THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF NAMES IN ENGLISH LITERATURE[1]

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When, just over a decade ago, my interest in the study of names in literature was first aroused, I saw the subject primarily as an intriguing variation and useful extension of my previous pre-occupation with place names as evidence for linguistic stratification and settlement history and was therefore quite unprepared for the immense possibilities it offers for both the student of names and the student of literature (Nicolaisen 1982: 1). Over the last ten years, the initial challenge to roam more widely intellectually and to be more innovative in my scholarship has, however, become an addiction and, succumbing to it, I can no longer read a work of literature of any kind on any level without being almost uncomfortably conscious of the names of its characters and locations, and of diverse fashions in which they work together, intertwine, bounce off each other to produce what I like to think of as an intricate text within a text, an onomastic[2] web, a subtly displayed pattern in the artfulness of a textured verbal tapestry. For me, the last decade has therefore been a pleasant, exciting voyage of discovery and revelation, and I am here today to share some of that pleasure and excitement with you.

[1] This paper was first read on August 31, 1983, as part of the Twelfth Triennial Conference of the International Association of University Professors of English, held in Hamburg, Germany, August 28 — September 3, 1983. It is a synthesis of ideas expressed previously in several articles which are referred to in the appropriate places.

[2] In this paper, I use the terms *lexical* and *onomastic* as pertaining to words and names, respectively. The main distinction between words and names lies for me in their semantic and functional properties, in so far as a name can function perfectly well as a name without any lexical meaning; even when such word meaning is accessible it, more often than not, does not interfere with the semantic contents of the name. I am, of course, well aware of the many grammatical, especially syntactic, characteristics which words and names share.

Looking back, it seems to me that at that time, in the early seventies, I was probably just about ready to steer my good ship *Onoma* into the oceans of creative literary endeavor not only because the time was ripe for a determined upsurge in scholarly involvement in the field of literary onomastics but also, and this for me was the more important factor, because I had for a long time regarded the purely etymological interest in names as far too narrow and limiting and especially as not doing justice to names as names; for in the last analysis etymology is, I believe, not an onomastic but a lexical way of seeing things because it is not its purpose to elucidate names as names but to reduce them to the words which they possibly once were. For etymology and etymologists a name is, principally, a word with rather unusual, if not to say odd or bizarre, additional characteristics, and the older a name is and the further it reaches back into prehistoric periods for which there is otherwise little linguistic evidence or none at all, the better. The main purport of etymology, i.e. the reconstruction of the original lexical form and meaning, can for any onomastic research which is aware of its own worth and of its own peculiar nature, only be beginning and foundation, not ultimate goal and exclusive thrust. Naturally, the lexical etymology of a name may indeed serve as a valuable base for other, extraonomastic endeavors, but this does not mean that, as a result of etymological pursuits, one is able to understand the name better as a name. Our understanding must be onomastic and our methods etch out the contours of such onomastic understanding. For this reason, we must, on the one hand, focus more on name content than on name meaning, and, on the other, progress beyond the study of individual names to that of name types, name clusters, name fields, name constellations. Names, as products of the linguistic gesture of identifying reference, only make sense, only have meaning, if you will, in relation to other names. Identity exists only in contrast, in conflict and in tension, and it is one of the essential tasks of the speech act of naming to create such contrasting isolating identities, thus giving the confusing world out there a structure which makes it possible for us to come to terms with it and to survive in it. Names help to turn, both in a geographical and in a social sense, a bewildering, chaotic, threatening wilderness into a recognizable, thinkable, knowable landscape, into a world of reassuring shelter, into a familiar habitat.

If one accepts these premises, then onomastics, the study of names of any kind, is, on its most profound level, to be understood as a discipline which engages in the exploration of the landscape of the human psyche and which in the course of that exploration can burst all those tight chains by which it has in the past been fettered to the rock of mere lexicography. The study of an independent, functional onomasticon, or a vocabulary of names, in this way gains dimensions and perspectives which it would be denied if it were to

be seen only as an integral part, or suspect extension, of a lexicon, or a vocabulary of words.

It seems to me that, in this respect, the nomenclature of a novel, for example, once recognized as an onomasticon, limited and defined by the covers of the published book, but not only by them, offers immediate possibilities of analysis and evaluation which are only made accessible after laborious preparatory work, if at all, in the much more diffuse and much less controllable nomenclature of the non-literary world. In my intellectual love affair with literary onomastics I have, for that reason, asked over and again new questions about the structure and function of the name inventories in certain literary works, especially in the great novels of the most important English-speaking authors of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Since, in such fictitious realities the special function of names as symbols, as metaphors, as linguistic icons (Nicolaisen 1974: 104—10) is more central than anywhere else, successful naming — not just competent but felicitous naming — is an essential ingredient of literary craftmanship, is, however, not always transparent and well defined enough in order to avoid misunderstandings in literary interpretation. The question as what authors realy have in mind when they choose certain names and place them among other names, is not easily answered, often even not by questioning the authors themselves, and certainly not through superficial linguistic etymological considerations alone.

