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THE PROPER NAME  
*MISIEWICZ AS NOMEN APPELLATIVUM*  
IN THE CURRENT POLITICAL DISCOURSE  
IN POLAND

**Key words:** proper name, paragon, conceptual metonymy, meaning construal, Antonio Barcelona

## 1. Introduction

The present contribution examines some figurative uses of one anthroponym, i.e. the proper name *Misiewicz*, in the current political discourse in Poland. The unique referent of this surname, Bartłomiej Misiewicz, became known to the Polish public in 2015, after the party Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość) had won the parliamentary elections. Despite his very young age (he was 25 then), lack of qualifications in military affairs and lack of experience, he was employed as the spokesman in the Ministry of Defense and director of Minister Antoni Macierewicz's political cabinet. The reason for the young man's promotion seemed to be his long-lasting association with Minister Macierewicz – Misiewicz had been his assistant since his teenage years. In 2016 he was awarded a golden Medal of Merits for contributing to Poland's defensive power, and in 2017 he was appointed to the supervisory board of the Polish Armament Group (for more details see [https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bart%C5%82omiej\\_Misiewicz](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bart%C5%82omiej_Misiewicz)).

The man's astounding career aroused considerable controversy among the opposition and members of the general public since the honours and privileges that he enjoyed appeared undeserved. As a result, his surname has come to designate people associated with the governing party who benefit from the

current political situation because of their loyalty to the party, irrespective of their qualifications.

The data under analysis have been culled from press articles (both traditional and electronic), including readers' online commentaries and opinions. The number of retrieved figurative instances of the surname *Misiewicz* exceeds two hundred, attesting to a considerable degree of entrenchment of the secondary meaning of this proper name.

It will be argued that a vast body of examples featuring the name *Misiewicz* display a paragonic sense, i.e. employ "a famous name to mean the type that made it famous" [Barcelona 2004, 363], and invoke the conception of a class of individuals. We will attempt to specify the conceptual motivations that license them, drawing on the recent cognitive linguistic literature dealing with secondary meanings of proper names. In particular, it will be claimed that the most frequent paragonic uses of *Misiewicz* in our data can adequately be accounted for within the model proposed by Barcelona [2003, 2004].

## 2. Nomen proprium

In standard grammars of English, personal proper nouns are treated as rigid designators<sup>1</sup> with inherently unique reference [Barcelona 2004, 359]. Human proper names primarily serve the function of labeling and have little or no descriptive meaning. Their referents are unique in a given context and the world knowledge shared by the speaker and hearer, and represent "the only [single] instance of their kind" [Radden and Dirven 2007, 99]. They are inherently definite, and their uniqueness is "socially sanctioned", i.e. identified by a specific social group or the whole society [ibid., 100].

The above-mentioned conceptual and semantic properties of proper names determine their morpho-syntactic behavior. The most important distributional characteristics of English *nomina propria* are listed below [Quirk et al. 1985, 288-290; Barcelona 2004, 359-360]:

- (i) proper names are not inflected for number (they show no number contrast, as in *The Hague* vs. *\*The Hagues*);
- (ii) they do not exhibit contrasting definiteness (*\*a Hague, \*Hague, \*some Hague*);
- (iii) they can only be postmodified by non-restrictive modifiers (e.g. *Dr Brown, who lives next door, comes from Australia.* vs. *\*Dr Brown who lives next door comes from Australia.*);
- (iv) only adjectives with emotive colouring can occur as their non-restrictive pre-modifiers (*dear little Eric*).

<sup>1</sup>The following definition is offered by Putnam (1975: 231; emph. added): a designator is called 'rigid' (in a given sentence) if (in that sentence) it refers to the same individual in every possible world in which that designator designates".

