

THE USE OF ANTONOMASIA IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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Abstract: This article explores the semantic and stylistic functions of meaningful proper names in English literature, with a particular focus on the phenomenon of antonomasia. Drawing on a wide range of literary and linguistic sources, the study examines the ways in which character names, imbued with internal form and symbolic value, contribute to the construction of meaning, characterization, and narrative tone across various historical periods.

Key words: Proper nouns; antonomasia; stylistics; character naming; English literature; meaningful names; figurative language; onomastics; literary semantics; fictional names; self-interpreting names; semantic function; symbolic names.

Proper names in literary works have long attracted the attention of scholars due to their deep semantic potential and stylistic versatility. In English literature, the phenomenon of meaningful character names—often serving as a reflection of personality, social role, or moral quality—has become a distinctive device employed by authors to enhance characterization and narrative depth. One of the most expressive manifestations of this phenomenon is antonomasia—a stylistic device rooted in classical rhetoric that involves the substitution of a proper name for a common noun or vice versa. Despite its rich historical presence in literary tradition, antonomasia remains insufficiently explored in modern stylistics as a standalone trope. This article seeks to fill that gap by examining the role of meaningful names and the stylistic function of antonomasia in English literature. Drawing on the works of authors such as Charles Dickens, William Shakespeare, Richard Sheridan, and Walter Scott, as well as foundational linguistic and literary studies, this paper highlights how character names function not merely as identifiers but as vehicles for thematic expression, satire, and cultural allusion.

The main task of E. Hope Gordon's book "The Naming of characters in the works by Ch. Dickens" is to analyze the names of famous people in Dickens's works [1]. Based on careful observations, the author identifies the initial words that form the name and draws conclusions about the role that the name plays in the characteristics of the characters. So, for example, the name of the colonel's guest, Ralph Nickleby, in the author's opinion, warns the reader that the owner of the name is an unscrupulous person, since the verb to hoax means "to cheat or to swindle".

The book notes cases of deviations from orthographic norms when the author deliberately distorts the graphic appearance of the word from which the surname is formed. For example, Scrooge has a name that corresponds to his character, and although the spelling of the name differs slightly from the original word scrouge, meaning "to crowd or press", the name nevertheless clearly corresponds to this, to the word that already existed in use. The book distinguishes three types of names used in Dickens's works: 1) neutral names; 2) figurative names; 3) grotesque names. The large number of figurative names that directly indicate the character of the hero is explained by the influence of Smollett and Goldsmith on Dickens's work. The group of grotesque names that produce a humorous effect includes neutral surnames of the

type Boffin and Wilfer, to which the names Nicodimus and Reginald are added. The rich illustrative material in the work is of great interest.

K. Malone's article "Meaningful Fictive Names in English Literature", which is historically and literary in nature, provides an overview of English fiction in which fictitious names are used [2]. Examples are arranged chronologically, starting with the English poem Widsith, written in the 17th century. The author notes the abstract nature of names in Chaucer's works and medieval drama. For example: Youth, Flattery, Delight, Patience, etc. At the same time, as the author shows, one of the oldest types of fictitious names appears - a name indicating the character's profession, social status, etc. As an example of classical drama of the 16th century, he cites the plays of Lily. Names were based on Greek and Latin words at that time, so understanding the invented names required knowledge of Greek and Latin. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth, Italian names supplanted Greek names, which gave way to French names in the 17th century.

The 18th century is noted by the author with Sheridan's essay "School for scandal". In the article, the characteristics of some characters are given by their names. For example: Lady Sneerwell, - how good she is at sneering; Mr. Snake has the bad qualities associated with that reptile. Sir Peter Teazle has a name that fits him well enough. The teazle is a plant "the heads of which have hooked prickles between the flowers and are used for teasing cloth", that is for combing its surface so as to make a nap. The word is derived from the verb "teaze", which originally meant "shred" or the like but now mainly used in the figurative sense "to worry or irritate by persistent action".

