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Linguistic aspects of literary name origination

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Abstract: This paper explores what *meaning* means in relation to proper names in artistic products, principally literature, focusing especially on the linguistic bases of name creation as a purposive historical act. The involvement of names in the process of reading and the impossibility of translation in a narrow sense are also discussed.

Keywords: Proper names, name creation, literature, creative arts, cratylic naming, *sprechende Namen*, semantic processing, translation, The Pragmatic Theory of Properhood (TPTP).

Aspects linguistiques de l'onomatogenèse littéraire

Résumé : Cet article examine ce que signifie le concept de la *signification* des noms propres dans les produits artistiques, principalement dans la littérature, en mettant l'accent sur les bases linguistiques de la création de noms en tant qu'acte

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historique intentionnel. La participation des noms au processus de lecture et l'impossibilité de les traduire (dans un sens restreint) sont également abordées.

Mots-clés : Noms propres, création de noms propres, littérature, arts créatifs, noms « cratyliques », traitement sémantique, traduction, The Pragmatic Theory of Properhood (TPTP).

Sprachliche Aspekte der Entstehung literarischer Namen

Zusammenfassung: In diesem Artikel wird untersucht, was *Bedeutung* betreffs Eigennamen in künstlerischen Produkten bedeutet, vor allem in Bezug auf die Literatur, wobei insbesondere die sprachlichen Grundlagen der Namensbildung als zweckgebundener historischer Akt im Mittelpunkt stehen. Die Einbeziehung von Namen in den Lesevorgang und die Unmöglichkeit ihrer Übersetzung (im engeren Sinne) werden ebenfalls diskutiert.

Schlüsselbegriffe: Eigennamen, Namenerfindung, Literatur, kreative Kunst, sprechende Namen, semantische Verarbeitung, Übersetzung, The Pragmatic Theory of Properhood (TPTP).

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Linguistic aspects of literary name origination

RICHARD COATES

1. Introduction: Literary onomastics, explanation and the author

> […] onomastics is an ideal testing ground for many questions that concern the limits of a theory of interpretation and, for instance, the relations which exist between the writer's work and the reader's response. (Grimaud 1977: 890–891)

Literary onomastics seeks to explain proper names and their usage in works of literature, and by extension in other forms of artistic creativity. No superordinate term has found general acceptance; the term *literary onomastics* is therefore retained here even if names that might be studied appeared in film or television, or in graffiti, or in inscriptions on artefacts. Related terms such as *text* and *author* will be used in comparably extended ways. The words here should not be taken to imply that an absolute distinction can be drawn between literary and non-literary texts, but the difference will be understood in a common-sense way and taken for granted.

Literary onomastics is often regarded as atomistic (Nicolaisen 2008: 90),[1] individualistic and subjective, too reliant on "sensitivity" and "implication" (Markey 1982: 134–135), and a breeding ground for dubiously supported hypotheses or guesswork (implicitly, and fairly politely, in Coates 1987).[2] But that does not mean that matters of linguistic interest cannot be discerned and pursued explanatorily in a systematic way.

Explanation may have a diachronic or a synchronic dimension. The former, founded in the act of onomatogenesis (name-origination) itself, has to do with discovering or hypothesizing the etymology of a name created for the endeavour in question: as in my first academic paper (Coates 1976). This procedure is regarded by Nicolaisen (2008: 90) as the original impetus for the more ambitious discipline of literary onomastics. That is, diachronic

[1] Nicolaisen (2005) has also eloquently reacted against the peripheral status which scholarship has allocated to this subject area as a result.

[2] Note also the remark by Butler (2010: 3) about "the lack of resources in comparison to other areas of onomastics, which seems to render literary onomastics a weaker academic field than it deserves to be." In its context, this comment highlights the same issue that the other scholars mention.

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explanation is founded in the author's reasons for *creating* the name, to the extent that those reasons are ascertainable. A related focus is relevant for a name drawn from a pre-existing stock rather than being an etymological novelty: the author's reasons for *selecting* precisely that name from precisely that stock. In either case, the essence of onomastic study is founded in attempting to identify authorial intention, which might seem problematic.

