CONVERSIONS OF PERSONAL NAMES INTO COMMON WORDS: IS IT ANTONOMASIA OR EPONYMY?

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Abstract: As archaeological evidence shows it, personal names were used as naming units in the written artefacts of the Assyrian Empire, to name different calendar units. If in its early beginnings this practice was active in the vocabulary of history, as time went on, it grew more and more expanded to be currently of efficient use both not only in the specialist vocabulary of such sciences as mathematics, physics, chemistry, nature sciences (in botany more than in zoology), technology, engineering but also in everyday speech. Due to their highest frequency of occurrence, the descriptions and definitions of these personal names used for other significates than the person themselves have been topical in mainly in medicine (Aronson 2014) and sciences, in social sciences and more recently in scientometrics (Beaver 1976, Canabac 2014). Lexicographers authored a consistent number of both general (Manser 1996, Manser 2004) and specialist dictionaries, but these mutations of personal names to any other signified but the persons themselves has been rather superficially considered in linguistics in general and in lexicological studies (Miller 2014) in particular. It is the purpose of this paper to contribute to lexicological literature with specifications regarding both the theoretical aspects and the practical uses of the terms antonomasia and eponym, which are hardly interchangeable semantically, although they have been used as such in both English and Romanian. By and large, the personal names which have penetrated the word stock display either a denominative or a stylistic function, and this distinction is crucial in their being used righteously. Based on language facts and specialist literature (Holmqvist, K., Pluciennick, J., 2010), this paper will draw a clear-cut distinction between these two roles a personal name may take, once it has become a common word.

Keywords: word formation, stylistics, metaphor, metonymy

Prolegomena to Conversion and Personal Names

Theories of word formations have used a wealth of words whose meanings depended on the theorist. For example, what is presented under "conversion"in one source (Bauer 1983, 226–30) is "derivation by a zero morpheme" in another (Marchand 1960, 293–308); what is envisaged as "word composition" (Jespersen 1938, 161) in a few approaches is substituted by "composition" (Bonta 2004, 63) and "compounding" (Bauer 1983, 201–13; Marchand 1960, 11–84; Rayevska 1971, 67–82) in a few others; what "word manufacturing" means to Marchand (1960, 367), means "blending" or "telescoping" to Bonta (2004, 66), etc. The same phenomenon is noticeable in the case of the word *conversion*, which has been used with different meanings. Linguists have pinpointed that "the exact status of conversion within word formation is unclear. For some scholars (Lyons 1977: 522) conversion is a branch of derivation, for others (e.g. Strang 1968: §188) it is a separate type of word formation, on a level with derivation and compounding" (Bauer 1983: 32). According to Quirk et al. (1972: 1015, 1985: 1564), conversion reflects the possibility of proper names to be used figuratively. In a wider perspective, which fits our view as well, conversion has also been used to refer to "[T]he use of a word that is normally one part of speech or word class as another part of speech, without any change in form" (McArthur 1996: 241).

Personal names are naming units used for referential purposes and which are outlined by a wide category of representations, whose finer distinctions refer to the *praenomen* (the

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forename or the name given by one's parents), the *nomen* (surname or family name) and the *cognomen* (or the nickname). Either taken together or separately, personal names have been accepted (Hockett 1958: 311-13, Lyons 1987: 219, Pierini 2008: 43) to:

belong with linguistic universals;

fulfil a referential function, i.e. they refer to *unique* entities (Lyons 1987: 214-23);

are given to well defined entities;

are part of culture-specific and/or language-specific systems;

may acquire various "connotations and associations" (Lyons 1987: 220)

are part of an open class of words, and like nouns, they "are lexical rather than grammatical", but unlike nouns, they "lack lexical meaning" (Pierini 2008: 43).

possibly be attributed, for a second time, to a certain new entity, thus migrating from a person to concrete representations such as any object or site, plants, insects, minerals, chemical elements, etc. or an abstraction, such as theory, theorem, lemma, coefficients, etc.

Lyons's (1987: 220) subject-oriented readings of connotative and associative capacities of personal names specify that the "connotations which one person associates with a name may be different from the connotations which another person associates with the same name in cases where both persons would use the name to refer to or address the same individual (or set of individuals)". At the same time, he emphasizes that when the bearer of the name is a historically, politically or culturally prominent person or place, the connotations of the name […] may be relatively constant for members of a particular language-community sharing the same culture" (idem).

