

Literary Onomastics

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NAMES USED IN LITERATURE form an individual, yet, to a certain degree, parallel group to general onomastic material. They are called *literary proper names* or *literary names*, and their theoretical study is *literary onomastics*. Because of their nature, the position of literary names in a language system is specific. Literary names, together with other names, such as place names and family names, perform the common function of naming, and belong to that group of elements of communication known as proper names. Literary names also perform a stylistic and expressive function in works of literature. Their individuality does not prevent a considerable quantity of such names from appearing on both levels in the language system, (e.g. names of historical persons often appear as names of literary characters). However, their primary function is stylistic. Literary names should, therefore, be considered not from a grammatical point of view, but from a literary perspective. They should be studied in regard to development and change in artistic language and literary technique, and should correspond in treatment to such phenomena as critical analysis of a literary genre or poetic school.¹

Study of names in literature is not new to onomastic research and literary criticism. Onomastic bibliographies list many articles dealing with names in literature.²

Yet, the approach to the problem has been somewhat one-sided. In most cases emphasis was placed on the so-called meaningful (figurative, significant) names, "redende Namen," though they

¹ A similar view of the study of literary names was expressed by Stanisław Grzeszczuk in the introduction to his *Nazewnictwo sowizrzalskie*, a work on names of plebeian trend in Old Polish literature (*Nazewnictwo sowizrzalskie*, nakł. Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków, 1966, pp. 5–9).

² *Personal Names. A Bibliography*. Compiled and annotated by Elsdon C. Smith. The New York Public Library. New York, 1952. Further works supplemented in *Names*, vol. 4, 1956-vol. 14, 1966.

constitute only one category of names used in literature. Hence, literary names have usually been studied from their semantic or symbolic aspects. Little consideration has been given to fundamental aspects of the subject in order to lay a theoretical foundation for research in literary onomastics as a whole.

The first attempt in this respect was made by J. B. Rudnyćkyj in 1959, in his paper entitled "Function of Proper Names in Literary Work."³ Rudnyćkyj, classifying literary onomastic material in regard to function in the composition and style of a literary work, presents a typology of functions. His typological schema may serve as an useful and valuable guide in literary onomastic research. The schema follows:

1. Relevance to content:

- a) relevance to the quality of literary characters (meaningful names);
- b) relevance to the place of action (couleur locale);
- c) relevance to the time of action (couleur historique).

2. Relevance to form.

In this paper I modify Rudnyćkyj's scheme slightly and supplement it by elaborating some aspects of Part 2, that is, of the part dealing with names relevant to the form of literary work.

In addition to their relevancy to the content of a literary work, names also play a role in its form. They can provide melodious sound and add rhythm to the composition of any literary work. In many works of art, especially in poetry, the sound-stratum attracts attention and thus constitutes an integral part of the aesthetic effect. The role of proper names pertaining to form is clearly evident in poetry. The poet chooses his words for meaning as well as for sound, and he uses the sound as a means of reinforcing his meaning. This verbal music, like connotative imagery and figurative language, is one of the important methods which enable an author to do more than communicate mere information. The musical quality of a literary work, especially of a poem, is so prominent, that, for instance, Edgar Allan Poe in his definition of poetry, describes it as "music . . . combined with a pleasurable idea."

³ J. B. Rudnyćkyj, "Function of Proper Names in Literary Work." *Stil und Formprobleme in der Literatur*, Heidelberg, 1959, pp. 378–383.

There are two broad ways by which the poet may achieve melodious auditory sensation in his work: 1) by the choice and arrangement of sounds and 2) by the arrangement of accents.

Since the role of a name in poetry is dependent on the requirements on the verse, we may distinguish two basic groups in this category of literary names: 1) names conditioned by rhyme and 2) names conditioned by rhythm.

In analyzing sound effects, we have to differentiate between sound-patterns (repetition of identical or associated sound qualities), and the sound-imitation (use of expressive sounds). Used in repetition of sound units, syllables, words, phrases, lines or only in repetition of individual sounds (vowels and consonants), literary names are emphasized much more than any appellatives, thus serving as a reinforced medium of meaning. To illustrate, I quote examples from literature. Here are examples of repetition of individual consonants – alliteration and the resulting consonance:

- in Byron: As I was saying, sir, the room –
The room's so full of wits and bards,
Crabbes, Campbells, Crokers,
Freres, and Wards
And others, neither bards nor wits: –
- in Shevchenko: Horyt' Smila, Smilanshchyna
Krov''ju pidplyvaje.
Horyt' Korsuń, horyt' Kaniv,
Chyhyryn, Cherkasy;⁴
Chornym shlahhom zapalalo
- in Cvetajeva: *Punsh* i *polnoch*. *Punsh* – i *Pushkin*⁵

The following are examples of assonance:

- in Coleridge: In *Xanadu* did *Kubla Khan*
A stately pleasure-dome decree . . .
- in Byron: Nor *Oscar* nor his brother came

A combination of alliterative names was especially popular in Old Germanic poetry. There a specific method was employed where-

⁴ Smila is on fire, Smilanshchyna / Swims in blood / Korsuń is on fire, Kaniv is on fire. / Chyhyryn, Cherkasy / Chornyj Shlahk is in flames.