In the last three quarters of a century, many have tried to remove the author from the study of literary texts, through identifying the Intentional Fallacy (Wimsatt & Beardsley 1946); the Death of the Author (Barthes 1967); types of reader-response based criticism, beginning with Rosenblatt (1938), Lewis (1961), Fish (1970); and so on. They view a text as interpretable in its own right and as the product of a more complex battery of forces than an author's often (or even in principle) unfathomable intentions. I fully accept that there is such a case to be made about understanding a text in general, but it is obvious that any answer to the question "Why does the name *X* appear in this text?" will be founded in the reader's assessment of aspects of the author's state of mind. Those aspects may exist on an epistemological range from the certainty of an explicit statement of his or her intention, through reasonable linguistically based inferences, to speculations perhaps involving the author's known reading habits, presumed personality or state of mind and social, sexual or gender identity. If we are going to do explanatory work in this sphere, the author as a truly active agent cannot be left out.

Synchronic dimensions of the explanation of names might be envisaged in a number of different forms. One possibility involves pragmatics in the broadest sense, dealing with the analysis of the textual uses to which names are put: identifying/nominative, vocative, referential, and of how those uses interplay with non-onomastic ways of performing the same communicative tasks (compare for non-literary texts De Stefani 2006a: 55–61; 2006b; 2009). Another involves what Gibka (2016; and in a sophisticated form especially 2018) calls the *permanent* and *momentary functions* in a literary text beyond mere identification and differentiation. These are exemplified in the considerable attention which has been paid to the literary relationships between names and the created individuals who/which bear them, as concisely illustrated by Cavill (2016): relationships involving characterization (also Kohlheim 2018), narrative role, intertextual reference (Nicolaisen 1986; 2008: 93–94), and so forth. Another may be sought in the analysis of relations between names in some fictive world (such as Lewis Carroll's, J. R. R. Tolkien's or J. K. Rowling's), viewed as an extension of the world encoded in the author's narrative language; essentially what Dvořáková (undated; also 2012) calls "the overall onymic structure of literary work (the so-called 'Landscape of Names')". An untypical rarer use might be found in the numerological interpretation of names as a characterization

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device, as adopted programmatically in modern times for the players in Suzette Haden Elgin's science fiction novels (Lillian 2015; Haden Elgin did not achieve consistency in her application of the "technique"). Not much attention will be paid to these synchronic aspects of explanation in the present article. In each of these cases authorial intention, the artist's striving after calculated effects, lurks in the background, and whilst it may be subordinate, the diachronic event of name creation or name selection constrains the possibilities that are open to pragmatic interpretation – even if not to the extreme extent of eliminating all but a small number – and that event can always remain subliminally present.

The philosophical and semiotic background to current thinking in literary onomastics is set out comprehensively by Smith (2005: 13–16; 2016; and more briefly 2018). The history and development of that background in relation to English literature in particular is analysed by Cavill (2016). These matters have been aired extensively, and will not be dwelt on in detail in the present article.

Briefly stating now the position set out more fully below: we shall see that names in literature fall into a simple "semantic" or etymological typology. One well-known type, the most interesting from the linguistic point of view, involves those that have been regarded as "meaningful", i.e. pregnant with the meaning of the lexical elements which etymologically comprise them. The processing of such names in artistic products involves a suspension of the normal processing of names, which I take to follow the process expounded in The Pragmatic Theory of Properhood (TPTP).

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The ideas here were originally floated in Coates (2015), which was concerned particularly with the genesis of "meaningful" or "cratylic" names for characters, often designated by the German terms *sprechende* or *redende Namen*, literally 'speaking names', and by Windt (2005: 53) as "symbolic" names. They were developed further in Coates (2018).[3] It was argued in the earlier paper that literary naming falls into (three or) four basic types. *Cratylic naming* might be understood as covering aspects of two of these sorts. Two types of consequence follow. The first type deals with the translatability of names, which I argued is technically impossible because names have no sense. In countering the superficially irrational nature of this idea, I proposed instead a view of name substitution which is completely in

[3] With the permission of the relevant editors, the substance of both of these papers is incorporated into the present article, with suitable expansions, amendments and updatings. I am grateful to Stefan Jurasinski and Valéria Tóth.

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harmony with the view enshrined in TPTP that names are definitionally senseless; in so-called name-translation, it is the *etymology* of a name which is accessed and translated, not its "sense", i.e. not any aspect of its synchronic meaning. The second type of consequence has to do with the role of such etymologies in literary reading. An attempt was made in Coates (2018) to harmonize the notion that etymology is accessible during ordinary reading with current views on the nature of semantic (psycholinguistic) processing more generally. These ideas will now be set out more fully, and developed into a full calculus for understanding certain linguistic aspects of literary onomatogenesis and name-processing.