As demonstrated by Quirk et al. [1985, 288-290], in some contexts proper nouns can lose their unique denotation and assume the characteristics of common nouns, such as plural contrast, contrasting definiteness, and occurrence with restrictive modification:

- (1) a. *Shakespeares* ('authors like Shakespeare'),  
       b. *his new Shakespeare* ('his new copy of Shakespeare's works')
- (2) *Lu Xun has been known as 'the Chinese Gorki'*.
- (3) *the Bradford she grew up in*

In terms of their categorial status and distributional properties, those proper nouns become reclassified as common nouns [ibid., 288]. The usage instantiated in example (1a), where the name *Shakespeare* signifies a class of referents exhibiting features typically ascribed to Shakespeare, the famous playwright, is of special interest for the present analysis [Barcelona 2003, 24].

According to Topolińska [1984, 351], unique reference and inherent definiteness of proper names are expressed in a parallel fashion in the syntactic system of nominals in Polish. In an unmarked syntactic pattern, proper names constitute a nominal group on their own, they do not pattern with any determining words. Therefore, the occurrence of a determining word with a proper name is always indicative of a secondary use of this proper name [ibid., 351]. However, there exist some marked patterns with a proper name in a primary use, exemplified in (4)-(5). On Topolińska's account, redundant definiteness expressed by the use of a demonstrative and possessive determiner with a proper name conveys inferences of the speaker's emotions or indicates additional deixis. Alternatively, it can mark anaphoric reference to the preceding text [ibid., 314, 351].

- (4) *Daj mi spokój ze swoją Marysią!*  
       Lit. Give me a break with your Mary-INSTR.
- (5) *Ta Zosia jest po prostu nieznośna.*  
       This-NOM Sophie-NOM is simply unbearable.

In the subsequent section, we present a selection of examples attesting to the fact that the proper name *Misiewicz* tends to be non-unique in reference when it is used in political discourse. In other words, we shall demonstrate that it has indeed converted to *nomen appellativum* and that this fact is reflected in its morpho-syntactic distribution. Interestingly, the spelling with an initial lower case in figurative uses has not become fully established yet; therefore, the noun occurs in two variant graphic forms: *Misiewicz(e)* and *misiewicz(e)*.

### 3. *Misiewicz* used as *nomen appellativum*

Sentences (6)-(7) supply information about the origin of the common noun *Misiewicz* used in a figurative sense, and reasons behind its popularity in the current public discourse in Poland.

- (6) *Ruszyła strona **Misiewicz.pl**. każdy może dodać swojego [**Misiewicza**].* [The website *Misiewicz-e* NOM.PL. has taken off, everyone can add their *Misiewicz* ACC.SG.] [www.wprost.pl, posted on 21.09.2016]
- (7) *Lista **#Misiewiczów*** [the list of *Misiewicz-es* GEN.PL.]; *mapa **Misiewiczów*** [a map of *Misiewicz-es* GEN.PL.] [www.misiewicz.pl, homepage]

The examples refer to an online campaign, hashtagged with *#Misiewicz.pl*, launched in the social media in September 2016 by one of the opposition parties. Its original aim was to raise public awareness of the policy allegedly adopted by the governing party Law and Justice after they had won the parliamentary elections in 2015, consisting in political corruption, favouritism, and nepotism (for details see <http://misiewicz.pl/mapa-misiewiczow>). It was not until the website grew in popularity that *Misiewicz* was dismissed from all the posts that had occupied, and left the public sphere.

#### 3.1. The morpho-syntactic properties of the common noun *Misiewicz*

In sentences (6)-(7), as well as in the examples quoted below, the nominal *Misiewicz* behaves as an ordinary common noun. It is inflected for number and occurs with indefinite or generic reference, zero-marked in Polish (cf. Radden and Dirven 2007, chp. 5). Sentences (8)-(10) demonstrate that when used figuratively, the nominal can be preceded by demonstrative determiners<sup>2</sup> (distal and proximal: *ci/these*, *tamci/those*, *ten/this*, etc.), indefinite determiners (*jakiś/some*), quantifying determiners (*żaden/none*, *każdy/every*), possessive determiners (*ich/their*, *jego/his*), and that it accepts pre-modification by a numeral as well as a quantifying adjective.