Nevertheless, an impressive number of personal names have acquired international currency, either in their primary form or undergoing alterations, and this has happened by means of lexical transfers. I do agree

"[T]hat names can, in a given culture, or society acquire more or less definite associations, such that the name can be said to symbolize eloquence or architectural beauty, is an important fact; and it is this fact which accounts for the ease with which names can in the course of time become ordinary common nouns" (Lyons 1987: 219).

But this ease seems to have gradually assumed a certain amount of complexity, starts with the drawing of the clear-cut distinction between stylistic figures of speech (antonomasia and metonymy) and lexical means of vocabulary enrichment (conversion, toponymy and eponymization). It continues with the adequate matching of the respective denomination with that particular definition which has been more frequent in specialist literature.

The conversion of personal names into common words may ultimately be accepted as a matter of lexical migration, with consequences displaying an array of structures, beginning with such monosyllabic units as *tor* (< Torricelli, the Italian scientist) and closing with hybrid patterns, generally known as antonomasia or eponyms.

The interchangeability of antonomasia and eponymy

Many descriptions have envisaged the phenomenon of (personal) name migration from one signified to another and instead of simplifying its aspects, they have been more successful in confusing the readership. This is exclusively due to the auctorial relationships between certain lexical mutations and their denominations, which vary from one author to another. Theorists of lexicology, dwell upon such distinctions in a similar manner, in other words, they make no separation between one category and another. Rayevska (1971) discusses *metonymy* to account for *eponymy*, but she is hardly worth criticising as such distinctions were rarely considered in the early 1970s. This view has been so deeply rooted that hierarchical relationships subsuming eponymy to metonymy were still advanced over three decades later

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(Lipka 2006: 32, Cymbalista and Kleparsky 2007: 71). Such practitioners in the field of lexicology, as Manser (1996/2004) and Laiu-Despău's (2003/2006) describe both eponyms and toponyms in their eponymic dictionaries, while Mușat's (2006) dictionary which is specifically called of *antonomasia* describes eponyms and toponyms not antonomasia.

And this interchangeable use of eponym, toponym and antonomasia is still operational in the case of recent publications, such as the volume of *English Lexicogenesis* (Miller 2014), whose section 6.8., *Transfer of characteristic (antonomasia, eponymy)* induces the relationship of perfect synonymy between antonomasia and eponymy. My observation relies on the fact that although antonomasia is mentioned in the subtitle, only eponyms are thoroughly described. The next section, *6.9* as its title clearly shows it, is dedicated to the discussion of *English-specific eponymy*. Nevertheless, it focuses on a few toponyms, like *bedlam*, which, is so described as to suggest its geographic etymo-referent:

"St Mary of Bethlehem, a London insane asylum founded as a priory in 1247 > ME, EMnE Bethlem/Bedlem [1528] 'the Bethlehem asylum' > bedlam [a. 1667] 'uproar, total confusion" (Miller 2014: 116).

And the examples could continue in the same direction, i.e. interchangeably using antonomasia and eponym/toponym and the other way round.

I consider that each of the above groups of words, i.e. antonomasia, eponyms and toponyms has its own peculiarities, strengthening its own specificity. These peculiarities refer to the:

grammatical categories to which both the primary and the second signified belong (common or proper noun);

specific name of transfer as it is acknowledged in specialist literature;

direction of transfer from one category (the initial name bearer) to another (the new entity which is granted the new or the 'reinvented' name which, in turn, acquires a new meaning);

nature of the transfer type involved which can be assigned to a wider linguistic background, i.e. lexical, stylistic or semantic.

The conversion of personal names into common words involves three main aspects which facilitate their subsuming to one group or another, and they are:

the point of departure

the sense of movement

the nature of the terminal point.

To be more specific, what stands for the point of departure may be a personal or a geographical name, the role of the sense of movement is to indicate the migration of the personal/geographical name to another target, which may be another person, an object, a concept, etc. or even another geographical point. The nature of the terminal point reveals the recycling of the personal name in order to denote a brand new entity or concept or to add new features (epithets, qualities, attributes, etc.) to an already known person, concept, geographical spot, etc. The three groups of words also differ from the perspective of the word formation theory as only one of them may produce descriptives, taking affixes, associating with other elements to produce well-established, widely-known and accepted compounds as well as expressing the relationship of possession, all these exclusively used for referential purposes.