⁵ Punch and midnight. Punch and Pushkin.

in names were composed according to the "Stabreim," e.g. *Theoderich* – *Theodebert* – *Theodebald*; *Vithigabious* – *Vadomarious*; or in the "Hildebrandslied":

Hadubrant gima(ha)lta, Hiltibrantes sunu;

.....

*Hiltibrant gimahalta, Heribrantes suno:*⁶

Nursery rhymes also utilize alliterative names, such as *Simple Simon*, *Hector Protector*, *Gregory Gregs*, *Wee*, *Willie*, *Winkie* or *Humpty Dumpty*.

Many authors do not hesitate to employ similar combination in their short stories, novels and dramas. From Dickens we may quote *Dingley Dell*, *Boffin's Bower*, or *Nicholas Nickleby*, and others. In Gogol there are *Ivan Ivanovich*, *Akakij Akakijejvich*, *Evtichij Evtichijejvich*, *Eleferij Eleferijejvich* and *Baltazar Baltazarevich*.

Another example of sound repetition is the popular phenomenon of rhyme. Literary names can be employed to achieve all possible types of rhyme patterns and their variations. For instance, the end rhyme:

in Byron: But tomorrow, at four, we will
 both play the *Scurra*,
 And you'll be Catullus, the
 Regent *Mamura*.

in Rylskij: Ide v prekasnu dalech *Bilorus'*
 De ožyly *Skoryna* i *Kastus'*⁷

in Pushkin: Branil *Gomera*, *Feokrita*
 Zato chital *Adama Smita*⁸

in Cvetajeva: Za pochetnuju *rvań*
 Za *Tamań*. za *Kubań*
 Za nash *Don russkij*⁹
 Starych ver *Iordań* . . .

⁶ Hadubrand, the son of Hildebrand, replied / Then spake Hildebrand, the son of Heribrand.

⁷ Into the wonderful distance goes *Bilorus'* / Where *Skoryna* and *Kastus'* came to life.

⁸ He scolded *Homer* and *Theocritus* / But he read *Adam Smith*.

⁹ For the honourable rabble / For *Tamań*, for *Kubań* / For our Russian *Don* / The *Joradań* of the ancient faith.

Names are frequently used with other words in rhyme:

- in Byron: For tears and treachere, for
 good or *evil*,
 Constance, King Richard, Hamlet,
 and the *Devil*
- If you can add a little, say why *not*
 As well as William Pitt, and Walter Scott?

Names may be used in so-called imperfect or slant rhyme:

- in Byron: The chief has fallen but not *you*
 Vanquishers of Waterloo!
- my lad, *you a*
 Journey must take on this instant to *Padua*.
- in Keats: ... and spiced dainties, *everyone*
 From silken Samarcand to cedard Lebanon

Other types of rhyme, for instance, internal rhyme, utilize names as well. Here is an example of such internal rhyme from

- Shevchenko: Ja spivaju. I pro Jassy
 I pro Žovti Vody,
 I mistechko Berestechko
- from Drach: Bach, Modiljani, my z vamy *pjani*,
 Pjani vid soncia – *pjano* sniv.¹⁰

The passages quoted illustrate some of the many patterns of rhyme and their effects. Cunning artificers in rhyme make it, however, more than a pleasant sound effect; they use it to enhance or contribute to the meaning. When, for instance, Pope satirized two contemporary pedants in the lines,

Yet ne'er one sprig of laurel graced these *ribalds*,
From slashing Bentley down to piddling *Tibalds*,

the rhyme, as W. K. Wimsatt has said, demonstrates "what it means to have a name like that" with its implication that the scholar is as graceless as his appellation.¹¹

¹⁰ I sing about Jassy / And about Žovti Vody / And the town of Berestechko.
Bach, Modigliani, we are drunk with you / Drunk from the sun — piano of dreams.

¹¹ Quoted by M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, New York, 1957, p. 84.

