Names in Brief

LITHUANIAN ANIMAL NAMES USED AS RIVER NAMES

Raymond Schmittlein, in his interesting and provocative book, *Toponymie lituanienne* (Vol. I of *Études sur la nationalité des Aestii*, Baden-Baden, 1948), p. 96, doubts that there are in Lithuanian numerous river names which are simple animal names. In his opinion, such occurrences are rather exceptional, and some of them may be designations of mythological origin. He is right in stating that P. Trost in his article, "Der bloße Tiername als Gewässer-bezeichnung," which appeared in *Zeitschrift für Ortsnamenforschung*, XII (1936), 89—90, had misunderstood Georg Gerullis. Actually, Gerullis, in his article, "Der bloße Tiername als Gewässerbezeich-nung im Baltischen", in *Studi Baltici*, III (Roma, 1933), 35—38, while admitting that there are Old Prussian, Lithuanian, and Lettish river names which in their sounds are identical with certain animal names, tries to explain this phonetic identity through popular etymology or as regular homonyms (a kind of phonetic confluence). He succeeds in proving his point in a number of cases. Howver, in other cases he does not even try to give an explanation, contenting himself with the modest statement of resignation that our knowledge does not reach too far back. Thus, he has the following unexplained Lithuanian examples: *bìtė* "bee" and *Bìtė* name of a brook, *eržilas* "stallion" and *Eržilas* "name of a lake," *lašišà* "salmon" and *Lašišà* name of a river, *meletà* "green woodpecker" and *Meletà* name of a brook, *vãbalas* "beetle" and *Vãbalas* name of a river.

Concerning Gerullis' lament that our knowledge does not reach too far back, it must be stated that first of all the age of such designations should be ascertained. I have a suspicion that in many cases such names are not very old. The fact that in Europe a number of etymologically unexplainable river names are still in use even today, does not warrant the conclusion that all names of bodies of water must be old.

In absolute contrast to Gerullis' and Schmittlein's opinions, we find in the Lithuanian Orthographic Dictionary (*Lietuvių kalbos rašybos žodynas*, Kaunas, 1948), p. 145, the following statement:

"Many lakes and rivers are called by the names of animals, wild beasts, various living creatures, and plants, e.g., *Vilkas, Vilkė, Vilkiniaĩ, Vi[kupis, Šérnupis, Kãtežeris, Elnỹs, Elnė, Karvė, Veršupis, Aviniškė, Sartiz, Sartupis, Šemė, Pálšis, Gaigalinis, Ąžuolùpis, Béržis, Klēvežeris*. A significant portion of the lake and river names have fish names, e.g., *Ešerinis, Karšupis, Lydėkinė, Lydėkis, Lỹnežeris, Mekšrinis, Mekšrùpis, Šaminis, Šamùkas, Šãpalas, Ungurỹs, Unguráitis, Vėžežeris, Vėžỹs, Vėžùpis*."

The authors of the Lithuanian Orthographic Dictionary (a collective made up of K. Gasparavičius, N. Grigas, J. Lazauskas, K. Ulvydas, and A. Žirgulys) are somewhat careless in their expression. Thus, in the first group of names, there are only four names, namely, *Vilkas, Sartis, Šemė, Pálšis*, which are phonetically identical with the corresponding common nouns, *vilkas* "wolf," *sartis* "chestnut, i.e. a reddish-brown horse," *šemė* "a cow of a bluish gray color," *pálšis* "an ox of a light gray color." All the others are either compounds with *ežeras* "lake" (*Kãtežeris* "Cat Lake," *Klēvežeris* "Maple Lake") or *ùpė* "river" (*Vilkupis* "Wolf River," *Šérnupis* "Boar River," *Veršupis* "Calf River," *Sartupis* "Chestnut River," *Ąžuolùpis* "Oak River") or they are former adjectives in *-is* (*-ỹs*) for the masculine gender and *-ė* for the feminine. It should be especially noted that the names *Vilkė* and *Karvė* are not phonetically identical with the seemingly corresponding common nouns *vilkė* "she-wolf" and *kárvė* "cow." While these common nouns have acute intonation, the two proper names have circumflex intonation, a fact which shows them up as secondary formations, originally adjectival in character.

In the above-quoted group of names of fish or other water animals used as names of bodies of water, there are only three which are identical with the corresponding common nouns: *šãpalas* "a type of carp (leuciscus cephalus)," *ungurỹs* "eel," *vėžỹs* "crayfish." *Šamùkas* is a diminutive form of *šãmas* "sheat-fish (siluris glanis)" just as *Unguráitis* is a diminutive of *ungurỹs*. The remaining names of that group are compounds with the nouns *ùpė* "river" (*Karšupis, Mekšrùpis, Vėžùpis*) or *ežeras* "lake" (*Lỹnežeris, Vėžežeris*), or adjective formations in *-inis* or *-is*. Examples for such adjective formations are *Lydėkinė* (name of a river in the district

of Alytus) and *Lydėkis* (name of lakes in the districts of Utena and Zarasai). Both forms are derived from the common noun *lydekà* "pike (esox lucius)." *Lydėkinė* is an abbreviation of *lydėkinė ùpė* "pike river," while *Lydėkis* originated from *lydėkis ėžeras* "pike lake."