- (8) *znajdować, pilnować i pokazywać palcem **tych misiewiczów**. Brawo N!* [One should trace those *Misiewicz-es* ACC.PL., keep an eye on them and point the finger at them] [www.echodnia.eu, 21.09.2016]
- (9) *Chcą zrobić miejsce dla **150** czy **200 misiewiczów** (...).* [They want to make room for 150 or 200 *Misiewicz-es* GEN.PL.] [www.wiadomo.co, 23.03.2017]
- (10) *Czy w naszym powiecie są **jacyś misiewicz**?* [Are there any *Misiewicz-e* NOM.PL. in our county/district/administrative unit] [www.forum.echodnia.eu, 5.10.2016]

<sup>2</sup> In the traditional taxonomy adopted by Polish linguists, the term 'demonstrative adjective' is employed [cf. Topolińska 1984, 351].

In examples (11)-(12), the noun collocates with qualifying adjectival pre-modifiers.

- (11) *władza pompuje grube miliony (...) nagradza różnych Misiewiczów*. [the government/people in power are pumping loads of money (...) (and) reward all sorts of Misiewicz-es ACC.PL.] [www.wyborcza.pl, 27.10.2016]
- (12) *Teraz kolejni misiewicz* (...) *muszą wejść szeroką ławą do polskiej dyplomacji*. [And now next Misiewicz-es must flock into diplomacy.] [www.wiadomo.co, 23.03.2017]

Sentences (13)-(14) involve post-modification by a prepositional phrase and by a nominal marked for the genitive case, respectively. The latter is the counterpart of the English possessive construction.

- (13) *Misiewicz* *z PiS* *urządzą niebezpieczne rajdy na naszych drogach*. [Misiewicz-es-NOM-PL from PiS make dangerous raids on our roads.] [www.tokfm.pl, 2.04.2017]
- (14) (...) *śledztwo zostało przesunięte (...) pod nadzór innego Misiewicza PiS*. [the investigation has been placed under the supervision of a different Misiewicz-GEN from PiS.] [www.koduj.24, 8.11.2016]

In the remaining parts of this article we attempt to provide possible conceptual and pragmatic motivations underlying the morpho-syntactic patterns presented above. As stated in the Introduction, Barcelona's [2003, 2004] approach to paragons will be employed since it appears powerful enough to adequately explain a large body of Polish data featuring the surname in question. The ensuing section briefly overviews the main arguments advanced by this scholar, focusing on the metonymic motivation that he advocates.

#### 4. Paragons as tiers of metonymic mappings

Before proceeding further, we need to briefly clarify how the notion of *metonymy* is understood within Cognitive Linguistics. The classic, cognitively based definition of conceptual metonymy, put forward by Radden and Kövecses [1999, 21], characterizes it as “a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle [or source], provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same idealized cognitive model (ICM)”. Oft-quoted examples of metonymy include: PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT (*He bought a Ford*), and PLACE FOR INSTITUTION (*Wall Street is in a panic*) [Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 38]. Notice should be taken that the conceptual entities linked by metonymy, referred to as (sub)domains, are necessarily part of the same overarching domain or ICM [Barcelona 2003, 226, 228]. Thus, metonymy is a *domain-internal* mapping, unlike metaphor, which occurs “across discrete conceptual domains” [Ruiz de Mendoza and Mairal 2007, 33].

In contrast to traditional accounts of proper names mentioned in Section 2, cognitive linguists demonstrate that the semantic and syntactic properties

of proper nouns are not disconnected from our experience-based knowledge. Primarily, names are not “merely rigid unique designators” [Barcelona 2003, 38-9] – the construal of their meaning involves evoking a language user’s rich conceptual network and highlighting some of its subdomains. This important assumption lays the foundation for the construal of meaning of paragonic names proposed by Barcelona [2003, 2004].

His conception of paragonic names draws on Lakoff’s [1987] insight that metonymy plays a fundamental role in structuring models for categories. When a salient individual category member or a subcategory (e.g. a paragon, social stereotype, or typical example, among others), “stand[s] for the category as a whole”, a metonymic model of the category results, potentially giving rise to prototypicality effects [ibid., 84-85].