In addition to individual sounds and syllables, authors repeat whole words, phrases, or lines. When proper names are employed in such repetition they contribute not only to the music of poetry but also frequently add to the suspense and emotional intensity. The most common repetition are anaphora and refrain. The following illustrate anaphora:

in Shevchenko: *Marija z schlakhu ne vstavala
Marija syna pryvela*¹²

in Byron: *Pomposus fills his magisterial chair;
Pomposus governs, – but muse forbear:*

The following are examples of Byron's use of refrain:

Through the street of Zacatin
To the Alhambra spurring in.
Woe is me, Alhama!
.....

And to fix thy head upon
High Alhambra's loftiest stone:
.....
*Woe is me, Alhama!*¹³

or: I sigh for the valley of dark
Loch na Garr.
.....
Disclosed by the natives of dark
Loch na Garr.

The refrain is especially common in songlike poetry, as in the anonymous ballad:

O where ha'you been, *Lord Randal, my son?*
.....
And what did she give you, *Lord Randal, my son?*

These are only a few examples of more common possibilities of repetition where names may be involved.

¹² Marija did not leave the road / Marija gave birth to her son.

¹³ Cf. *onomastic contraction* re: use of *Alhama*.

Another group of literary names which appears in poetry is that of names conditioned by rhythm. The term rhythm can be defined as the regularity of a recurrence in time. In language study generally it refers to any wavelike recurrence of accent; in poetry the repeating is an accented or emphasized syllable. The pattern of repetition is meter (organized rhythm). The magic of great poetry lies in the recognition and use made of the potentials of this basic tool. There are several ways by which names can be introduced into the poet's use of meter. One method is the alternation of a normal name accent – the so-called wrenched or shifted accent, for instance, in Shevchenko: *Néron:Nerón*; *Lýtva:Lytvá*; *Moskvá:Móskva*; in Pasternak: *Figáro:Figaró*; *Dezdémóna:Dezdemóna*; in Cvetajeva: *Dzýngára:Dzyngára*; or in Rylskyj: *Gústav:Gustáv*; *Ukrajína:Ukrájina*; and in Malaniuk: *Mózel:Mozél*, etc. Shifted (wrenched) accents were a convention of English folk ballads (e.g. "fair ladié," "far countrée"), and are sometimes used by poets to imitate the effect of the ballad, as in Byron's

Bewáre! bewáre! of the Bláck Friár.

Among other changes that occur in names pertaining to rhythm we should mention contraction and extension, for example, in Shevchenko and Rylskyj: *Vladymyr:Volodymyr*, *Dnipr:Dnipro*, *Carhrad:Carehrad*, *Vltava:Viltava*, etc., as well as the previously mentioned example from Byron: *Alhambra:Alhama*. Here, the onomastic abbreviation (shortening) should also be added, for instance, in Byron the names: *Thomas:Thom*, *Luddites:Ludd*.

A special chapter in formal poetical onomastic might be devoted to elliptization. As one of the important syntactic phenomena, it is the omission of a part of the compound name. Here it may be exemplified by the following names from Shevchenko and Rylskyj: *Kos Aral:Aral*, *Favor hora:Favor*, *Syr-Darja:Darja*, *Putivel hrad:Putivel*, *Karpaty-hory:Karpaty*, etc. Usually all these modifications or stylizations of name-forms (contraction, extension, shortening, elliptization) occur interchangeably with normal name-forms within the same content in the same poem.

Sometimes for a necessary rhythmic effect a split of a compound name or a change of the order of the components of a name is employed, as in Rylskyj:

Nash Kyjiv Zoloti rozkryluje Vorota

or

Sam bachyv ja takoho dida
V *Malych*, zdajet'sja, *Prychodach*

and here is the change of the order of the components:

Pro strichu z tyhramy na *Klynu Zelenim*¹⁴

It is obvious, that repetition of accent, like repetition of sound, can be pleasurable for its own sake. Yet, when skillfully stylized name-forms are employed, the rhythm works not only to stimulate emotion but also to elevate attention and awareness to what is going on in a poem. There are several ways in which an author can convey meaning or experience through the sound of names. One of the most popular methods is onomatopoeia – use of a special class of words which in some way correspond with things signified, (they produce an auditory-verbal association). This is well illustrated in Dickens: *Bobster* – lobster; *Tadger* – Badger; *Grimble* – grumble; *Grompus* – grumpy, and many others.

