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EIDETIC APPROACH TO ANALYSIS OF POETIC FUNCTION OF ENGLISH PERSONAL NAMES (POETONYMS)

Abstract. The paper aims at developing principles of eidetic approach to disclosing the nature and functioning of poetonyms in English literary texts. Fundamentals of the approach were set forth in my monograph *Realization of poetic function of English personal proper names* (ZHIVOGLYADOV 1998) where the notion of anthroponymic eidos (AE) was first introduced. AE – is an embodiment of referentially bound name (i.e. personal name-in- function) in the mind of a sender (an author or a personage). Dating back to times of archaic and even mythical ways of thinking eidos has retained its depictive and highly imaginative power not only in classical works of English literature but also in modern ones. Due to the specific semantic structure of AE English poetonyms should be regarded not as separate name-forms but as complex units comprising name-forms and naming descriptions. The latter are actually those spans of speech, inner and outer, where the poetic (aesthetico-cognitive) function is best revealed.

Introduction

It seems to be a common idea that the research interest in literary onomastics is on the increase. Still there are grave doubts entertained by scholars as to an independent status of this discipline (DEBUS 2002: 403). This, in a way, is due to the lack of profound theory of literary names as specific language units contributing to a deeper insight into the artistic intention. As a call for such a theory one can interpret the following admonition of professor W.F.H.Nicolaisen in his contribution of names in English literature: “Our expectations have to be less timid, our challenges more demanding, our horizons wider” (NICOLAISEN 1995: 567).

Most of the existing general theories of proper names are either unsatisfying or even distressing for “literary onomotologists” (i.e., those who study names in literature), because the creators of these theories are apt to reduce functioning of onoma to that of naming things alone (REFORMATSKYI 1964: 17-18) or to deprive proper names of any sense whatsoever (COATES 2002: 126). What is usually meant by *s e n s e*, is the *c o n c e p t u a l* (LEECH 1977: 10-13) or *l e x i c a l* (COSERIU 1987: 89) meaning of a name.

What is clearly demonstrated by the general theories might be defined as a selective approach to proper names, the latter being regarded within

the limits of only one language function as separate word-forms. A search for reflective abilities of names there can exploit only some “marginal” for literary onomastics meanings of onoma, to wit: categorial and, as its kind, presuppositional meaning, associative or encyclopaedic, emotive or affective, and grammatical meanings. Their describing is outside the scope of this paper, but a fairly good account of them can be found in (SjöBLOM 2002: 266-267).

There is also one more meaning which, being, not infrequently, lost in the formal lavishness of the above, poses a worthy escape from the otherwise barren semantic landscape fixed in general theories of proper names. The meaning in question deals with the very essence and purpose of language – its functions and, accordingly, is called functional. Names differ not only in categorial or associative meanings but also in their intention (purpose, function) which in the long run is the reflection of the basic functions of language. That is why literary onomastics should have an absolute lucidity in understanding both the functions themselves and their influence on the semantics of names.

Language functions revisited

According to academician V.V.Vinogradov, three main functions of language can be singled out: a) “funktsiya ‘obscheniya’ (function of intercourse), b) “funktsiya soobscheniya” (function of information), and, last but not the least, c) “funktsiya vozdeistviya” (function of impact) (VINOGRADOV 1963: 6).

In a modernized terminological wording these functions are known as communicative, cognitive and poetic, respectively.

Communicative level of functioning aims at maintaining a minimally sufficient intercourse between the sender and receiver of a message based on the process known as “semiosis”. Semasiological, or semantical, characteristics of names here are not evident, because it is enough for onymic semiosis to accept that a unit in question is a proper name referring to a particular human being, some geographical place, etc. That’s why semasiological analysis alone yields so distressing a result for literary onomotologists.

Realization of cognitive function is based on conveying some additional information either of scientific or cultural character. The latter is usually preserved in the stylistic device of antonomasia which, in its turn, exploits either metaphoric or metonymic transference. Onymic semiosis is complicated here by an additional mental effort because the sender and the re-

ceiver of information concentrate on the form of expression, on the means by which the content is expressed. For example, instead of saying "He is a real genius of poetry" one can say "He is a real Shakespeare", thus introducing in the focus of attention a new mode of expressing a new meaning. In cognitive functioning onymic semiosis is raised on a higher level, "meta-level", becoming "meta-semiotic". The term "meta-semiotic" is not a new one but borrowed from (HJELMSLEV 1960). On the meta-semiotic level both the content and the expression of a name of semantic level becomes the expression for a new meaning.