For the purposes of this article, *names* always means 'proper names'; an *author* is any creator of a work of art, the *reader* is its perceiver-interpreter and consumer, and *literature* means any genre of creative artistic activity. An *individual* is any single character, place or other nameable single thing or event.

2. The Pragmatic Theory of Properhood

The essentials of the approach to proper names and naming called *The Pragmatic Theory of Properhood* (TPTP; see also Caprini 2015) can be stated briefly but densely. They derive ultimately from the philosophical logic of John Stuart Mill (1843; on this relationship, see also Coates 2009).

1.

1.1. Names are linguistic devices for performing reference senselessly. [= Names have no sense, i.e. they have no synchronic linguistic content which can be used in logical operations.]

1.2. The corollary: any expression which is used on some occasion to refer senselessly is a name.

1.3. Etymological sense is cancelled or suspended by the process of becoming a name and by the act of creating one. [= the historical precondition for 1.1.]

1.4. Names do not denote categorially, but only individually. [= Names have no intension, but only a set of individuated extensions. To the extent that the category to which a thing-named belongs can be inferred – e.g. inhabited place, female human being, domestic animal – it is probabilistic rather than categorial, and denotational class membership cannot be a structural-linguistic category (Coates 2014).]

Some key semantic terms have long been used inconsistently in linguistics and especially philosophy. My usage is based on that of John Lyons (1977, esp. chapters 7–9).

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2. *Reference* is the act of picking out an individual *referent* in a *context of utterance* (which can be defined in relation to speech, signing or writing, or non-linguistically through gesture).

Denotation is the range of *potential* referents of a word or other lexical expression; that is, it is an abstraction from reference and must not be confused with it.

Sense is the network of semantic relations in which lexical expressions participate, including synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, polysemy, etc.: i.e. a set of more-or-less-logically definable relations among lexical items in a conceptual space, involving identity, negation and inclusion of various sorts, along with tropes (meta-denotations, relations between denotations) such as metaphor and metonymy, based on comparability and association respectively.

Sense should not be equated with *meaning*. The meaning of any linguistic form includes not only sense and *denotation*, but also spatiotemporally located *reference* deriving from usage in a context, a whole range of conventional *cultural associations*, *personal associations* (see e.g. Reszegi, forthcoming) and crucially, the possibility of an accessible, but not necessarily accessed, *etymology*. We need not emphasize that *etymology* should not be confused with *sense*. To commit this confusion is to subscribe to the Etymological Fallacy, that the "true" meaning of an expression is what it used to mean. This distinction is crucial.

Much in the four numbered points above may look like the common position of most onomasticians and name theorists. The key points of distinction are (i) that TPTP prioritizes *reference* over *denotation* (hence *pragmatic* in the label *TPTP*, because reference involves acts in real time, real-world language usage), and (ii) that the position espoused allows a simple way of theorizing the relationship between homonymous words/phrases on the one hand and names on the other (*felicity* vs. *Felicity* as a given name; *ten acres* vs. *Ten Acres* as a field-name; *the white castle* vs. *The White Castle* as a place-name (a microtoponym): the homonymous pairs respectively bear sense and lack sense. That permits the simple equation of *name* with *expression that carries no sense*. This article focuses on what these tenets imply for name-interpretation (by lay readers or professional analysts) and for name-"translation" as literary activities.

3. Literary naming

Proper names chosen for characters, places or other nameable individuals in works of fiction can be organized into four broad categories, one of which might be seen as problematic from the perspective of TPTP. Let us therefore move on to what the above thoughts imply about literary onomatogenesis.

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An author may choose a name for an individual by a decision process which places it into one of four broad categories:

3.

3.1. The name may be invented from scratch (*ex nihilo*), or give the appearance of being so. If the author invents one with no intention of using the form to convey any meaning (understood as broadly as possible), this does not amount to exercising a choice that provides a reason for its creation at all, though any apparent randomness might alert a critic interested in subconscious associations. Possible examples: Sidney's *Pamela*, Swift's *Brobdingnag*, Blake's creative force *Urizen*, Dickens' *Mr Micawber* and *Pumblechook*, and *Mr Spock* in the TV series *Star Trek*.[4]

3.2. The name may be chosen as if randomly from some pre-existing set, e.g. of personal or given names; if so, the same applies as in (3.1.). Examples might include, for all I know (because I have no access to the author's knowledge-space, though I may be able to hazard some guesses, in which cases (3.2.) may have a porous boundary with (3.3.)): Chaucer's *Robin* the miller; Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*; *Eduard* and *Charlotte* in Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, Jane Austen's *Emma* (Barry's 2005 study offers no biographical source for this common name of the Georgian period); Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*; Joyce Carey's *Mister Johnson*; Solzhenitsyn's *Ivan Denisovich.*

