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Two Types of the Expressive Function Served by Characters' Proper Names in *Harry Potter*

Abstract

The main aim of this article is to present a new method of analysing the expressive function of characters' proper names in a novel. Although this role was identified over half a century ago, it has not received scholars' attention and nearly no research has been done to advance its study. The onomastic material examined in this paper comes from the *Harry Potter* series and includes over one hundred and thirty *nomina propria* that serve the expressive function either from the moment of naming or in particular acts of using the name.

Key words: literary onomastics, expressive function, naming act, act of using a name, *Harry Potter*

Introduction

Within Polish literature on the subject, the expressive function has been recognized as a secondary function of literary proper names already in the first work that discussed the issue of roles served by characters' names in literature; it was, however, not defined but only illustrated with some examples (cf. Reczek 228). The first definition of this function was put forward by Aleksander Wilkoń, who claimed that it is based on the "the use of a proper name as a sign voicing certain emotions and emotional undertone" (105)¹ and this understanding of expressive function was taken over by the majority of other literary onomasticians. Nevertheless, the function received also other definitions, for instance Czesław Kosyl redefined it as "the use of apt means of artistic expression to make the utterance distinct, and as achieving the intended reaction of the recipient" (129). As observed by the scholar himself, this approach to the expressive function of literary proper names combines the poetic and conative functions of language defined by Roman Jakobson (cf. Jakobson 248, 250).

On the other hand, the literary onomastic research published in English does not recognize the expressive function of literary proper names until 2012. Presenting the first "typological scheme of the functions of a name in literary work" (Rudnyckyj 378), Rudnyckyj lists four functions: semantic, localizing in space, localizing in time and relevance to the form. Then, Iraida Gerus-Tarnawecky creates the second classification which is supposed to supplement that proposed by Rudnyckyj by elaborating on the

1 All quotations from publications in Polish have been translated by the author of the article.

function called the relevance to the form. Although her final “typology of names relevant to the form of a literary work” (Gerus-Tarnawecky 323) does not explicitly include the expressive function, it is mentioned briefly within the discussion of rhythmic effects the names can have. Nevertheless, this study concentrates on poetry and the majority of findings are irrelevant to literary proper names in novels. For over four decades after the publication of Gerus-Tarnawecky’s article, the list of functions and uses of literary proper names continues to grow (cf. for instance Alvarez-Altman; Nicolaisen, *The Structure and Function*; Ashley; Pablé; Nicolaisen, *Use of Names*; Windt), however, the expressive function of proper names in a novel is still not identified. Finally, in 2012, Benedicta Windt-Val states that “names and other terms of address often serve as a means of expressing feelings, and they can run the whole gamut from love to hatred” (278). However, she does not call this the expressive but “the psychological function” (278).

In both Polish and English literary onomastic research, the definitions and descriptions of the expressive function of literary *nomina propria* lack a theoretical foundation. This intuitiveness led to chaos in works concerned with the functions of proper names in literature. The expressive function has been mistakenly recognized as three other roles: the poetic (cf. Domaciuk; Siwiec), the humorous (cf. Domaciuk; Siwiec; Kania), and the semantic (cf. Mrózek; Kuffner-Obrzut). Thus, despite the fact that it was discovered more than six decades ago, the study of the expressive function and also of expressive *nomina propria* has not been advanced. Therefore, the main aim of this article is to examine the characters’ proper names in *Harry Potter* that serve the expressive function. The analysis will be conducted on the basis of the theory of “Two Acts,” a theoretical approach to the issue of the functions of literary *nomina propria* based on the acts of naming and of using a name in a novel.²

The “permanent” expressive function

The “permanent” functions of literary proper names identified on the basis of the naming act are understood as roles served by the name in relation to given elements of the naming act in a novel. Therefore, the onomastic expressive function is served by a name which voices the feelings and emotions of the author (who creates or chooses the name) or of the namer (the fictional figure who gives the name to a character). Consequently, even at this stage of research, the expressive function cannot be perceived as a uniform role. The function is served in relations to two elements of the naming act, which affects also the possibility of the analysis of the role, as the namer belongs to the fictional world of the novel and thus the expressive function served in relation to him can be decisively determined. The author, however, belongs to the non-literary world, so the examination of the expressive function served in relation to him requires an extensive study of additional materials (biographies, interviews) and still cannot be

2 This theory is proposed and explained in the present author’s doctoral thesis entitled *The Functions of Characters’ Proper Names in a Novel: A Theoretical Approach and Its Application* – currently in preparation.

complete. Therefore, the study of the “permanent” expressive function presented in this work will focus on the one served by names in relation to the namer.