The 20th century was introduced by the book "Adding Machine" by Elmer Rice. The author once again clarifies the purpose of his work - what an important role invented names have played and continue to play in English literature, and directly indicates the need for research in the field of invented names. Bloom's interesting article "Symbolic Names in Jonson's Periodical Essays" contains a number of interesting considerations about the significance and use of "symbolic" names, as well as an analysis of some of them in Johnson's works [3]. The author singles out the names of writers who used "symbolic" names to one degree or another in their works: Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, G. Eliot, Hardy, Wells, Huxley, etc. The author believes that the "metaphorical use of famous names" is the simplest and most effective literary device for highlighting the typical features of a character. As in previous works, noting the names of writers with whom the metaphorical use of proper names is associated, the author shows their wide multifunctionality in a much later period novel, essay and drama. The author shows that the symbolic names, genetically connected with classical drama and epic, began to be widely used in modern literature. Along with general historical and literary information, the author provides an analysis of several names from the "Rambler". The heroes of this play, which represents a typical example of classical drama, have Latin names. In his article "Character Names in the Waverley novels" Parsons examines the characteristic names in Scott's novels - Waverley, where the heroes or the environment described are the same [4]. This article, in our opinion, is of the greatest interest because, along with historical facts demonstrating the importance of the use of characteristic nouns in English literature, the author attempts to generalize the observations obtained as a result of the analysis of characteristic nouns, studies the genesis of characteristic nouns, and also gives his own classification of characteristic nouns in Scott's works.

In the appendix to the article, Parsons gives a list of characteristic nouns used in the Waverley novels, whose heroes or the environment they describe are the same, and proves the need to study them /each of the five names of the characters contains a characteristic of the owner - a selfinterpreting name/. The author distinguishes the following groups of characteristic nouns: 1) humorous; 2) characteristic; 3) narrative; 4) foreign; 5) animal; 6) contradictory; 7) alliterative names in each group.

In the first group of characteristic nouns, a large number of types of nouns characteristic of Dickens's works stand out. For example: Bedrooket (drook, to drench). Within this group of nouns, nouns of other structures stand out. For example: The Devil's Oliver, Rob the Ranter. The author believes that epithet nouns are more emotional than noun phrases. For example: Mrs. Carefor' Double-Knock, Seir-Despise. The sixth group of nouns "contradictory" is illustrated by the following nouns: Mr. Hammorgaw - hammergaw, argue pertinaciously, Auld Willie Winkie - Willie-winkie, a fondling name for a small child. There is absolutely no doubt that the classification is of a chaotic nature, since it is built on different principles. However, on the other hand, it shows possible ways of studying characteristic nouns, namely: from the point of view of the stylistic function they perform, their etymology and structure.

Kökeritz's article "Punning Names in Shakespeare" examines the names of some comic characters in Shakespeare's plays [5]. The author shows the characteristic function of the names of comic characters in Shakespeare's plays and confirms his opinion with the following examples: Bottom, Quince, Flute, etc. Names with a characteristic function, according to the author, are used by Shakespeare as a means of creating puns. In the study of "meaningful" names, numerous literary encyclopedias and dictionaries, such as The Reader's Encyclopedia [6], both general and specialized encyclopedias and dictionaries dedicated to the work of a single author, play a large role [7]. Usually, these dictionaries provide a list of the names of characters in the works of famous writers. "Punning" names, which are found along with ordinary names, are assigned to the character, habits, etc. of the owner (their owner) are explained.

In the current works on stylistics in the country itself, devoted to both specific and general problems of stylistics, the stylistic method of antonomasia is either not considered at all, or is presented as a separate type of metaphor, metonymy and periphrase. So, for example, I.Z. Ilyina in her dissertation "Periphrase and its stylistic functions" denies the very fact of the existence of antonomasia and considers it a special case of periphrase [8]. "To the original periphrases," writes I.Z. Ilyina, "we also include the so-called antonomasia [9]. The author considers the isolation of antonomasia as an independent stylistic method to be an unnecessary anachronism, mechanically transferred to modern stylistics from Greek and Latin rhetoric: "It should be noted that modern stylistics owes the replenishment of Greek and Latin terminology only to its conservatism, to which it has not yet critically looked at the scholastic poetics of the past, which, trying to identify various forms of tropes and classify them in detail. Moreover, this classification often followed from here, for example, along the line of the emergence of what is called antonomasia, external and, as it seems to us, antonomasia. In his definition of antonomasia, the author proceeds from the following definition of antonomasia by Sobolevsky: "Antonomasia is the replacement of a proper noun with a cognate noun, which expresses its distinctive feature and can be an adjunct to a proper noun. Examples include the following phrases: "The Prince of Smolensk" - Kutuzov, "The Singer of Love", "The Singer of the Gods" - Ovid, or "The Corsican Bandit" - Napoleon. In conclusion, the author once again emphasizes that "antonomasia

is undoubtedly a special case of paraphrase, but by no means an independent stylistic means of language” and, incidentally, notes that the dissertation, unlike the definition proposed by L.N. Timofeev (Theory of Literature, 1940), Darmstetter (La vie des mots, Paris), Greenough and Kittridge (Words and their ways in English Speech), Bain (Stylistics and Theory of Oral and Written Speech, 1886) and others, uses the definition of antonomasia belonging to Sobolevsky, who understood antonomasia as “the use of the name of an individual in place of a thing”: “No one is Solomon”, “he is a real Korun (very rich, overflowing with wealth)” – Bain.