Closely related to onomastic onomatopoeia is the so-called phonetic intensity of names or physiognomy of names based on a sound-symbolism or sound-metaphor, which in each language has its established conventions and patterns. M. Grammont, while making a study of French verse in regard to expressiveness, has classified all French consonants and vowels. Clear vowels, for example, can express smallness, rapidity, *élan*, grace, and the like.¹⁵ A. Wellek states, that a sound-symbolism is far more persuasive than mere onomatopoeia. In his opinion, there is the fundamental association between front vowels (*e* and *i*) and thin, quick, clear, and bright objects and, again, between back vowels (*o* and *u*) and clumsy, slow dull, and dark objects.¹⁶ A similar view is expressed by De Laski in his critique of Dickens' names: "... the shorter and thinner vowels suggest quick and slight movements and slender objects, i.e., active, small, or more or less insignificant persons: ...

¹⁴ Our Kyjiv spreads open the Zoloti Vorota; I myself saw such an old man / It was, in Mali Prychody; About a meeting with tigers on Klyn Zelenyj.

¹⁵ M. Grammont, *Le Vers français, ses moyens d'expression, son harmonie*, Paris, 1913.

¹⁶ Albert Wellek, „Der Sprachgeist als Doppelpemfinder“, *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik*, XXV (1931) pp. 226–62.

Furthermore, short or thin vowels in combination with initial and final stopped-consonants are so suddenly initiated and quickly stopped as to make these the most insignificant of words. When, however, a suffix is added to such a word, particularly when the final consonant of the stem is doubled or two stopped-consonants are used in combination, an odd, droll, rustic effect is produced, which rests upon the sound of the light vowel in combination with the heavy, ponderous consonants (*Podder, Tadger*) . . ."¹⁷ The following Dickens' names exemplify such sound-symbolism or phonetic intensity: *Pott, Tigg, Noggs, Bodds, Raddle, Wardle, Hubble, Guppy, Podsnap, Tippins, Lillywick*, and others; or Gogols' *Chichikov*, and Pushkin's *musjo Bopré, l'Abbé Triké*, etc.

Names used in the above-mentioned methods may be pleasant sounding and easily articulated, or harsh sounding. However, both euphonic and cacophonous combinations can be appropriate to an author's intention, such as humor, ridicule, satire, for instance, as in this French "Anonyme" of the eighteenth century:

(ennemis de la France)

Paul, Léon, Jules, Clément
 Ont mis notre France en tourment.
Jules, Clément, Léon et Paul
 Ont partroublé toute la Gaule.
Paul, Clément, Léon et Jules
 Ont beaucoup gagné par leurs bulles.
Jules, Clément, Paul, Léon
 Ont fait de maux un million.

or in Pushkin:

Ugrjumykh trojka jest' pevcov –
Shikhmatov, Shakhovskoj, Shishkov.
 Umu jest' trojka supostatov –
Shishkov nash, Shakhovskoj, Shikhmatov,
 No kto glupej iz trojki zloj ?
*Shishkov, Shikhmatov, Shakhovskoj*¹⁸

¹⁷ E. De Laski, "The Psychological Attitude of Charles Dickens Toward Surnames." *American Journal of Psychology*, vol. 29, 1918, p. 344.

¹⁸ Morose are the three singers / Shikhmatov, Shakhovskoj, Shishkov. / Wisdom being an enemy of the three / Shishkov ours, Shakhovskoj, Shikhmatov, But who is more foolish from the evil three ? / Shishkov, Shikhmatov, Shakhovskoj.

Another method employed in literature to achieve a specific effect, such as humor or dual meaning, is paranomasia, a play on words that are identical or similar in sound but different in meaning. Mickiewicz widely employs paranomasia in his *Pan Tadeusz*. There appear such paronomasic pairs as *Gerwazy – Protazy*; *Domejko – Dowejko*; *Rymsza – Dymsza*; *Maciej – Pociiej*. To illustrate its effect here are a few lines from *Pan Tadeusz*:

Lecz Dobrzyński odpisał: “Niech *Pociiej Macieja*
A nie *Maciej Pociēja* ma za dobrodzieja”.

or

“Tak, tak, mój *Protazeńku*”, rzekł klucznik *Gerwazy*
“Tak, tak, mój *Gerwazeńku*”, rzekł woźny *Protazy*.

and

Aż wygrał wreszcie syndyk klasztorny, ksiądz *Dymsza*
Skąd jest przysłowie: Większy Pan Bóg niż pan *Rymsza*;¹⁹

Also in Drach:

“No, *Charlie, Chaplin*, pojikhaly, no!”

or

Oj chy to ja *Leda*, oj chy to ja *Lada*²⁰

In prose we may illustrate paronomasic pairs by Gogol; in his *Dead Souls* there are *Djadja Mitaj – Djadja Minaj*; *Kifa Mokijevich – Mokij Kifovich*; *Karp – Polikarp*; or *Bobchinskij – Dobchinskij* in his *Inspector General*.