In the *Harry Potter* series there are seventy-two characters' proper names that voice feelings or emotions the namer has towards the denoted character. The majority of these expressive *nomina propria* are constituted by two big groups: diminutives and nicknames and both these categories express not only positive but also negative feelings. First, there are thirty-eight expressive diminutives, the majority of which (twenty-nine) voice positive emotions of the namers. A large group of these positive diminutives is constituted by names given to children by their parents: Mrs Weasley calls her youngest son, Ronald, *Ronnie*³ and *little Ronnie*, and one of her older sons George *Georgie*; Amos Diggory calls his son, Cedric, *Ced*⁴; Ted Tonks never uses his daughter's name Nymphadora but always the short form *Dora*; Mrs Dursley uses five different forms of her only son's name Dudley: *Duddy*, *Dinky Duddydums*, *Ickle Dudleykins*, *Diddy darling* and *Diddy*. Finally, when the three main characters survive the war and start their own families, they also show affection for their children with the use of names: Ginny and Harry call their son Albus *Al*, and Ronald calls his daughter, Rose, *Rosie*. There are also five diminutives created for family members by siblings and other relatives: *Grawpy* given to Grawp by Hagrid, *Perce* to Percy by George, *Cissy* to Narcissa Malfoy by her sister, Bellatrix, *Dromeda* to Andromeda by her husband, Ted Tonks, and *Teddy* to Ted Lupin by Harry. Finally, there are twelve diminutives created by non-family members. Lily Evans names her friends Severus and Wormtail *Sev* and *Wormy*, similarly the Fat Lady calls her friend Violet *Vi*. Then, Percy calls his girlfriend, Penelope, *Penny*, and Hagrid names his hippogriff, Buckbeak, *Beaky*. Then, Neville calls Aberforth Dumbledore, the lonely owner of the Hog's Head Inn, who helps him and his friends, *Ab*. Mundungus Fletcher names Arabella Figg, an elderly lady who covers his watch for him, *Figg*. Even Voldemort expresses his emotions through names and calls Bellatrix *Bella*. Then, a house elf named Kreacher shows which family members he respects and likes by calling Narcissa and Bellatrix *Miss Cissy* and *Miss Bella*. Finally, the last two positive diminutives – *Peevesy* and *Peevsie* – are created by Peeves (a poltergeist) for himself. All these names convey positive feelings like love, sympathy, respect, liking or gratitude of the namers towards the named figures.

The remaining nine diminutives are created to voice negative feelings. Seven of them are created ironically: *Freddie* – by Bellatrix expressing her joy at killing the boy; *ickle Ronnie the Prefect* and *Ickle Prefect* – by Fred voicing irritation and jealousy; *Vicky* – by Ron again expressing jealousy; and *Ickle Diddykins*, *Dinky Diddydums* and *Diddykins* – by Harry voicing his irritation and frustration. Finally, the last two diminutives are created to express contempt (*old Sluggo* by McLaggen) and the perception of the denoted character as an eccentric (*Xeno Lovegood* by Dirk Cresswell).

3 Since the article includes a great number of proper names, the ones which serve the expressive function are italicized for the purpose of a better clarity.

4 Some diminutives are identical to the short forms of the names, which are not always created and used for the purpose of expressing emotions. Some, however, are and that is why they are included in this article.

The second group of expressive characters' proper names is constituted by nicknames. Contrary to the diminutives, the majority of nicknames are created to voice negative feelings. There are twenty-two negative nicknames expressing a wide range of different emotions, sometimes more than one at the same time. First, jealousy gives rise to four names: *the Chosen Captain* and *the Boy Who Scored* – given to Harry by Draco Malfoy; and *Bighead Boy* and *Pinhead* – given to Percy by Fred. Then, there are three nicknames that originate in anger: *Harry I've-Faced-Worse Potter* (invented by Ron), *Mr Brilliant* (given to Albus Dumbledore by his brother Aberforth) and *Master of Mystery* (created by Hermione for Ron). Next, two *nomina propria* are created by Ron because of both jealousy and anger, these are: *Queen Slug* and *King Slug*, and are given to Hermione and Cormac McLaggen. Then, irritation gives rise to *Humungous Bighead* and *Perfect Percy* (both given to Percy by his brother Fred), and frustration to *Dog-breath* and *Dung-head* (given to Wilkie Twycross, the Ministry-Apparition Instructor, by his students)⁵. Another three nicknames are created because the denoted characters are disliked by the namers: *Weasel King* is given to Ron by Draco, *Snivellus* to Severus Snape by Sirius Black, and *Pretty-Boy Diggory* to Cedric Diggory by Seamus Finnigan. Finally, six *nomina propria* originate in the contempt of the namers for the denoted characters. These are: *Batty*, *Darling Dodgy* and *Dodgy Doge* – invented by Rita Skeeter and given to Bathilda Bagshot and Elphias Doge, *Wormtail* – created by James Potter and given to Peter Pettigrew, *Dung* – given to Mundungus Fletcher by Sirius Black, and *Dobbin* – to Firenze by Sybill Trelawney.