Exploring antonomasia and eponymy

Conversions of personal names into common words have represented a more or less consistent chapter in comprehensive approaches to lexicology as early as the dawns of the 20th century (Greenough and Kittredge 1901: 372). In Romanian approaches to English

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lexicology, this view is popularized in Levitchi (1970), although references to the Romanian language had been made in the mid-1960 (Graur 1965), but none of these makes use of the words antonomasia and eponymy. Even the adoption or rather the specialization of meaning in the particular case of the word *eponym* (irrespective of its derived forms) has not been fully done so far within the descriptions of either the Romanian general vocabulary or its terminologies. On the other hand, the Romanian *antonomaza*, borrowed from French was identified as part of the metalanguage peculiar to linguistic sciences in 1995 (Anghelescu, Ionescu and Lăzărescu, 1995).

This practice of attributing the personal name of a famous person to a new entity is approached by Greenough and Kittredge's (1902: 372-89), who are among the first to refer to the transfer of "the name of a well-known personage to someone who resembles him". They say that one

"may call a great orator 'a Demosthenes', or 'a Burke' or 'a Webster', a great general 'a Wellington' or 'a Marlborough', a cruel tyrant 'a Nero', the assertor of his country's liberties 'a Washington'. This happens every day and calls for no remark" (Greenough and Kittredge 1902: 372).

Nevertheless, there is a remark to make, i.e. that speakers using such names with an indefinite article not only refer, as Quirk et al. (1972: 1015; 1985: 1564) put it, to "a member of the class typified by N" (where N stands for a personal name), but they also involve an emotional colouring, assigning positive or negative feelings to the signified. The signified, that is any ordinary person, has certainly gained special features in the eyes of the beholder. Otherwise, the wording would have been simpler, an orator being simply 'an orator', and so would there have been the instances with 'a great general', 'a wise advisor' or 'a cruel tyrant', etc.

This is an emotional substitution where no new referent is called by a new name but where the referent is assigned a certain feature. That is why, in such instances it is preferable to speak about *antonomasia* rather than any other type of transfer. Antonomasia, originating from the Greek αντονομάζειν/*antonomázein* (<*anti* 'instead' and *onomaizen* 'to name') with the Latin correspondent *pronominatio* "is regarded as a rhetorical figure similar in some respects to metonymy" (Holmqvist and Pluciennick 2010: 373). A mid-19th century definition simply specifies that "Antonomasia is the name applied to that form of expression when the title, office, dignity, profession, science or trade is put instead of the true name of the person or place" (Borthwick 1858: 3). Dupriez (1991: 52) admits that antonomasia "is based on the substitution of regular nouns by proper names and vice versa." One such example of substitution is 'the "Corsican Monster" for Bonaparte', accounted for by the author to be "a kind of metonymy: a name for one function or aspect of an object is regarded as a typical representation of the object" (Holmqvist and Pluciennick 2010: 373), i.e. metonymic antonomasia. But the other substitution, "when a proper name replaces a regular notion, e.g. *Don Quixote* instead of *an idealist* (idem), *Daniel* for a *judge*, i.e. metaphoric antonomasia which "highlights analogical features shared" (Dupriez 1991: 52) is also frequent. The English language has also acknowledged a series of antonomasia, as part of the word stock and so, while any sailor may be *a son of Neptune*, any shoemaker may as well be *a son/knight of St. Crispin*.

The substitution might work with a periphrasis, such as *the patrimony of St. Peter*, which means "the states of the Church; the land formerly subject to the Pope" (DPF 1995: 165) and the one quoted by Bussman (2006: 67), who equates *San Francisco* with "the Paris of the West".

In line with these, I bring forth Merton's example (1965: 102-103) related to the

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moment "when Ernest Jones bestows on the Father of Psychoanalysis the title of 'the Darwin of the mind'". Although Merton considers this to be an instance of "eponymies within eponymies", I would consider this to be an instance of complex antonomasia, joining a metonymic and a metaphoric antonomasia into one meaningful phrase. Thus, the quotation joins *Father of Psychoanalysis* [i.e. Dupriez' *metonymic antonomasia*] with *the Darwin of the mind* [i.e. Dupriez' *metaphoric antonomasia*] into a hybrid formula. The word *eponym* used by Merton refers to those proper names which behave as common nouns, adjectives or verbs to arguably cover lexical gaps. The author reiterates this same type of error when he states that "A *Freud*, a *Fermi* and a *Delbruck* play a charismatic role in science. They excite intellectual enthusiasm among others who ascribe exceptional qualities to them" (Merton 1968: 60), i.e. our italicized examples are other instances of metaphoric antonomasia. While in Merton's above eponymy stands for antonomasia, Botoşineanu (2006: 7) views antonomasia to be "the word building process which accounts for the transformation of proper names into common words", which is actually the 'classic' definition of eponymization. But antonomasia is also a trope or a figure of speech. More precisely, it means, in our view, "to stylistically or emotionally, or affectionately name instead". This is actually its traditional meaning, which is clearly illustrated in a 19th century collection of examples, out of which a few are presented in the table below (Borthwick 1858: 5-6):