3.3. The name may be chosen commemoratively, i.e. either to replicate deliberately the name of a real or fictive individual known to the author; or to allude to such an individual. Examples of commemoration in a range of sub-types might be drawn from the vast literature on Shakespeare's names and their associations, e.g. most recently Smith (2015); Racine's *Phèdre*, after Euripides; Gottfried Keller's *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe*, playing on Shakespeare; *La Bohème* as a topos; James Joyce's *Stephen Dedalus*, from Greek mythology; *Joan Hunter Dunn* in John Betjeman's poem from an actual person. A name might be put together out of separately allusive parts, as in the "official" story of the case of Paul McCartney's

[4] The supposed blankness of the canvas – my mind – on which any of these was drawn might be disputed from a particular critical or biographical perspective. On Urizen, compare and contrast Metcalf (1972) and Sha (2009: 237). Gene Roddenberry, the creator of Star Trek, was notoriously unaware of a prominent namesake of Mr Spock: the famous paediatrician with that surname. Sometimes explanations seem thought up on the spur of the moment, as when an interviewer asked Samuel Beckett why Lucky in Waiting for Godot was so named, and he replied: "I suppose he is lucky to have no more expectations […]" (quoted in Bair 1990: 407).

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Eleanor Rigby.[5] The commemoration might be punning and playful rather than direct, as in the case of Patrick Hamilton's *Hangover Square* based on the street-name *Hanover Square* in London; Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead* which presumably plays on the English place-name (or the lexical word which it has come to resemble) *Maidenhead*; and the Hanna-Barbera cartoon character *Yogi Bear*, whose name plays on that of the famous baseball player Yogi Berra.

In each of (3.1.)–(3.3.), there is often considerable room to speculate what or whom the author had in mind, leading to ill-grounded assertion, pointless controversy and a plethora of *perhaps*es. Examples are too familiar to need invidious pointing to individuals. My own point about *Brideshead* above might be taken as a potentially humiliating test-case. Proposals which are convincing to a wide range of degrees can be, and have been, made under these headings.

3.4. The name may be invented, but consist of or contain interpretable linguistic elements (excluding names), and the author may intend or wish to impose a meaning (understood broadly) on the reader. That is, the act of naming, and the name chosen, are non-random, and the lexical meaning of any expression that constitutes or is included in the name is relevant to understanding its significance in its context of use. The author may or may not succeed in imposing that meaning on an actual reader, but the (presumed) intention, desire or hope is enough for our purposes. Examples are manifold: Shakespeare's practice as suggested at numerous points in Coates (1987) and writings referenced there; Kipling (Sussex edition, vol. 1, p. 43) opens his thoughts to explain, for example, that "KAA is pronounced *Kar*. A made-up name, from the queer open-mouthed hiss of a big snake."; and there are many informal suggestions in print and on the Web, of which Kozlowski (2016) on character-names in Dickens' novels is an example.[6] The practice of J. K. Rowling in her *Harry Potter* books has excited much recent interest, especially regarding the "translatability" of her charactonyms; see e.g. Gibka (2016, 2017).[7]

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5 In an interview referenced in the Wikipedia article on "Eleanor Rigby", McCartney said he made up the name with Eleanor from the actress Eleanor Bron and Rigby from the name of a shop in Bristol, Rigby & Evens Ltd. He recalled in 1984: "I just liked the name. I was looking for a name that sounded natural. 'Eleanor Rigby' sounded natural." Others have observed that exactly this name occurs on a gravestone in Liverpool which might have been known to the Liverpudlian McCartney, subconsciously or otherwise.

6 Dickens has long been noted as a master of this art: "[…] the last noteworthy appearance in fiction of names that pertinently distinguish the characters is in the works of Charles Dickens, especially in his early books" (Gordon 1917: 4).

7 Note further Nilsen & Nilsen (2005), Kerr (2017), and the Wikipedia entry "Harry Potter in translation", section 7.4. The topic is currently very popular with (aspirant) academics: see for example Brockman (2016), Al-Hadithy (2017).