However, there are also six sobriquets that express positive feelings. First, the feeling most often voiced is love. It gives rise to four nicknames: *Mollywobbles* – given to Molly Weasley by her husband, Arthur; *Tuney* – to Petunia Dursley by her sister, Lily; and *Popkin* and *Dudders* – to Dudley Dursley by his mother. Then, Dudley receives one more sobriquet – *Big D* – because he is liked by his friends. Finally, the last expressive nickname, *Won-Won*, is given to Ron by Lavender who is infatuated with him.

Apart from diminutives and nicknames, there are also six other names that express the feelings and emotions of their namers. First, on his eleventh birthday, when Harry discovers he is a wizard, he receives an owl and he does not want to give her a Muggle name, so he searches for a more suitable one in his books of magic, finally finding the name *Hedwig* in *A History of Magic*. Then, another owl, which belongs to Ron, is named by his sister *Pigwidgeon* as the girl recons the *proprium* to be sweet. Finally, the four remaining appellations are given to one character – Tom Riddle. The first two, *Voldemort* and *Lord Voldemort*, are created by Tom himself and voice his hatred for his Muggle name and desire for a unique one. Then, the other two, *He Who Must Not Be Named* and *You-Know-Who*, are invented by wizards terrified by Voldemort to an extent of being unable to say his name.

5 Some of the proper names discussed in this article serve not only the expressive function, but also the semantic (for instance *Mr Brilliant* or *Pretty-Boy Diggory*) or the humorous (for example *Dung-head* or *Snivellus*). However, since this article focuses on the expressive function, the analyses of other functions will not be included.

The “momentary” expressive function

The discussed proper names serve the expressive function as identified in relation to the namer on the basis of the naming act in a novel, and can therefore be recognized as expressive from the moment of naming. However, these are not all expressive *nomina propria* in the *Harry Potter* series. There are also names that do not express feelings or emotions of namers from the moment of naming, but become expressive in particular situations in which they are used. A function which occurs only in a given act of use should be identified and defined on the basis of the act of using a name in a novel. Therefore, the “momentary” expressive function occurs when a character’s name used in a given situation voices the feelings or emotions of the fictional figure who uses it (the speaker).⁶

In *Harry Potter* there are nine types of acts of using characters’ names in which the names used serve the “momentary” expressive function. The first one occurs when a first name is used instead of a surname and it usually shows positive feelings the speaker has for the denoted character. Such situations happen for instance when teachers address their students: Karkaroff calls Krum *Viktor* (HP4 217)⁷; Umbridge (HP5 537) and Snape (HP5 562) call Malfoy *Draco*; Lupin (HP3 139), Lockhart (HP2 92) and Dumbledore (HP3 286) call Potter *Harry*; and Slughorn calls Riddle *Tom* (HP6 346). Similarly, Voldemort who usually calls his Death Eaters by their surnames calls Malfoy and Snape *Lucius* (HP4 564) and *Severus* (HP7 11). Moreover, first names are used instead of surnames also when relations become more friendly: *Elphias* (HP7 127) and *Remus* (HP7 561) – said by Harry to Doge and Lupin, or when they change from hostile to friendly: *Harry* (HP7 40) – said by Dudley. Finally, a first name used in such a manner can express also negative emotions, for instance when used by a person who should not use it, but who disregards the character the name denotes: *Bathilda* – used by Muriel (HP7 131) and Skeeter (HP7 290).