Person	Antonomasia
Cowper, William	The Bard of Truth and Feeling
Duke of Somerset (Geo. III)	The Proud Duke
Duke of Wellington	The Iron Duke; The Hero of 100 Fights
Duke of Wellington	The Hero of Waterloo
Ethelred, of England	The Unready

Table 1. Historic and geographic antonomasia

Since antonomasia has traditionally been accepted as a stylistic means (c.f. Borthwick, in the previous paragraph) with its two definite roles, I shall assume this view and state that its use for lexicographic purposes should probably be avoided, for it neither shows any lexical productivity nor does it play the role of a proper signifier, but simply that of an epithet.

Eponymy shows another facet of proper noun migration, which means the assigning of a personal name to a newly created, invented or discovered entity. I share the opinion emphasizing that

"eponymy which widens the meaning of a proper name into a common noun (sandwich, ampere, hertz) is not the same as antonomasia, because eponymy lacks this common feature which builds an analogical link between two referents" (Holmqvist and Pluciennick 2010: 379).

In addition, as obvious from the excerpt, as common nouns, the names are orthographically altered. This loss of the capital initial admittedly a phenomenon of "depersonalization" (Aronson 2014: 25) might as well be interpreted as a process of eponymization or "recategorization", i.e., a migration of a proper noun, be it a personal or a geographical name to one or more lexical classes. These classes, i.e. nouns, verbs or adjectives or even both nouns and verbs bring about the replacement of the initial capital letter with a small letter. And with this minor orthographic modification, which naturally involves a semantic transformation, any such proper noun becomes a common word. This common word "passes current", thus indicating that "the language has gained a new word" (Greenough and Kittredge 1902: 372).

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A restrictive definition would concisely view eponymization to be that particular transformation of personal names whose initial capital letter is displaced by a small one into common words or lexemes as well as prefixed and suffixed formations. This definition should equally account for those extremely numerous "fossilized constructions" including capitalized personal names, be they forenames or surnames or both, within larger strings of words which convey a well-defined meaning. And this necessarily refers to eponyms, i.e. only those common nouns which originate in personal names, while the other categories of substitutes are either toponyms or metonyms.

Conclusions

Frequently used as interchangeable words, antonomasia and eponymy are meaningfully different lexical representations, related to different categories of proper nouns. Each of them unveils its own structural peculiarities and lexically productive features. They share one trait only for they both represent sources of vocabulary enrichment, even if they function against different backgrounds. Thus, while the former is assigned to the stylistic framework, the latter has massively contributed to the lexical framework of the English vocabulary. What separates them is their frequency of occurrence and their formal flexibility.

Antonomasia most frequently occurs in contexts which may as well associate it to clichés, for it has well-established patterns indiscriminately applicable to persons or places for either suggestive comparisons or associations of images, behaviour, role, etc. Antonomasia is usually attached to a certain person (Margaret Thatcher remains the only *Iron Lady*, the way Virgil remains the only S*wan of Padua*).

Eponymy is so rich, flexible, variegated and complex that it could synthesize all word formation processes with examples built only with personal names as a base. If only the name of *Mercury*, the name of the Roman god of commerce, eloquence, travel, cunning and theft, were taken as an example, a few of its new referents would include the name of the planet, (thus its transformation into a toponym), the common noun *mercury*, used to denote a chemical element, *mercuric*, although used in chemistry, *intramercurial*, related to the orbit of the planet, *mercurial* (a literary adjective assigned to persons likely to change their mood or opinion unexpectedly), etc.

Although the same interchangeability has been active both in English and Romanian approaches to antonomasia and eponymy, they have their own meanings and well-delineated fields of application and, probably each of these aspects will be considered and carefully observed in the future.

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