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(3.4.) is of particular interest, because one of TPTP's axioms (1.1. above) is that a name has no *sense*, i.e. no lexical meaning. A name is a *referential* device that comes to have a *denotation* only through an accumulation of acts of *reference* using the same name to pick out the same individual. A consequence of literary interest follows: if names have no sense, they cannot be used referentially in a way which draws on any sense; and it further follows that names are untranslatable, under a purely semantic interpretation of that term. *Translation* is defined here in a way adapted from Catford's classic definition (1995: 20): "the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by textual material equivalent *in sense* in another language (TL)".[8] So if a name (senseless) appears to deliver lexical meaning (sense) in the context of its use, as many readers will undoubtedly believe, at least at first, we need another way of conceptualizing that meaning if the principles of TPTP are to stand.

4. Non-translatability

Non-translatability (in this narrowed sense) does not mean that names cannot form equivalence-pairs. A name may have a denotational equivalent in another language which is not a semantic translation: *la Manche* is *the English Channel*; the *Šaṭṭ al-ʿArab* 'stream of the Arabs' in Arabic is *Arvand Rūd* 'swift river' in Farsi; the Gaulish druid in the *Astérix* comics is *Panoramix* in French but *Getafix* in English; the bilingual 1960s radio DJ Mike Pasternak was *Emperor Rosko* in the UK, but *le Président Rosko* in France. Sometimes partial translation may be suspected, as with Italy's *Cenerentola*, Czechia's *Popelka* and Germany's *Aschenputtel* 'Cinderella' (*cenere*, *popel* and *Asche* are all 'ashes, cinders'). None of these name-sets consist of *complete* linguistic translations of each other. *Equivalencing* rather than translating is the key notion when the "translation" of charactonyms is considered. For the unity of the process, *apparent exact translation* of names is to be viewed in the same way as more general equivalencing (more fully in Coates 2006: esp. 375).

5. "Cratylic" naming and intention

Other interesting things might be said about names in works of art in

[8] Professional translators will not construe their discipline so narrowly. But I prefer to distinguish using a more embracing term – perhaps transposition – the highly skilled activity of "replacing textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another language" with due attention paid to the cultural contexts in which SL and TL are used.

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general, and especially about what Anne Barton, in her 1983 Alexander Memorial Lectures, called "cratylic" charactonyms in literature (Barton 1990: esp. 7–10). There are three broad types of literary naming: *arbitrary* or *intention-free naming* (covering (3.1.) and an indeterminate sector of the range of (3.2.) above, and of no purely "meaning-related" interest); *cultural naming* (which trades, intentionally, on conveyed meanings, i.e. implicit meanings which may or may not be recovered in context, covering (3.3.) above, and perhaps some element of (3.2.)); and *semantic naming* (which trades, presumably intentionally, on *apparent* senses or lexical meanings, or etymologies, converging with (3.4.)). *Cratylic naming* takes its most obvious and potent form in (3.4.). From here onwards, and as foreshadowed above, an authorial intention in the genesis of charactonyms of types (3.3.) and (3.4.) is taken for granted, at least for expository reasons. That does not mean that there necessarily was any such intention, but that a reader might assume one, even if wrongly. We are dealing with what might be intended by the author or inferred by the reader, with greater or lesser degrees of probability, with a focus on where there is a credible likelihood of overlap between their cognitive worlds.

Cratylic names, as noted, have also been called *symbolic names*. Their existence is alluded to by the ancient expression *nomen (est) omen* 'the name is a sign', i.e. 'the (apparent sense of a) name can be understood as having literal relevance at the moment of utterance', whether *name* is understood to apply on every occasion of use for a range of referents and therefore *characteristically*, or just at some individual moment of utterance, i.e. *contextually*). These are names whose form seems to urge the reader to access or retrieve some meaning relevant to the plot. Many charactonyms illustrate what I have called (Coates 2012) *The Etymological Onomastic Turn*; *purposive onomatogenesis* would serve. Take for example the names, famous in English literature and film, of Ancient *Pistol*, Doll *Tearsheet*, *Christian*, Roderick *Random*, Becky *Sharp*, Peter *Poundtext*, *Wackford* Squeers, *Rosa Bud*, Mr *M'Choakumchild*, Gabriel *Kettledrummle*, Gabriel *Oak*, *Ernest* Worthing, Sebastian *Flyte*, Titus *Groan*, Auric *Goldfinger*, George *Smiley*, *Rocky* Balboa, Johnny *English*… In virtue of their transparency, such names may be understood, at least in part, with their etymological meaning, and apparently therefore an accessible or latent sense or semantic value, remaining available whenever they are used to refer to the relevant individual. That may help form a view of the individual's personality and role. But the name need not be (although it could be in principle) interpreted anew on each occasion of use, once its referent has been established – certainly not in the way that a normal lexical word must be semantically interpreted on every such occasion.