In line with Lakoff [ibid., 87], Barcelona [2004, 363] perceives paragons as “well-known individual members of a category that represent an ideal of the category”. He argues that the use of proper nouns as paragons is motivated by a chain of two PART FOR WHOLE metonymies [2003, 24-26, 38; 2004, 365-365, 368-369]: (i) CHARACTERISTIC PROPERTY OF AN INDIVIDUAL FOR THE INDIVIDUAL, and (ii) IDEAL MEMBER FOR CLASS. The first metonymy “assigns a stereotypical property to a famous individual”, defocusing his/her other properties that are irrelevant in a given discourse situation, and creates a stereotypical conceptual model of the referent of a paragon name. The second metonymy “directly motivates” the use of paragon names as common nouns by activating a figurative mental class from the ideal member [2004, 369; 2003, 38]. Members of this class exhibit one or more salient properties of the paragon. Whether or not a given individual can be construed as a member in this category depends on his/her closeness to the ideal set up by the original bearer of the name. Thus, the examples quoted in Section 3 imply that the people described as *Misiewiczze* [Misiewicz-es NOM.PL.] exhibit at least some of the key characteristics ascribed to Bartłomiej Misiewicz – the protégée of the Polish Minister of Defence.

One of the doubts that can be raised with respect to Barcelona’s [2003, 2004] analysis of paragons concerns the direction of the first metonymy. Since the effect of the mapping is meaning reduction (cf. Ruiz de Mendoza [2007, 14]) and defocusing, it appears that it should rather be formulated as AN INDIVIDUAL FOR HIS/HER CHARACTERISTIC PROPERTY (WHOLE FOR PART) (cf. Brdar and Brdar-Szabó [2007, 135]). Support for this view can be drawn from what appears to be a standard assumption in cognitive semantics, namely, that a metonymic source is directly invoked by a given linguistic expression [Ruiz de Mendoza 2007, 15-16]. For instance, the mapping underlying the sentence: *The sax has a flu today*, whereby the metonymic source (the saxophone) enables mental access to the target concept (the person playing the instrument), is rendered as OBJECT USED FOR USER [Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 39], and not as USER FOR OBJECT USED. This perspective will be adopted in our analysis.

In the section to follow we attempt to define the meaning of the common noun *Misiewicz* and specify the conceptual steps that are involved in the construal of its meaning.

## 5. The semantics of the common noun *Misiewicz*

Sentences (15)-(16) seem to provide good grounds for characterizing the figurative sense of the lexeme *Misiewicz*.

- (15) (...) **Misiewiczów**, tych niedouczonech bęcwałów, którzy dzięki “dojnej zmianie” zasiedlają szeregi polskiej administracji czy spółek Skarbu Państwa. [(...) Misiewicz-es ACC.PL., those uneducated half-wits, who joined the ranks of the Polish administration and state owned companies.] [www.wiadomo.co, 23.03.2017]
- (16) na pierwszej radomskiej liście “**Misiewiczów**”, czyli osób, które – według działaczy Nowoczesnej – dostały swoje stanowiska przede wszystkim ze względu na swoje powiązania polityczne w PiS. [they are on the first list of Misiewicz-es GEN.PL. in Radom, that is those, who – according to members of the party Nowoczesna [Modern] – got their jobs because of their connections with the party Law and Justice (PIS).] [www.echodnia.eu, 21.09.2016]

We would like to propose that in the examples provided so far, the name *Misiewicz* is re-categorized as a common noun and used as a paragon. It no longer denotes the unique referent of that surname, i.e. Bartłomiej Misiewicz, but assumes the meaning that can be characterized as follows:

- (17) <an undeserving protégée, holding a lucrative position in the public sector or state-owned companies because of his/her association with the Law and Justice party, and despite the lack of requisite qualifications and/or experience>.

As a paragonic term, the noun acts as “a metonymic reference point” [Barcelona 2003, 24, 28], activating a mental class of individuals that are conceptualized as sharing the salient properties specified above, and originally associated with Mr. Misiewicz. The young man represents an ideal exemplar – or prototype [cf. Rosch 1978; Lakoff 1987] – of the category designated by the common noun *Misiewicz*. It deserves note that members of this category, i.e. people described in the public discourse as *Misiewicz* [Misiewicz-es NOM. PL.], may resemble the prototype in varying degrees. Sentence (18) provides a clear illustration. We have included subscripts in order to emphasize the goodness-of-exemplar ratings that are implied.