The second type of such acts of using characters’ names is opposite to the first, as a surname is used instead of a first name. The majority of such situations occur when Hogwarts students use surnames when addressing or talking about other students: *Malfoy* – used by Hermione (HP5 176), Ron (HP6 125) and Harry (HP6 335); *Crabbe* – by Ron (HP5 172), Angelina (HP5 359) and Hermione (HP7 511); *Goyle* – by Ron (HP5 172) and Angelina (HP5 359); *Granger* (HP5 551) – by Draco; *Potter* (to Harry Potter) – by Draco (HP1 163), Blaise Zabini (HP6 143), Ernie Macmillan (HP2 149), Cormac McLaggen (HP6 382), Seamus Finnigan (HP5 197) and Pansy Parkinson (HP7 490);

6 Similarly to the one identified on the basis of the naming act, the “momentary” expressive function can also be served in relation to the author, but its emergence in this relation is even more difficult to prove. Consequently, the research will focus on the expressive function served by characters’ proper names in relation to the speaker only.

7 Each name that serves the expressive function not from the moment of naming but in a particular act of use is accompanied by a reference to this act. If more than one character uses a name in this way the references do not appear next to the expressive *proprium* but next to the speaker. If a character uses the same name in an expressive manner more than once and each time the name voices the same emotions, reference to only one of these acts is given.

Weasley (to Ron) – by Draco (HP5 175) and Slytherin students singing Draco's Quidditch song (HP5 360); *Longbottom* – by Draco (HP6 143) and Zabini (HP6 143); *Warrington* – by Harry (HP5 355) and Dean (HP4 230); *Harper* – by Ginny (HP6 275) and Harry (HP6 278); *McLaggen* – by Harry (HP6 388), Ron (HP6 263) and Zabini (HP6 143); *Smith* (HP6 277) – by Harry; *Parkinson* (HP6 161), *Bradley* (HP5 620), *Kirke* (HP5 491) and *Sloper* (HP5 491) – by Ron; *Derrick* (HP5 359) and *Bole* (HP5 359) – by Angelina; *Zabini* (HP6 139) – by Ginny; *Vaisey* – by Ginny (HP6 275) and Ron (HP6 275); *Belby* (HP6 143) – by Zabini; and, a generation earlier: *Avery* (HP7 540) and *Mulciber* (HP7 540) – used by Lily; *Lupin* (HP7 540) – by Snape; and *Potter* (to James Potter) – by Snape (HP7 540) and Lily (HP5 570). However, there are also some other examples of this type, as there are situations in which adult wizards who are on the first name basis use surnames to address one another. This happens when Dumbledore calls Cornelius *Fudge* (HP4 614), Voldemort calls Severus *Snape* (HP7 516), and Crouch calls Amos *Diggory* (HP4 122). All these uses of surnames express negative feelings and emotions of the speakers, such as dislike (like in the majority of the utterances of Hogwarts students) or anger (like in the case of Dumbledore, Crouch or Lily).

The next group comprises uses of first names together with surnames instead of first names only. First, during her date with Harry, Cho Chang cannot stand her boyfriend mentioning his friend Hermione, so she stops referring to her by her first name, calls her *Hermione Granger* (HP5 496) and runs out of the café. Then, during a heated conversation about relations with their sister Ginny, Fred and George Weasley call their fellow Gryffindors (and Ginny's boyfriends) Dean and Michael *Dean Thomas* (HP6 117) and *Michael Corner* (HP6 118). Finally, when Ron, who a few weeks previously left Harry and Hermione due to the discomforts of living in a tent, comes back, Hermione calls her friends *Ronald Weasley* (HP7 309) and *Harry Potter* (HP7 310). Each of these names (not expressive in themselves) voices the anger the speaker currently feels.

On the other hand, there is also an opposite group of acts of using a name in which only first names are used instead of both first names and surnames or the latter only. In the discussed novels these acts occur during Quidditch matches, when the commentators use first names to commentate on the moves of the players they like or care for. The majority of such situations happen when the commentary is done by Lee Jordan, who sometimes uses first names: *Angelina* (HP5 360), *Alicia* (HP5 360), *Katie* (HP5 363), *Fred* (HP5 361), *George* (HP5 361) and *Ron* (HP5 361) instead of surnames: Johnson, Spinnet, Bell and Weasley, as all these players are not only his fellow Gryffindors, but also his friends. Another act like this occurs when the commentary is done by Luna Lovegood, who uses her best friend's first name – *Ginny* (HP6 387) – instead of her surname.