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Contrast:

4.

4.1. This is Pistol. Pistol is a comic character who is always boasting. But Pistol is really a coward.

4.2. This is a pistol. The pistol was used to shoot the diplomat. The pistol is in an evidence bag.

One does not need to interpret *Pistol* lexically on each occasion of usage (though one *has the opportunity to*, and on the first occasion one *may well do*): thereafter one just uses the label referentially to identify the individual in question. But *pistol* needs to be understood lexically, sensefully, semantically, each time for the mini-narrative (4.2.) to be understood.[9]

6. Sense and suspension

We face a potential, but not inevitable, difficulty. The axioms of TPTP require us to accept that onomatogenesis separates a name from the sense of any and all of the senses of its etymological component parts. But the point of cratylic names of this type is precisely to suspend, subvert or compromise such a separation. What any semantically aware intentional literary act of naming actually consists of is the offer of *repotentiation* or *contextual resemanticization* of the etymology of a name. To focus on my simplest example, *Christian*: John Bunyan's choice in *The pilgrim's progress* was surely intentionally transparent; the character Christian was to be understood as being a Christian, even the archetypal Christian, and the authorially intended connection between name and word would be expected to be made by the reader as soon as the character was introduced to them. However, following the logic of example (4.), the reader is not required to access the sense of the word *Christian* every time the name appears in order to successfully identify the name's referent (and thereby the unique character denoted). Of course, the repotentiation of an etymology fails if the reader is ignorant. Activating the potential of the connection, and therefore recovering an intended "meaning", is only possible if the etymology is transparent *to the reader*, and even then only if they actually make the necessary connection. A reader might understand that the referent of *Christian* is a character, and they could follow his progress as a pilgrim without ever making the connection with the word *Christian*. Evidently that reader misses something of central importance for the author and his *imagined* reader. However, that is not a matter for linguistics or onomastics,

[9] This idea clearly underlies the following remark by Grimaud (1977: 890): "When we are introduced to a person we do not know, if we notice the meaning of their name, we tend to forget it as soon as we are better acquainted with them." He goes on to draw a parallel in literary reading.

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but for the study of individual variation in cultural (encyclopaedic) and lexical knowledge. Activating an etymology (of a name) is obviously a very different linguistic skill from activating a sense (of a referring expression which is not a name). No-one can understand that the referent of *a certain town* at the beginning of Dickens' *Oliver Twist* is a specific but unspecified place having the characteristics of a town unless they understand the senses of the expressions *a certain* and *town* – not just the first time, but every time they are used. However, in the same verbal context, "Among other buildings in […]", they could grasp that *Mudfog* was a place-name without understanding either *mud* or *fog*, and without necessarily recovering the senses of these words every time the place-name was used referentially.[10]

The claimed non-translatability of names is another issue that may give rise to misunderstandings. The present writer has had his opinion about this dismissed publicly, without argument, because the scholar attacking my view had failed to grasp the essence of the distinction made above between *translation* as I had defined it for my purposes[11] and *the substitution of equivalents*. That scholar insisted on the superficial and obvious point that it is possible to substitute one name-form for another where the two stand in an equivalence relation, in the way explored above, and notably where there is a sense-overlap *between their etymological sources*; for example *Crookshanks* the cat in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* novels, which (who?) appears in the German translation as *Krummbein*. *If* charactonyms traded on some kind of semantic transparency amounting to having sense, it would follow not only that they *could be* translated, but that they *should be* when the opportunity arises, just like the text which surrounds them. That would leave some charactonyms *necessarily translated* (those of type (3.4.)) whilst others remained *necessarily untranslated* (those of types (3.1.) and (3.2.), and probably a goodly number of (3.3.)). To understand the force of the *if*-clause fully, we need to recognize the *context* of name-bestowal.

7. Name-bestowal as art

Literature is artful.[12] It is legitimate to suppose that this fact cancels or subverts the assumption about name-bestowal which we have claimed to be normal, certainly within TPTP: namely that the real-world act of name-

[10] Dickens actually used the name Mudfog for that "certain town" in earlier drafts of Oliver Twist.

[11] Reminder: by translation I mean narrowly the substitution of material in the target language for material in the source language having what is judged to be an equivalent sense.

[12] Indeed Smith (2005) considers the prospect of names themselves as an art-form, which is in tune with my purposes in this article: they result from an author's actualizing an intention. Kohlheim's article in this volume emphatically develops the same view.