A name in its poetic functioning aims at an aesthetic impact. To produce an aesthetic effect a name is raised on a still higher level of onymic semiosis - "meta-meta semiotic". Linguistic analysis on this level is known as "**linguo-poetic**" (ZADORNOVA 1992), mostly because the units under study there acquire essentially poetic qualities which enables the author to provide an aesthetic impact necessary for incarnating artistic intention. In other words, the aim of linguo-poetic analysis consists in defining how a particular language unit is included in a creative work of art, in what way this or that particular combination of language means leads to the aesthetic effect.

To mark the specific semiotic status of literary names in their poetic function the term "poetonyms" seems to be an appropriate one. So "**poetonym**" is a proper name, used in its poetic function and capable of producing an aesthetic impact. It is not just an "another declaration", for a very important consequence does follow from the previous observation.

Transformation of a proper name into a poetonym means that the former is accepted into the system of creative work of art as a full-fledged aesthetic unit. Not all the units of creative fiction can boast of that status. Auxiliary (syncategorematic) words, standard form of greetings, clichés, normative constructions, etc., more often than not constitute a spacious layer of the so-called "gap-fillers" in fictional discourse just because by nature they are deprived of any aesthetic qualities.

Eidetic abstraction

In order to be included in a poetic discourse a unit must possess an inherent power for aesthetic expression. In fiction the power reveals itself in the so-called "imagery". It is also believed that an "image" is the transitional medium between meta-semiotic and meta-meta-semiotic stages of expressive development (ZADORNOVA 1992: 75). "Image" is a loosely used term applicable to any sphere of creative activity. With no intent to dwell

on the contradictory nature of “image” and likewise contradictory definitions of it, we shall need the notion of image as a framing pattern in our search for the type of abstraction which lies in the essence of poetonyms.

The most obvious features of an “image” are as follows:

1. An image is a sensory perception of an abstract notion already existing in the mind (= mental picture).
2. To create an image means *to shift* a phenomenon from the highly abstract to the essentially concrete. (GALPERIN 1981: 140).

Thus, the mode of abstraction underlying an actual poetonym should present a “thing” (in our case, the referent of a name) as a “picture”, and the picture ought to be a “changing”, or a “shifting” one.

In order to present a concept of a “thing” as a “picture”, one may *gestalt* it. But *gestalting* of a concept in the name gives a mental picture of an individual only as a stable, “immovable” entity, thus endowing the name with some sort of an inter-subjective meaning. The fact was proved by surveys of Rolf Hedquist, who experimented with associative meaning of the same personal names in 1982 and 1992 (HEDQUIST 2002) using an Osgood differential with 19 pairs of adjectives.

At the same time, *gestalting* a concept of the name is not the only way to present a “thing” as a “picture” in our mental eye. Ancient poets (Homer), philosophers, both ancient (Plato, Aristotle, Parmenides) and modern (A. F. Losev, O.I. Rudenko and others), have made current a notion of “eidos”, understood, roughly speaking, as an “embodied idea”. It was also Aleksei Fjedorovich Losev who among other essential characteristics of *eidos* (“simplicity”, “wholeness”, “individual generalization”, and “iconicity”, i.e. being given as “a picture”) especially accentuated the “inner self-propellant” (“self-mobile”) power of *eidos* (LOSEV 1990: 122). In traditional terms of logical semantics the self-propellant power of anthroponymic *eidos* was usually interpreted as the ability of names to “have a different connotation for every denotation” (LANGER 1969: 65-66).

The mobile aspect of an *eidos* matches perfectly a fickle and ever-changing nature of an individual human being who is never what he seems and is rarely the same at the every passing moment of his realistic existence (as our own experience and great works of art teach us). By means of an anthroponymic *eidos* the name of a fictitious bearer is given to our mental eye as a “picture of moving embodiment”.