- (18) Brudziński tylko potwierdził, że jest nawet **lepszym Misiewiczem<sub>1</sub>** niż **oryginalny Misiewicz**, jest **super-Misiewiczem<sub>2</sub>**, jest **esencją Misiewicza<sub>2</sub>**. [Brudziński has only confirmed that he is an even better Misiewicz<sub>1</sub> than the original Misiewicz, he is a super- Misiewicz<sub>2</sub>, the very essence of being a Misiewicz<sub>2</sub>.] [www.koduj24.pl, 13.04.2017]



Interestingly, the sentence implies that some people may exceed the “original Misiewicz” (the unique referent of the name understood literally) in their *misiewicz*-like characteristics. Thus, someone may be perceived as “*a better Misiewicz*” or even “*a super-Misiewicz*” / “*the essence of Misiewicz*”, that is, a perfect embodiment of his negatively evaluated characteristics.

## 6. Metonymic mappings that license the paragon noun *Misiewicz*

Let us elaborate on the conceptualization underlying the meaning of *Misiewicz* characterized in (17). In line with Barcelona (2003, 2004), we assume that two conceptual steps are involved. The input to the process is the proper name *Misiewicz* with unique reference. The encyclopedic knowledge that it invokes is organized as a complex domain matrix, subsuming information about the education, job experience, interests, family, etc. of the original referent of the surname used in the literal sense.

The first metonymy, AN INDIVIDUAL FOR HIS/HER CHARACTERISTIC PROPERTY (WHOLE FOR PART), reduces the rich conceptual knowledge associated with Mr. Misiewicz to the features that are definitional in the creation of a mental class of Misiewicz-like people, summarized in (17). As mentioned earlier, the first metonymic mapping downplays and defocuses those attributes of the unique referent which are irrelevant in the context of political discourse. The mental class of Misiewicz-like individuals, directly invoked in the examples featuring the name in the plural, is created via the second metonymy, namely IDEAL MEMBER FOR CLASS (cf. Barcelona 2004). The metonymy maps the cluster of definitional properties ascribed to Mr. Misiewicz onto the class of people who are conceptualized as exhibiting them as well.

As discussed in Section 4, membership in this mental class is decided on the basis of the closeness of a given individual to the ideal. In the example below, the process of categorizing an individual as a potential member in the category *Misiewicz* (and member of the class of Misiewicz-like people) is referred to *expressis verbis*:

- (19) *Nowoczesna zebrała i otrzymała od wyborców ok. 600 nazwisk, w których zachodzi podejrzenie nepotyzmu przy obsadzaniu spółek skarbu państwa. Po weryfikacji okazało się, że 227 (194 mężczyzn i 33 kobiety) z nich spełnia kryteria bycia ‘Misiewiczem’.* [The Party Nowoczesna (Modern) has collected and received from voters about 600 names of people who are suspected to have got their jobs in state-owned economic enterprises via nepotism. Their examination has revealed that that 227 (194 males and 33 females) meet the criteria for being a ‘Misiewicz’.] [www.newsweek.pl, 20.09.2016]



## 7. Further extensions of the metonymic model

Finally, attention needs to be drawn to the astounding expansiveness of the lexeme *Misiewicz* in the paragonic sense. In addition to the metonymically motivated instances of use discussed in the foregoing sections, there appear further extensions, illustrated in (20)-(23), which seem to diverge from the meaning specified in (17).