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bestowal eliminates from subsequent acts of referring the sense(s) of any words or phrases which appear in the expression chosen to be a name. Literary name-bestowal is different. The essence of its literariness is that it invites the reader precisely NOT to eliminate the connection between usage and etymology, but to perform the balancing-act of maintaining both the (senseless) form of a name and its (real or apparent) etymological meaning active for the duration of the reading. In cases of type (3.4.) like *Christian*, that means acknowledging *both* that the item is a charactonym and is in principle senseless because a name, *and* that the act of using it relevantly references its etymology involving the homonymous lexical word, or that it *may* do so. For that reason, something resembling charactonymic translation is in a restricted sense *possible*, in the guise of etymological translation, but never *necessary*. *Crookshanks* (representing an English surname) may appear in German as *Krummbein*, a literal equivalent (and also a German surname), 'bent leg', with the exception of the loss of the English plural suffix; but there is no *semantic* reason why the cat should not instead bear the surname *Hoffmann*. *Dörchen Lakenreisser*, in German, is literally and etymologically '(pet form of) *Dorothy* sheet-ripper' for a tart called *Doll Tearsheet* in Shakespeare's *Henry IV, part II*; but there is no *semantic* reason why she should not be *Gretchen Werther*. Of course, there are potent *literary* reasons for the author not to be satisfied with *Hoffmann* or *Gretchen Werther*, but that is not the point.

Epstein (2009: 202) reports an exchange with Meta Ottosson, the translator into Swedish of Roald Dahl's children's novel *Matilda*. Ottosson wrote:

> How did it come about that I translated Miss Trunchbull with [= as, RC] Domderassonskan? […] I had an impression of how she was after I read the book for the first time. When I was a child, there was a film called "Anderssonskans Kalle".[13] Kalle was a naughty boy and Anderssonskan was a real matron, a bitch who was both angry and grim, and dared to say what she thought, as I recall […] This is what I think of when I hear this name: Anderssonskan. […] Someone who commands and blusters, so it became Domderassonskan. That's how I think it was but I can not be completely sure of how my thoughts wander, how I associate when I translate. [Epstein's translation]

This "translated" name is an effectively arbitrary blend of an established charactonym *Anderssonskan* with the verb *domdera* 'to keep on grumbling about [something]'. This blend had full "meaning potential" only within the translator's mind at the moment of creation, and was not necessarily repotentiated on every, or even any, occasion of use in the resultant text.

[13] Rolf Husberg's 1950 film.

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Any name-"translation" may be either purely lexical and literal, or idiomatic and suggestive, just like all other translation. However, it can, and must, still be argued that the act of "translating" charactonyms is exactly like all other non-literary onymic "translation" in TPTP (see especially Coates 2006: 373–378), and therefore that it accesses the *etymology* of a name rather than any *sense* which might be detectable from elements in its linguistic form. To repeat, one does not (have to) investigate a charactonym for sense whenever it is used referentially, as one does for the senses of ordinary words and other expressions in a text, although the possibility of such a cognitive reconnection during the act of reading is not ruled out. A reading of charactonyms for meaning or "translation" therefore differs from a reading of ordinary lexical items for meaning or translation; whilst *sense* is necessarily accessed in the case of lexical items, it is *etymology* in the case of names, amounting to something *resembling sense* on the first encounter if the etymology is transparent, with the reservations set out earlier. Hermans (1988: 12) said that "the translatability of proper names is a function of their 'semanticization'" – asserted in the context of a discussion of how names become common nouns. It would be better to replace the first clause with "the translatability of proper names is a function of their etymological transparency to the would-be translator."

8. Literary onomastics and language processing

This article began with the suggestion of a second type of consequence of the basic tenets of TPTP, to do with the role of etymologies in ordinary literary reading. Let us attempt to harmonize the notion that etymology may be accessible (and actually accessed) during ordinary reading with the nature of semantic processing more generally.

The presentation of a charactonym to a reader resembles the presentation of a verbal stimulus to a subject in a psycholinguistic experiment, but with an extra layer of detachment. Before introducing a character, the author may or may not present some context which will prime or skew the reader's response to the character's name. If such a context is absent, the reader may (but need not) seek the most salient lexical item(s) that might represent the name's etymology,[14] and suppress the less frequent material, to help "get a handle on" the character, typically generating a single possibility (or probability). Such a process is essentially like *convergent semantic processing*, a left-brain dominant activity whose main function is processing efficiency which eliminates ambiguity. But an author may tease the reader by seeking to exploit a non-salient etymology which has to be approached indirectly: one relying on

[14] Or in some cases a (near-)homonym, if a punning interpretation is attempted.