The “embodiment” of personal names is very important though frequently overlooked condition for understanding their functioning in literary works. The principle has been initially introduced by A. Gardiner as a distinctive feature of the names used in “language-as-an-action” vs. the

name-forms used in “language-as-a-system” (GARDINER 1954: 8). M.I. Steblin-Kamenskiy observes that the degree of “embodiment” of names is the highest in literature which is explained by a Germanic literary tradition (STEBLIN-KAMENSKIY 1974: 105-106). That is why an anthroponymic eidos, both in everyday speech and in a representation of a personage through its name, is always “embodied”, i.e. focused on the particular person (dead or alive, real or imaginary) and thus offering a subjective perception of one’s contradictory traits and qualities. Accordingly, the principle of “embodiment” is to be added to the above given definition of **poetonym**. The principle also means that the bearer of the name is to be made personally known to the receiver of information (in our case, the reader) with a help of descriptions “attached” to the name (i.e. naming descriptions). The more descriptions are used and the more elaborate they are, the higher the degree of embodiment is achieved.

Eidetic icons

Another name for a “description” in poetic diction is an “icon”. Icons as poetic descriptions were justly promoted to canons in the belles-lettres style by Archibald A. Hill (1968: 212), but since then they have been somewhat neglected by most of the scholars because of their delusive simplicity and ease of decoding. Literary onomastics should not be lead astray in this respect because only icons are the sole legitimate linguistic manifestations of anthroponymic eidos as it exists in the minds of the users of the corresponding name, being a direct representation of the “moving picture” of its bearer. As to their “simplicity and ease” for understanding and interpreting, then it is only a half-truth. The complicity of icons depends on their type, for, typologically, icons can be divided into two varieties: verbal and sustained (“nonverbal”).

Verbal icons, though varying in length and mode of wording, are quite lucid and usually give an immediate presentation of the characters’ leading traits and appearances by an explanatory remark which follows or precedes the name, as, for example, in G. Byron’s *Don Juan*:

And Sir John Pottledeep, *the mighty drinker*.

[...]

There was *the sage* Miss Reading.

[...]

And the two fair *co-heiresses* Giltbedding.

[...]

There was Dick Dubious, *the metaphysician*,

*Who loved philosophy and a good dinner;
 Angle, the soi-disant mathematician;
 Sir Henry Silvercup, the great race-winner.
 Or in W. Scott's *The Lady of the Lake*:*

*Of stature tall, and slender frame
 But firmly knit, was Malcolm Graeme.
 The belted plain and tartan hose
 Did ne'er more graceful limbs disclose.*

(The emphasis is mine – A. Zh.).

Depicting power of a sustained icon rests on some specific use of words, their forms, or the arrangement of sentences. The language units employed in a sustained (“nonverbal”) icon may be likened to the colours in a painting which only in an adequate arrangement will reproduce the image. It usually requires a minute linguo-poetic analysis, the results of which can be interpreted in multiple ways. In other words, the nonverbal icon gives a multi-dimensional (“stereoscopic”), highly subjective, shifting and ambiguous view of an object, i.e. “live” in its true sense, on the part of the speaker.

That is really an eidetic mode of vision, and though it sometimes lacks precision as well as concreteness it still remains the only way in an attempt to come closer to an “inexpressible” entity in terms of language, being at the same time a potent means of conveying to the reader a very strong upsurge of emotions.

An eidetic nonverbal icon may be exemplified by a verse of Robert Browning, entitled, symptomatically enough, *The Names*:

Shakespeare! – to such name's sounding, what succeeds
 Fitly as silence? Falter forth the spell, -
 Act follows word, the speaker knows full well,
 Nor tampers with its magic more than needs.
 Two names there are: That which the Hebrew reads
 With his soul only: if from lips it fell,
 Echo, back thundered by earth, heaven, and hell,
 Would own “Thou didst create us!” Naught impedes
 We voice the other name, man's most of might,
 Awesomely, lovingly, let awe and love
 Mutely await their working, leave to sight
 All of the issue as – below – above –
 Shakespeare's creation rises: one remove,
 Tho' dread – this finite from that infinite.

The example is an illustrative one to demonstrate some important specificities of structural and semantic arrangement of the eidetic icon of the second type.

The leading features of this particular icon may be conventionally defined as an obvious "*aposiopesisy*", on the one hand, and a hidden "*anagram*" and "*polyphony*", on the other.