Names like *Vėžežeris* "Crayfish Lake" and *Vėžùpis* "Crayfish River" are unequivocal. They indicate that crayfish live in such bodies of water. When we find, beside such compounds, also the common noun *vėžỹs* "crayfish" as the proper name of a river (in the district of Šakiai), we have an example of back formation. Similarly, *Vilkupis* "Wolf River" and *Šérnupis* "Boar River" designate bodies of water on whose banks wolves or boars can be found now or could be found in the past. A *Vilkupis* exists in the district of Šakiai and a *Vilkupỹs* in the district of Vilkaviškis. The common noun *vilkas* "wolf" occurs in the function of a proper name of a river in the district of Lazdijai. Again a case of back formation, from either *Vilkupis* or *Vilkupỹs*. A river with the feminine name *Vilkė* exists in the district of Lazdijai. In view of the different intonation of the common noun *vìlkė* "she-wolf," the proper name *Vilkė* cannot be identical with it. It can only be a back formation from a compound *vilkupė* "wolf river."

Such a back formation is also represented by the name *Béržis*, a reduction of either *béržupis* "birch river" or *béržežeris* "birch lake," i.e., a river or lake with birch trees on its banks or shores. The common noun for "birch tree" is *béržas*.

Both Gerullis and Schmittlein are right when they refuse to admit the use of plain common designations of animals as proper names for rivers and lakes. I go a step farther and assert that there is no need for any mythological background, since the use of animal names as river names is only a secondary development.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF NOMENCLATURE
IN A FRENCH CLASSICAL COMEDY

When Hauteroche's *Les Bourgeoises de qualité* appeared in 1690 the rôle of the valet was an old theatre tradition. Certain names had become the time-honored appellation of stage valets: Arlequin, Mezzetin, Scapin (the "Commedia dell'Arte" had left its mark), Philippin, Frontin and a host of others conspired throughout the French comic repertory to bring the plot to a successful conclusion. Only rarely was one of these names owned by a character other than a valet, a case in point being that of Crispin, a hotel proprietor, who was in Raymond Poisson's *Le Fou de qualité* (1682). It will be recalled that some actors were known by the name of the character they portrayed on the stage rather more than by their own. For example, one seldom thinks of Julien Bedeau in theatre history, but his stage creation, Jodelet, remains alive in memory as the character for whom seven plays were written between 1645 and 1659.

There was a vast store of traditional names on which Hauteroche might have drawn to name his valet in the *Bourgeoises*. However, he eschewed all of these and introduced a new name, that of L'Esperance.

This decision was more than the author's whim, as may be seen in his preface. Here he rebuffs critics who have objected to still another valet disguised as his master. This valet, Hauteroche tells us, is different:

> ... si ces connoisseurs avoient bien examiné le personnage du Valet qui passe ici pour son Maître, ils auroient connu qu'il est fort différent de ceux qui l'ont précédé, & qu'il prend une route toute opposée à celle qu'ils ont tenue. Il n'agit point, dans cette Comédie, en Valet extravagant; au contraire, il s'y soutient partout en homme de qualité, & ne fait aucune chose pour faire soupçonner qu'il ne soit pas ce qu'il feint d'être. Ses manieres, ses discours & ses habits n'ont rien de ridicule; tout paroît en lui vraisemblable; & il ne tombe point, par ses actions ni par ses paroles, dans des plaisanteries outrées & grossieres. Il conserve toujours beaucoup de bienséance; & s'il en sort quelques occasions, c'est de concert avec les gens, afin de faire mieux réussir

ce qu'il entreprend. Ainsi je puis dire sûrement qu'il y a du nouveau dans son caractère, dans ses sentimens & dans ses expressions.[1]

L'Esperance's disguise as a count is a device to bring about his master's marriage. Dr. Lancaster feels it "better suited to a farce than to a comedy of manners" and notes that whereas Molière used a similar stratagem in *Les Précieuses ridicules*, he did not in *Les Femmes savantes*.[2] At any rate, the author's attempted novelty in this important valet rôle apparently failed to impress audiences, as the play, a good one, was shown only nine times and has never been put on again since 1690.

The author's experiment with his valet has interest as a problem of dramatic creation, despite the play's failure. Particularly to be noted is the importance Hauteroche attached to the choice of a name for this character. "L'Esperance" suggests Hauteroche's awareness of the psychological impact that names must have had in his day.

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[1] Noel le Breton, *Théâtre* (Paris, 1772), III.

[2] Henry Carrington Lancaster, *French Dramatic Literature in the Seventeenth Century* (Baltimore, 1940), Part IV, Vol. II, p. 822.