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a less frequent sense, a metaphorical one (the teacher Mr M'Choakumchild in Dickens' *Hard times* does not literally choke children, but does so metaphorically), or a metonymic one (Herbert Pocket in *Great expectations*, who has no prospect of the riches that *pocket* may seem to suggest), or an ironic one (*Little John* for the tall outlaw in the Robin Hood stories), or even a paradoxical one (a cat named *Dog* in Norma Tanega's song "Walkin' my cat named Dog", 1966). Such a process is essentially like *divergent semantic processing*, a right-brain dominant activity which may leave a pool of possibilities available to the reader and favours ambiguity and creative inefficiency. The increased time inefficiently made available may be deployed for understanding the author's probable or presumable charactonymic intention.[15]

The proposed process has two stages: one where the charactonym's etymology is identified with lexical material, and another where the *lexical material* (as opposed to the name itself) is processed for meaning (sense or denotation or both). The first stage may never take place, but *must* take place in order to activate the second stage, the only source of any linguistic understanding of a charactonym and its possible ironies or paradoxes. The proposed two-stage process, so defined, is universal, whether the name involved is transparent or not.

These remarks may go some way towards bridging an intellectual gap identified by Nicolaisen (2008: 97) between names as objects with onymic (i.e. linguistic) features and names as literary phenomena, by providing a hint of a framework in which the literary and the non-literary understanding and processing of names can be brought together. The desire and intention are there.

9. Final thoughts

Readers might think that, by explicitly suspending the relevance of current critical opinion concerning textual interpretation that eliminates the author, I have damaged my own case. Let me partly recapitulate what I have proposed in my defence, though without any sense of being defensive. I do not dispute that it is admissible to eliminate the author at the level of evaluating a text's communicational effectiveness; that is, at the level of regarding the reader's formulation of propositions about the author's real, adopted or pretended world-view, mental state, cultural embeddedness, dissentience or otherness. Naturally, one can read a text without knowledge of the author and without drawing any conclusions about them. One can also read a text *with* such knowledge, though if one does it is not legitimate to dress one's conclusions up as necessary truths about the author and therefore

[15] For these processing concepts in action, see for example Faust & Lavidor (2003: 593) and Abraham (2014).

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about the text's "true" meaning. One can dispute endlessly what aspects of a character's behaviour, for example, were intended by the author to be viewed as praiseworthy or evil, altruistic or self-serving, normal or abnormal, and come to no definitive or collective conclusion, depending on one's own stance(s) as reader(s) within one's own cultural framework. So the text can be viewed non-biographically, as for example from psychoanalytic, Marxist or feminist perspectives, or even from idiosyncratic ones not dignified by any -isms. It is certainly legitimate to explore viewing reader response, rather than authorial intention, as paramount, as critically explored, for example, by Musleh (2019: chapter 2). So far, then, I agree that authorial intentions can hold no unchallengeable place in the interpretation of a text.

However, the issue of (re)constructing an author's intent as to what a work is "about" should be distinguished from the question of how or why a name is bestowed on a character. An author's text is created and then available for interpretation because it expresses or encodes propositions. Charactonym-bestowal is an event, not a text or a proposition, though the evidence provided by names can be used in formulating propositions about such beliefs. Bestowal indisputably happens in the author's head, not in the reader's, nor in the ether between author and reader. The ideas above are primarily about name-bestowal, and about what happens if a reader engages in the quest to understand a name against a linguistic and cultural background assumed to be shared with the author. What a reader makes of a name *can be* a separate question from that of its bestowal by an author. It is not necessarily related to it, much less governed by it – though it *may* often be related, especially when the reader shares a cultural framework with the author and infers the existence of an authorial intention.

Names do not just happen, and it seems perfectly legitimate for a reader to assume that some names are chosen by an author with a purpose: with the intention, supposition or hope that the reader may divine that purpose, even if the choice is laden with irony. But the text can still work as literature if the reader does not do that. Divining aspects of authorial intention is not the only purpose of reading charactonyms – they may be there for intratextual humour, say, or their presence may be influenced by subconscious cultural biases – and I would not wish to convey that I believe divining authorial intention is the only purpose. But charactonyms are available for etymological interpretation, they are linguistic objects, and the author is responsible for them.

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