Aposiopesis, graphically indicated here by "dashes" (the term 'aposiopesis' in Greek means 'silence'), unequivocally contributes to the idea of a "silent sounding" of names or of reading them "with one's soul only". It also seems to imply that a proper (i.e. "lovingly") voicing of "the other (i.e. Shakespeare's) name" enables the speaker to behold something so unusual, awesome and dramatic that it deprives him of the previous ability to express himself in habitual terms of language. The reader, thus, is implicitly invited to look for an unusual application of words. He is also, as it were, prompted the way to review the habitual forms and senses. First of all he has to echo them in some sort of "back reverberation" (*cf.* "back thundered"), or, to put it bluntly, to use an anagram, allowing, for example, rereading the title of the verse not as "names" but as "means".

The "anagram" of the icon is not of course confined to only this primitive word-play, though this little bit also adds to the development of an "echo image". What Browning most likely "means" by bringing the "echoed" ("anagrammatic") name of God ("Thou didst create us!") together with the Shakespeare's name is that in uttering it "the speaker", by a sheer force of the name's magic, calls into being the "poetic universe" (*cf.* "Shakespeare's creation") where everything is "finite" (i.e., where the harmony dwells) in contrast to "that infinite" chaos of "earth, heaven, and hell" (=God's creation). The anagrammatic "redressing" of the real world into an imaginary universe of a poet here seems to be very much in tune with S.T. Coleridge's reasoning on the role of the re-creative imagination (COLERIDGE 1981: 223):

The IMAGINATION, then, I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, coexisting with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree*, and in the *mode* of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate [...].

Authorized by Coleridge's ideas, the above given interpretation of the eidetic icon might have been regarded as a perfect and a complete one, if not for a disturbing question: why on earth should the ideal world of

poets provoke DREAD in the heart of one of them? The answer, as Bob Dylan put it, is “blowing in the wind”, i.e., uncertain, for the spectre beheld by the poet might be dubious, both alluring and repulsive, beautiful and ugly. It might be even the spectre of Shakespeare himself, emerging as it were, in the shape of Hamlet’s father.

The sudden turn of associations is coursed by another important feature of an eidetic icon in the sphere of an unusual application of words – their polyphony. This musical term was introduced into the linquo-poetic analysis to indicate the ability of a word to simultaneously realize several of its potential meanings in one and the same contextual usage.

The polyphony of the given icon exploits not only polisemic words but also phonetic expressive means and stylistic devices, as is the case with its opening lines where alliteration and paronymic attraction help to blend the difference between “sounding” and “silence” in an indistinguishable “spell”, the latter retaining a twofold meaning of a ‘word having magic power’, on the one hand, and a ‘state of fascination and an overpowering attraction’, on the other. Synchronically, thus, the “spell” becomes a “word” and an “act” and this engenders a kind of radiating semantic development. “Word” plus “act” makes up not only “speech” (i.e., “word-in-action”) but also includes an “issue” through its meanings of ‘the **act** of passing out’ and, obviously, - ‘a result, outcome or consequence’. Accounting for the fact that the “issue” is to be left to “sight”, we get a “visible speaking” issue of one who is gone (a specter) or, synonymously, “a ghost”, which, according to the latest international edition of Macmillan English Dictionary (MED 2002: 597), is ‘the spirit of a *dead person* that someone *sees* or *hears*’ (the emphasis is mine – *A.Zh.*).

Interaction of the two equally valid interpretations results in a double sense of the crucial for deciphering the iconic imagery expression “Shakespeare’s creation”, for it is efficiently understood both as a ‘world of poetry created by Shakespeare’ and as an ‘emanation of Shakespeare’s spirit’. And that is exactly the point where the “echo image” of an eidetic icon can bring us to – the point of double vision of something becoming other than itself in its self-propellant changeability.

Conclusion

Eidetic theory of poetonyms is based on the following principles:

1. Application of functional approach to proper names with a special emphasis on the language functions of impact (i.e., poetic function).
2. Acknowledgement of an objective aesthetic value of poetonyms. It means

that these units are endowed with a reflective force of their own, understood as their “sense”. 3. Singling out the eidetic mode of reflection (abstraction) as a leading one in the semantic structure of poetonyms. 4. Recognition of a complex “outer contour” of poetonyms, consisting of a name-form and an icon, the latter being a separate descriptive micro-context susceptible to linguo-poetic analysis.

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