# *METONYMY, METAPHOR AND OTHER TROPES FAVOURING THE PROCESS OF ONYMIZATION, RELATED TO THE HYDRONYMS OF THE OLT BASIN*

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***Abstract****: Research on the names of waters in this country, especially those in the Olt River Basin, can be done in several ways and from distinct angles, depending on the researcher's targets and the methods he / she uses. In the present study we have considered the importance of the tropes with respect to the names of waterways, as well as the origin, structure and derivation of those terms referring to the hydronyms of the Olt River basin. The purpose of this approach also lies in analysing some characteristic features of the whol of the hydronyms in the Olt River Basin.*

***Keywords:*** *onymization, metonymy, metaphor*.

The findings of the numerous studies on Romanian toponymy in general, and on hydronyms in a special way, suggest that hydrographic units have an exact natural individualization, as they constitute the "laboratory" of place denomination in a given region.

In a broader sense, onymization can be defined as "*turning an appellation into a proper name, or shifting the respective linguistic unit from the plane of generalizing denominations into the plane of individualizing denominations*." (Ioniță, Vasile C., 2002: 55-59)

As far as the denomination system of the Olt River Basin is concerned, one can say that it is based on conversion (i.e. providing the appellation with an onymic function, with no changes in point of form), polarization or subordination to the toponymic system, transonymization (or toponymic transfer) and the use of tropes favouring onymization, such as metonymy and metaphor.

Denomination (onymization) based on ***metonymy*** is very common in toponymy, in general, and especially in hydronymy. It complements the description itself and actually is very similar to it. Essentially, the semantic indexes considered in the process of selecting the onymized appellations not refer explicitly to the watercourse or the bed proper that the river flows in, but rather to some details, of a physical or other nature, of the places that the watercourse designated flows through, such as the banks, the surroundings, certain geographical landmarks that are in close proximity or are encompassing them, which are placed in a relationship of *contiguity*, in the broad sense of the term, which actually characterizes any metonymy.

Indeed, *metonymy* is defined as a *semantic figure* (*a trope*) *and a linguistic phenomenon whereby an object name is replaced with another, based on a relationship of logical contiguity or adjacency between them (be it spatial, temporal or causal)*.( Bidu-Vrânceanu, A., Călăraşu, C., Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, L., Mancaş, M., Pană-Dindelegan, G., 1997: 295)

Metonymy involves other relationships between the terms than those presupposed by the metaphor, which is in fact the element that distinguishes it from the metaphor, although it is related to it.

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The terms of a metonymy express the cause through the effect, or the effect through the cause, the abstract through the concrete, etc. The relationships between the terms are logical. In many respects, symbolic metonymy reproduces linguistic metonymy, *where the transfer is based on three main types of contiguity between objects and phenomena : a) spatial contingence [... ] b) temporal contingency [... ] c) causal contingency or an identifiable link between action and results*....( Evseev, Ivan, 1983: 117)

We consider that those hydronyms reflecting ancient occupations of the people (agriculture, shepherding, hunting, fishing, etc.) are of a metonymic nature, or the relationships that were presumed (and were sometimes actual) to exist between the natural phenomena important for the above-mentioned occupations; in actual fact, the way in which hydronyms helped man to move and orientate in space, and also order his vital activities.

The following examples represent the clearest illustrations of the hydronyms in the Olt River basin, which were designated by means of a sui generis mutation of a metonymic type, sui generis, underlying the complex process of onymization described above, which it favours: *Agreş, Aluniş, Alunoasa, Aninoasa, Arţăroasa, Bălteni, Beica, Bolovan, Brad, Braniştea, Budele, Carpen, Căciulata, Cărpeniş, Ceapa, Cetatea, Cetatea de Piatră, Cocoş, Copăcioasa, Corbul Ucei, Corbul Viştei, Cumpăna, Curpăn, Dosul, Fierarul, Foltea, Frăsinet, Găunoasa, Găvan, Grebla, Horezu, Horezul, Hotaru, Locul, Lovnic, Lunca, Luncşoara, Mamu, Măciuca, Mănăstirea, Moaşa, Mogoş, Muereasca, Paloş, Păuşa, Pârâul Cailor, Pârâul Cheii, Pârâul Câinelui, Pârâul cu Fagi, Pârâul Urşilor, Plopoasa, Poarta, Poiana, Raţa, Răchita, Rudaru, Rudăreasa, Sălişte, Scorei, Stejerel, Stânca Uriaşului, Sterpul, Suhat, Şasa, Ştiuca, Tilişca, Trestia, Valea Caselor, Valea Cerbului, Vaşea Fâneţelor, Valea Fermelor, Valea Popii, Valea Prăpăstiilor, Valea Săpunului, Valea lui Trifan.*

