk, have relationships with countless aliens across the galaxies, fears over the audience’s reaction to that kiss led some media executives to consider cancelling the series. These concerns were fueled by the fact that the now-historic episode aired just one year after the landmark Supreme Court decision which legalized interracial marriage in the US. When Nichols contemplated leaving the series to take on other roles, she was urged to stay on by none other than Civil Rights leader, Martin Luther King, who said: “You have opened a door that must not be allowed to close [...] [T]he world sees us as we should be seen, as equals, as intelligent people” (Delmont 2018, para 11).

⁵ As Stephens (1992) observes: “As with discourse in general, the discourse of children’s fiction are pervaded by ideological presumptions, sometimes obtrusively and sometimes invisibly” (2).

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Notes on Contributor

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