Apart from that, names can also be used without titles that should accompany them. Such acts happen with regard to six characters, four of whose names are used without the title "Mr" (Harry calls a former Minister *Fudge* (HP6 325) and a Ministry of Magic official *Barty Crouch* (HP6 325); Alastor Moody addresses Harry's uncle *Dursley* (HP5 765); and a great number of witches and wizards refer to an Azkaban escapee Sirius Black *Black* – a few examples of such speakers are: Cornelius Fudge (HP3 154),

Minerva McGonagall (HP3 153) and Madam Rosmerta (HP3 153), and two without the title "Professor" (*Quirrell* is called thus by Albus Dumbledore (HP7 545), Severus Snape (HP6 33) and Harry Potter (HP6 73); and *Snape* (HP2 8) is repeatedly referred to without the title by Harry, who, even though repeatedly reproached for that, does not change it).⁸ These *nomina propria* express dislike, contempt and anger.

On the contrary, an additional word can accompany a name when none is expected. Such uses of appellations express politeness (Hermione addressing ragged Sirius *Mr Black* [HP3 272]), admiration (Ron talking about Gwenog Jones *the Gwenog Jones* [HP6 262]) or respect (Percy referring to his boss *Mr Crouch* [HP4 54]).

The next type of act of using a character's name in which the name becomes expressive is the use of a former name instead of a new one. In *Harry Potter* there are only three *nomina propria* used in this way: *Tom*, *Riddle* and *Tom Riddle* used by Harry (HP7 591) and Dumbledore (HP6 413) to address Voldemort. They express the lack of fear, composure and the will to oppose the dark wizard.

The last but one type of the acts in question comprises uses of names in situations when they are not expected. There are two such *nomina propria*: *Crouch* (HP4 593) and *Barty Crouch* (HP4 593), used by Severus Snape and voicing his surprise at seeing a man whom he considered dead.

Finally, the last group of acts of using a name in which the *proprium* used performs the "momentary" expressive function differs from the previously discussed in that the names used are also expressive from the moment of naming. This group includes *nomina propria* (in the *Harry Potter* series only nicknames and diminutives) that express the feelings of the namers but are taken over to voice the feelings of the speakers instead. These feelings may be similar, but also entirely different from those of the namers. Hermione's use of the nickname *Won-Won* (HP6 329) voices anger, jealousy and hurt and Lily's use of *Snivellus* (HP5 571) expresses rancour. *Xeno* and *Xeno Lovegood* said by Ted Tonks (HP7 246) and Neville Longbottom (HP7 462) voice liking. Then, Hermione's quoting of names *Miss Cissy* (HP7 164) and *Miss Bella* (HP7 164) is full of sorrow and anger. Finally, *Popkin* (HP5 17) and *Big D* (HP5 17) used by Harry express his anger and frustration, but years later *Big D* (HP7 40) is said by Harry with different, positive emotions and marks the moment the relation between the boys changes.

Conclusions

As demonstrated in the analysis above, the expressive function of characters' proper names in *Harry Potter* is not uniform. Within the seven volumes of the series, there are seventy-two appellations that are created as expressive and sixty-three that become expressive only when used in particular situations. Moreover, eight names that serve the expressive function from the moment of naming are also used expressively by the

⁸ The manner in which Harry talks about Professor Snape is corrected in: HP5 457; HP5 729; HP6, 79; HP6 335; HP7 248.

speakers and thus, these *nomina propria* serve both types of the expressive function – the one identified on the basis of the naming act and the one recognized on the basis of the act of using a name. Furthermore, as demonstrated in the article, the set of expressive names in the *Harry Potter* series includes categories of *nomina propria* which seem to have a tendency for being expressive – diminutives and nicknames. Moreover, each of the two types of expressive function (“permanent” and “momentary”) can be served by characters’ proper names in two relations: to the author and namer, and to the author and speaker. However, the emergence of this role in relation to the author is difficult to prove, requires the study of not only the analysed novels, but also additional materials and still might be subjective and not conclusive. On the other hand, the study of the expressive function only in relations to the namer and the speaker confirmed the intricacies of this role, its extensive uses and effects.

Abbreviations

- HP1 – Rowling, Joanne Kathleen. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2001.
- HP2 – Rowling, Joanne Kathleen. *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2002.
- HP3 – Rowling, Joanne Kathleen. *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1999.
- HP4 – Rowling, Joanne Kathleen. *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2000.
- HP5 – Rowling, Joanne Kathleen. *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2003.
- HP6 – Rowling, Joanne Kathleen. *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2005.
- HP7 – Rowling, Joanne Kathleen. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007.

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