The place names that are formed by conversion from appellations having the sense of possession or ownership (*arvătească* < *Arvatu*, *brăiasca* < *Braia*), and perhaps some of the place names formed with the suffixes *-oaia*, *-oaica*, *-eanca*, are not motional proper; rather, they show appurtenance, e.g. *Drăghioaia, Roboaica, Bădoşanca, Glogoveanca.* They take over the individualizing meaning of their deonymized onymic "predecessors", which were subsequently reonymized by conversion.

Compared to primary entopics, which are semantized through the direct description of the geographical object named, derived appellations can also be considered the result of metonymic semantic shifts (the structure of vegetation for a covered site, the human group that is settled in a place, the owner or tenant for the place possessed or the space of belonging); before acquiring the status of onyma, the appellations in question could be part of contexts such as "the place covered with hazelnut trees", "the subsiding valley", "the estate of the Alexeanu kin", "the area inhabited by Botorogi", "the arvat property", conversion being preceded by a "decontextualization."(Toma, Ion, 1995: 161-162)

Membership to the group of hydronyms refers to the proximity to human settlements, their dependence on them.

It is also as a result of a semantic transfer that the status of hydronyms is acquired in the case of a number of anthroponyms such as *Androchiel*, *Angheluş*, *Babaşa, Baciu*, which have a status of individuation in point of form, and sometimes in point of meaning too; they transpose it from the social to the geographical plane.



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Sometimes, the distinction between an appellation and an anthroponym underlying a place name can only be made through certification in the field, or in the archives (e.g. *Berbeaca, Bălana, Găinoaia, Acreală, Vătuiu*).

*"When it comes to toponymized anthroponyms, far from having to do with a mere process of onymization, it represents a transonymization, an aspect different from the conversion of appellations into proper names."(ibidem).*

In general, place names or toponyms, and also hydronyms, which, semantically, have not yet emerged from appellations, or are still understood as appellations as well, make up two categories, considered stylistically: *a) place names of zero expressiveness*, which have only denotative values; *b) expressive place names*, which, besides their intrinsic denotation, also contain some additional representations related to connotation.

Most place names are devoid of expressiveness and have only a denominative value, endowed with a various degree of precision. Expressive place names, though less numerous, are a category that is rich and varied enough to be considered by research.

Eugen Câmpeanu believes that, in the place names connected with the appellations where their origin can be traced clear stylistic values can be detected.

The toponyms in this category, which we could call semantemes, are the most expressive. Their stylistic value more often than not results from the collaboration of the semantic content with their evocative capacity, with the graphical and imaginative function of the word; the main function of a toponymic, localisation, is in this case associated with some other expressive effects. Included here are not only the so-called "psychological" toponymics, but also many of those toponymics called "topographic" (**Bâlbâitoarea, Pietrele Arse, Colţii** etc. – i.e. Stutterer, The Burnt Rocks, the Fangs), "social" (**Valea Balaurului, Valea Iadului, Râpa Dracului**, etc. – i.e. Dragon Valley, Valley of Hell, Devil's Ravine), or "historical" (**Podul Geţilor** – i.e. The Bridge of the Getae), the latter being remarkable through their particularly evocative effect. (Câmpeanu, Eugen, 1975: 139)

By calling a watercourse *Pârâu Alb (*White Creek*)*, or *Pârâul Adânc* (Deep Creek), *Pârâul Auriu* (Gold Creek), *Pârâul Bogat* (Rich Creek), *Pârâul Despletit* (Disheveled Creek), *Pârâul Întortocheat* (Tortuous Creek), *Pârâul Mare* (Great Brook), *Pârâul Mic* (Small Brook), *Pârâul Mijlociu* (Middle Brook), *Pârâul Nou* (New Creek), *Pârâul Primejdios* (Dangerous Brook), *Pârâul Rece* (Cold Creek), *Pârâul Roşu* (Red Creek), *Pârâul Sărat* (Salty Creek), *Pârâul Strâmb* (Crooked Creek), *Pârâul Şoptitor* (Whispering Creek), *Râul Mic* (Small River), *Râul Mare* (Big River), *Râul Negru* (Black River), *Valea Adâncă* (Deep Valley), *Valea Întunecoasă* (Dark Valley), *Valea Lungă* (Long Valley), *Valea Mare* (Big Valley), *Valea Mică* (Small Valley), *Valea Neagră* (Black Valley), *Valea Rece* (Cold Valley), *Valea Roşie* (Red Valley), *Valea Scurtă* (Short Valley), *Valea Seacă* (Dry Valley), *Valea Şerpuită* (Meandering Valley), we are justified to believe that there are well-grounded, objective grounds for those who first called them to have called them as they did. But objectivity is relative, as for instance the qualifying adjectives alb ("white") and *negru* ("black") include the subjective attitude of the person who gave the name of the river or the mountain. The determinatives are the result of the