- (20) (...) słowa Krzysztofa Łapińskiego, który Ryszarda Petru nazwał “*Misiewiczem Balcerowicza*”. [(...) in the words of K.Ł., who called Ryszard Petru the *Misiewicz of Balcerowicz*.] [www.se.pl, 19.09.2016]
- (21) *GROM też ma swojego Misiewicza*. [GROM (an elite special military unit) also has its *Misiewicz-ACC*.] [www.strajk.eu, 17.03. 2017]
- (22) *Rosja też ma swojego Misiewicza*. [Russia also has its *Misiewicz-ACC*.] [www.money.pl, 15.04. 2017]
- (23) *Gdyby narrację ze świata polityki przenieść do futbolu, należałoby napisać: Wisła Kraków ma swojego Misiewicza*. [If the narrative was transferred from the world of politics to football, one should write: *Wisła Kraków* (a football club) has its *Misiewicz-ACC*.] [www.weszlo.com, 10.01.17]

In example (20), the term *Misiewicz* is used to refer to one of the leaders of the opposition, who can by no means be perceived as associated with the governing party. Sentence (21) involves the domain of the military rather than politics, albeit the two are interconnected. Example (22) describes the politics of a different country (Russia), and example (23) pertains to the domain of football. It appears that sentences (20)-(22) may be considered as borderline cases in that they can be construed and interpreted via metonymy or metaphor. Example (23), in contrast, seems to evidence a fully metaphorical shift, that is, a mapping between distinct domains: politics and sports (in the context at hand, the sports domain is detached from politics).

## 8. Conclusions

The paragonic noun *Misiewicz* is just one of many personal proper nouns that are employed in a figurative sense in the current political discourse in Poland (cf. *Obamy* [Obama-PL], *Junckery* [Juncker-PL], *Timmermansy* [Timmermans-PL], *Merkle* [Merkel-PL], *Camerony* [Cameron-PL], *Tuski* [Tusk-PL], etc.). What distinguishes *Misiewicz* from other names recategorized as common nouns and used to refer to a class of people that share some salient property(ies) of their unique referents is the fact that it seems to have already become institutionalized as part of the lexicon. *Misiewicz* in the non-literal sense may perhaps be considered as an example of what Hohenhaus [2005, 369] terms ‘artificial’ institutionalization since it was established due to, “at least initially, media power rather than normal spread through a speech community”.

This paper employs a slightly modified version of Barcelona's [2003, 2004] approach to paragon, and describes the conceptual motivation behind using the name *Misiewicz* as a class-label. It is proposed that the data under analysis are licensed by two metonymies: AN INDIVIDUAL FOR HIS/HER CHARACTERISTIC PROPERTY, and IDEAL MEMBER FOR CLASS.

A thorough examination of the lexeme *Misiewicz* would require accounting for its considerable productivity in word-formation, illustrated by such forms as *misiewiczki* [a feminine noun], *misiewiczostwo*, *misiewiczyzm* [misiewicz-hood-NOUN<sub>ABSTRACT</sub>], *(ustawa) antymisiewiczowa* [anti-misiewicz-ADJ motion], *Misiewiczze-Pisiewiczze* [a compound], etc. One common denominator underlying all the figurative instances mentioned in the present contribution is the emotive component of the word's meaning, with a strong negative axiological evaluation. The paragon name *Misiewicz* fulfills a range of functions in the current public discourse, from referential and descriptive to expressive and social. Arguably, the emotive and socio-political dimensions of its figurative meanings might have been an ultimate motivation behind its widespread use and rhetorical power. The lexeme appears to have become a marker of political identity and group solidarity among the opposition, as well as a sign of citizens' emotional involvement in politics. Apparently, it has also proved to be a very effective tool of persuasion in the public sphere.

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## Summary

### THE PROPER NAME *MISIEWICZ* AS *NOMEN APPELLATIVUM* IN THE CURRENT POLITICAL DISCOURSE IN POLAND

The paper discusses a secondary, figurative meaning of the proper name *Misiewicz* that has evolved in the current political discourse in Poland. The data under examination have been retrieved during the years 2016-2017 from paper and electronic editions of Polish newspapers and magazines, including online commentaries and opinions of their readers. It is claimed that best documented and most frequent uses of the name *Misiewicz*le [SG./PL.] exhibit a paragonic sense. Barcelona's [2003, 2004] model was adopted in the explanation of the metonymic mappings underlying them.

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