In addition, there is play on words where a name and an appellation are used together, such as in Lesia Ukrajinka, *Slavus – sclavus*; in Rylskij, *Maj – Majakovskij*; in Shevchenko, *slava – lavjany*; or in anonymous limericks like

There was a young woman named *Bright*,
Whose speed was much faster than *light*.

¹⁹ But Dobrzyński answered: Let Pociiej have Maciej / But not Maciej have Pociiej as a well-wisher.

“Yes, yes, my dear Protazy”, said Gerwazy, / “Yes, yes, my dear Gerwazy,” said Protazy.

And won the case Father Dymsza / A proverb echoes it: that Lord God is greater than Rymsza.

²⁰ “Let’s go, Charlie Chaplin, let’s!”

Am I either Leda or am I Lada.

or

A decrepit old gas man named *Peter*,
While hunting around for the *meter*,
Touched a leak with his light.

or in Dickens: *Phunky* – *Monkey*.

Although paronomasia has chiefly a humorous effect, it can have a serious use, as, for example, the Greek pun: *Petros* – *petros* (Matthew XVI: 18 “Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church”).

Shakespeare often used puns also in serious circumstances. But in his *Sonnets* 135 and 136 he puns on his own name *Will*. In addition to the seven places in the Quarto text of *Sonnet* 135 in which the name *Will* is used, there are six other times in which the uncapitalized word *will* is used. As *Will* may have also been the name of the Dark Lady’s friend, and as the word *will* is susceptible to a great many meanings, the range of punning in this *Sonnet* is unlimited:

Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy *Will*,
And *Will* to boot, and *Will* in overplus;
More than enough am I that vex thee still,
To thy sweet *will* making addition thus.
Wilt thou, whose *will* is large and spacious,
Not once vouchsafe to hide my *will* in thine?
Shall *will* in others seen right gracious,
And in my *will* no fair acceptance shine?
The sea, all water, yet receives rain still,
And in abundance addeth to his store;
So thou, being rich in *Will*, add to thy *Will*
One *will* of mine, to make thy large *Will* more.
Let no unkind, no fair beseechers kill;
Think all but one, and me in that one *Will*.

This practice of name punning was common in the Renaissance. For example, Sir Philip Sidney punned on the name of his beloved’s husband, *Rich*, in his sonnet sequence, *Astrophel and Stella* (35 and 37.)²¹

²¹ Unicio J. Violi, *Shakespeare’s Complete Sonnets: a Critical Interpretation*, New York, 1965, p. 131.

There are names which may function on both levels – in relevance to content and to form. In our material such bifunctional names are those used in paronomasic pairs and in play on words (*Bobchinskij – Dobchinskij*, *Domejko – Dovejko*, *Maciej – Pocij*, *Slavus – sclavus*, *Phunky – Monkey*, etc.), as well as names of auditory-verbal associations (*Bobster*, *Tadger*), and phonetic intensives (*Pickwick*, *Chichikov*, *Raddle*, *Noggs*).

The fact, that names tend to appear on two levels, suggests that some names might be poly-functional. In the content of a literary work they may have two or more semantic functions and, at the same time, play a role in its form. For example, in the aforementioned Pushkin's epigram the names *Shikhmatov*, *Shishkov*, *Shakhovskoj* are used with the intention of ridicule but at the same time they greatly contribute to the form of the epigram used in alliteration and end rhyme. Also there is poly-function of name in this line by Rylskyj:

“Pro strichu z tyhramy na *Klynu Zelenim*”;

the name performs the function of *couleur locale*, is symbolically meaningful, and contributes to rhythm.

The existing typology of name function in literature needs to be extended, supplemented, and amended. For instance, the typology of names relevant to the form of a literary work may be modified and extended in the following manner:

1. relevance to rhyme:

- a) alliteration, consonance and assonance;
- b) rhyme patterns;
- c) anaphora and refrain;
- d) alliterative names and their combinations;
- e) onomatopoeia and sound symbolism (auditory-verbal associations and sound intensives);
- f) paronomasia (a pun);

2. relevance to rhythm:

- a) shift of accent;
- b) modification of name-forms (contraction, extension, etc.);
- c) onomastic elliptization.

Obviously, much more critical work needs to be done before we shall be able to lay the theoretical groundwork necessary for proper study of literary names.

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