M.K. Moren and N.N. Teterevnikova adhere to a different point of view on antonomasia [10]. They consider antonomasia as a special form of metonymy, which consists in the use of a proper noun in the function of a cognate noun. Below are examples of such figurative use of proper names of characters in literary works: Don Juan, Tartuffe, etc., which also occur in the following meanings: “a man who charms women”, “a hypocrite, a hypocrite, a hypocrite”. A separate type of metonymy is distinguished - momentary metonymy - "... in which instead of a person's name, some physical feature characteristic of him or an item of clothing that stands out is called [11]. The possibility of this type of metonymy becoming stable is noted. For example: Russian "Red Hat", "Blue Beard", etc.

I.R. Galperin's book "Essays on the Stylistics of the English Language" identifies the place of antonomasia among the lexical-phraseological stylistic means of the language, in the group of stylistic methods based on the interconnection of objective-logical and nominal meanings [12]. The author defines antonomasia and distinguishes two types of antonomasia: linguistic and speech-related. The following words are given as examples of linguistic antonomasia: "Sedan" - in the sense of oppression and "Panama" - in the sense of grand fraud, conspiracy. In these words, previously contextual It is noted that due to the strengthening of the objective-logical meaning, the main noun meaning fades. The author believes that the characteristic of designating the rarely occurring in the language by words denoting a previously existing general concept finds its own stylistic application in the stylistic method of antonomasia. Below this idea is confirmed by examples from the works of Byron and Dickens.

Among the works of English and American linguists devoted to style issues /taking into account various educational and normative manuals/ A. Bain's book "English Composition and Rhetoric" attracts attention, in which the author gives a detailed classification of figures of speech [13]. Based on the above definition of antonomasia /using the name of an individual instead of a thing/, A. Bain includes this figure of speech in the group of figures of similarity/ and considers it one of the forms of synecdoche [14].

In English and American dictionaries antonomasia is defined, on the one hand, as a simple replacement of a name, on the other hand, as a stylistic style, the definition of the style is given by another stylistic method - an epithet. Here is one of them, taken from the WKID dictionary [15].

"antonomasia /L, fr., gr., antonomasia, fr. antonomazein to name instead, fr. anti+onomazein to name fr. onoma name/ Rhet.

1) The use of epithet, official title, or the like, instead of the proper name of a person, as when "his majesty" is used for a king.

2) The use of a proper name instead of an appellative as when a wise man is called "a Solomon". or another, from Shorter Oxford: antonomasia – the substitution of an epithet, etc. or the name of an office or dignity, for a person's proper name, as "the Iron Duke" for Wellington. Also

conversely the use of a proper name to express a general idea, as in calling a wise judge “a Daniel”.

The following follows from the above literature review:[16]

1. Proper nouns play an important role in the structure of a work of fiction; they have certain semantic features and certain stylistic functions.

Proper nouns have been of great importance in the history of the development of English literature.

2. All the proposed studies of proper nouns in the literary work of writers represent separate articles or private observations on certain groups of proper nouns in the work of some writers. Neither in Russian linguistic literature. V.N. Mikhailov's work is an exception, nor has there been a single, theoretically grounded, comprehensive study of “meaningful” nouns in English linguistic literature to date, although this group of nouns with an animate internal form stands out clearly from the mass of proper nouns used in fiction in general, since, according to A. Behm's figurative expression, the connection "between word and word-meaning" is a necessary characteristic of a personal name in a work of fiction [17].

The study of proper names in English literature, particularly those imbued with semantic depth, reveals their crucial role in shaping character, advancing thematic concerns, and enriching stylistic expression. Antonomasia, as one of the most expressive manifestations of this phenomenon, bridges the gap between lexical meaning and artistic intent, serving not merely as a rhetorical ornament but as a potent narrative device. Analysis of works by Shakespeare, Dickens, Sheridan, Scott, and others demonstrates that meaningful names operate on multiple levels: they characterize individuals, create satirical or humorous effects, evoke cultural associations, and often function as implicit commentary on social or moral norms.

Despite its long-standing presence in the rhetorical tradition, antonomasia remains underexamined in modern stylistics, frequently being subsumed under broader categories such as periphrasis, metaphor, or metonymy. This lack of terminological and methodological consensus underscores the need for a more systematic approach to its study, one that integrates historical, etymological, and functional perspectives. By situating antonomasia within the broader framework of literary onomastics, future research can not only refine its definition but also better illuminate its aesthetic, cultural, and communicative significance in the evolution of English literary discourses.

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