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linguistic reaction of people, generated by their need to distinguish the "objects" from others within the same semantic field.

The stylistic value of a toponym is equal to the affective character of the expression, and the expression to what we call a word. So, stylistic values (of both place names, and words) belong to linguistic stylistics, about which Charles Bally said "*it deals with the study of the means of expression of the speech of a language community in terms of emotional content*."(Iordan, Iorgu, 1975:12)

Underlying the *metaphoric transfer* is any analogy or resemblance that is aimed, though not necessarily, at the essence of the object. Metaphor is the very essence of language (G. Vico, L. Blaga), because "*all the words are, at their starting point, nothing but metaphors*."(Bucă, M, Evseev, Iv., 1976: 56)

It is a well-known fact that many place names originated in references to the shape, the setting, the colour or other attributes of the respective places, i.e. their appearance or topographical nature.

The semantic classification that the late academician Iorgu Iordan gave Romanian toponyms, he established a category of psychological topical names, "*names that betray a certain attitude or mental trait of those who gave them*."(Iorgu, Iordan, 1963:313) In relation to psychological toponyms, Iorgu Iordan says, "*one can see the people's subjective attitude towards the surrounding natural world: they way they see the things in the midst of which they live, and how they react linguistically when the need to distinguish them from one another requires them to give them a name*."(*ibidem*)

Given the issues previously discussed, we believe that it is only true to say that "*the subjective attitude of the speakers to refer to the objects they designate gives those names some stylistic meanings*." (Moise, Ion, 1979: 186.)

The stylistic (metaphorical) value of such hydronymics as *Creţul*, *Creaţa* (Wavy), *Găunoasa* (Hollow), *Geamăna*, *Geamănu* (Twin) needs no explanation, as they show some well-known properties, because they come from nicknames. In the consciousness of the speakers, such place names are semantically related with the appellations they originate in, therefore they still belong to emotional language and are expressive.

We must bear in mind that only careful observation of places, the flora and fauna, the landforms disposition as to the centres of the villages (or former villages), can help us to determine the true origin of the hydronyms in question. The hydronyms that have a mythological meaning have resulted from the efforts that people made in order to explain natural phenomena and interpret the elements of the geographical space they inhabit.

*The characteristics of a remote, less evolved cultural stage*, the explanations that they people would give at the time, "*actually consisted of pseudoscientific interpretations*" (Homorodean, Mircea, 1979:34).

In fact, there are all metaphors, connected in the form of myths.

The following examples are more than eloquent, as they also highlight the link often established between "*the mythological significance of place names and the scientific, archaeological, historical, ethnographic, etc. explanation*".(*ibidem*)

The giants in fairy tales, fabulous beings who were sometimes called *jidovi*, would have inhabited the earth – according to folk tradition – before humans. The large bones found in the earth are attributed to those giants by the people. The appellation *jidov*, synonymous with Slv. *židovŭ*, has always been used to form the names of the



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places with ruins that are considered remains of the settlements inhabited by the *Jidovi* (or giants), e.g. *Jidioara (Jdioara), Jidoaia* or *Jidaia, Jidovini*.

Another example is the hydronym *Dracul* (Devil), with the toponymic extensions *Pârâul Dracului* (Devil's Creek), *Râpa Dracului* (Devil's Ravine), *Valea Dracului* (Devil's Valley).

Similar place names of stylistic value are those based, at the time of their coinage, on stories that have impressed their creators: *Balta Dascălului* (The Teacher's Pond), *Bătătura Cailor* (The Horses' Field), *Pârâul Cailor* (Horses' Creek), *Pârâul Românilor* (Romanians' Brook). Finally, wild beasts, the (one time) cause of many dramas in the rural world, especially when one would go out from one's house straight into the clearing in the forest, could not fail to be a reason for places to receive their names. Sometimes the *wolf*, the *bear* or the *snake* were identified with the "Evil One", who was believed to assume the appearance of those animals.

Very much as traditional Romanian denomination records Christian names like *Lupu* (Wolf), *Ursu* (Bear), etc., which were given to the babies to protect them from the danger of the named beasts, so the places were "baptized" for the same reason, to remove such dangers from around the people.

This explains a good deal of the hydronyms made with the names of these animals: *Izvoru Lupului* (Wolf's Spring), *Pârâu Lupului* (Wolf's Creek), *Tău Lupului* (Wolf's Lake), *Valea Lupului* (Wolf's Valley), *Ursana, Pârâul Urșilor* (Bears' Creek), *Pârâul Urșanilor* etc. The names of these animals appear in stories and the reporting real events. Many place names like those mentioned above took anthroponyms as a starting point, but some of them have underlying explanations of the nature of a type of exorcism.

All linguists agree on the issue of the expressive quality of the epithet and the metaphor in the class of the appellations. However, some argue that, when turning into place names, these words lose their value as expressive images, and so they become stylistically neutral. Yet it can be argued that such metaphors have not entirely turned into toponyms, they still oscillate "*within an adjacent area, or a range of interference with common nouns or appellatives.*" (Câmpeanu, Eugen, *op. cit.:* 141)

That is why such placenames retain their expressiveness to a greater extent for the locals, and to a lesser extent for the other speakers.

As far as the so-called **strict toponyms** are concerned, i.e. those that „*do not exist, nor have they ever existed as current lexical items of the Romanian language"(* Iordan, Iorgu, *op.cit. :* 9.*)*, we do not know when they are (or rather were) descriptive, i.e. rendering notable features of the respective places, and when they were explanatory, resulting from man's constant need to interpret and explain his geographical environment.

Even if currently these place names have an individualizing function, they used to have, in the distant or ver distant past, stylistic values, for toponyms were originally common names and designated a dominant feature of the place or site, of the geographical object, and all common names were metaphors, in their beginnings.

Hydronyms are the oldest names, which means that it is within this class that we are certain to find the oldest metaphorical thinking patterns, a type of thinking that was much more marked in primitive man than it is in today's humans.

The numerous metaphorical meanings that we are provided by hydronymy, in an impressive wealth of images and facts, reveal to us how the speakers act and react in contact with the environment. We can thus get an insight into the folk geographical



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mentality in a period relatively close to this day, and we also get a fair knowledge of how our distant ancestors would represent the geographical environment.

Sometimes the selection of onymized entopics has to cope with certain disagreements and discrepancies between the meaning of the onymized appellations and the reality of the hydronyms, either because of changes over time, or due to changes in the appearance of the valley along the watercourse. These were explained by *the principle of relative negativity*. (Ioniţă, Vasile C., *op.cit.*: 56.)

The absence of material elements, the feature that "denies" does not justify the current name, placing the current hydronym under the sign of arbitrariness, is relative, since the elements in question initially existed, after which they disappeared.

Another aspect of the problem is that speakers choose the name that corresponds to the interest of the community: the economic value of the hydronym, the need of orientation, or even the impression value, the source of names of a metaphorical nature. A large share is held by hydronyms expressing the relationships between people and a certain place, relationships of possessions or related to a specific event, which gave the opportunity for water being associated with man, a situation when the person's name is transferred to the place, and also the reverse phenomenon (e.g. (*Albeşti, Androchiel, Angheluş, Babarunca, Băbaşa, Baciu, Brâncoveanca, Bujoreanca, Marioara, Doboşeni, Gheorghe Matei, Guguianca, Guşoianca*, etc.).

In any of the solutions cited before, it is necessary to meet an obligatory prerequisite: the criterion chosen must distinguish the hydronym from the other neighbouring names, as the function of differentiation (or individualization) is essential.

By applying the principle of relative negativity, possible errors in determining the etymology of certain hydronyms can be avoided – especially in the case of ancient hydronyms, which usually do not admit of explanations grounded on the criterion of the relationship between material reality and the meaning of the name. In order to establish the etymology of a hydronym, it is sufficient to indicate only the seemingly unmotivated etymon or etym, which will however have to be explained on the basis of relative negativity.

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