There are, however, some exceptions in this regard which enable us to gain access to an author as a name giver and to glance, so to speak, into the workshop of *homo faber*, or maybe even *homo ludens*, as *homo nominans*. That is the case in those narrative situations in which *fictitious* characters are thrust into the role of namers and, when confronted with such a task for which they are usually ill-equipped and prepared, vicariously act out the author's ideas and principles regarding the manner in which apparently names are created. Such situations occur particularly often and necessarily in stories which have as their theme sudden shipwreck and the subsequent demanding life on a lonely island — the well known *Robinsonaden*, as they are called in German (Nicolaisen 1978a: 110—51; 1981: 1—9).

Paradoxically, the eponymous hero of such narratives, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, himself, is not particularly effective in this respect, setting no noteworthy example at which later castaways, actual or fictitious, nor we the readers, can orient ourselves (Defoe 1719). *Robinson* has not only difficulties of an onomastic nature but is equally unsuccessful materially and lexically in coping with his new environment. Before the foundered ship sinks he salvages many serviceable goods in several perilous trips. These he piles up on the beach but only uses a small fraction of them during his quarter of a

century on the island. His lexical troubles are not unrelated. Unable to extend the semantic range of certain words and unwilling to do so for others, he fails to build their connotative potentials constructively into the mastering of his new, capriciously acquired environment and thus cannot redefine his inherited vocabulary well enough to shape his solitary life satisfactorily. He is therefore compelled to withdraw behind an artificial wall of his own making which also becomes his onomastic boundary insofar as the rest of the island remains toponymically anonymous and thus an unstructured, always threatening wilderness, demanding constant distrust and caution. Except for the single, unrepeated attempt to give his island a name in his diary — *Island of Despair* — he only once names something, a human being, i.e. *Friday*, and it is typical that his loneliness is not diminished through this solitary act of naming; for at the same time he orders the perplexed fugitive to call him *Master* ("I likewise taught him to say Master, and let him know, that was to be my name") (Defoe 1719: 206). Consequently, there are now two solitary persons isolated side by side, each without his own name, bereft of his identity, on a nameless island. In ironic mockery of true communication, it is the parrot which is taught to pronounce its own name, *Poll*, and which has the imitating ability and permission to address its owner as "Poor Robinson Crusoe", in echoing externalization of the namebearer's self-pity. All in all, *Robinson* is not a smart onomastic artisan.

In contrast to the onomastically fumbling, almost helpless Crusoe, the shipwrecked group in *The Swiss Family Robinson* shows an astonishing ability to convert the dangerous island wilderness, through acts of naming, into a lifesustaining, friendly landscape (Wyss 1812—13). In a kind of family council they decide one Sunday afternoon, soon after their unexpected and disconcerting arrival, "to give proper names to our home and to the different areas of this country with which we have so far become acquainted" (Wyss 1812—13: Chapter II). For them, the naming of places is thus a deliberate, democratic, principled act, essential to felicitous communication and precise denotative reference. By relying almost solely on general descriptions and selective memories of significant events during their short stay on the island so far, they give names such as *Rettungsbucht, Zeltheim, Haiinsel, Walfischinsel, Flamantsumpf, Falkenhorst, Schakalbach, Vorgebirge der betrogenen Hoffnung*, and *Warte*, which are immediately put to use with great eagerness, and impose a basic structure on the new landscape, thus first creating and later repeatedly reconfirming it. Their coinages are practically all compound names whose generics — *Bucht, Heim, Insel, Sumpf*, etc. — represent taxonomically the most general terms in the topographic sector of the lexicon[3]. As happens so frequently in literary works, the category of incident names is, in this narrative, proportionately much larger than would be the case in the non-literary world where it plays an important role in the secondary, folk-etymological explanation or re-creation of names, but is only minimally productive in their initial creation.

From the large number of *Robinsonaden* — Jules Verne's *The Mysterious Island* (1874), James Fenimore Cooper's *The Crater* (1847), Captain Marryat's *Masterman Ready* (1854), William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954), or even Johann Gottfried Schnabel's *Insel Felsenburg* (1732) — I only want to single out briefly a third, R. M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1858). His three shipwrecked lads — the onomastic precursors of Golding's island boys — are also namers but are very restrained in their onomastic actions because they are reported to have named only six locations, each of which is selectively highlighting an unusual event in their lives on the coral island. These few names, as toponymic reference to the extraordinary, the strange, the fantastic in their involuntary adventures, draw the map of their own personal lives and not anybody else's, nor a map of general validity and knowability. They are, in this respect, not unlike the Yurok Indians in Northern California whose "whole environment", according to Erikson (1945: 331), "exists only insofar as human history has named certain locations". This is no voluntary or deliberate restraint but an onomastic gesture reflecting a certain world view in which landscape and life merge and become the same. Place names of any kind are in an environment, thus perceived and thus shaped, the footprints of human history, as well as symbols of inner concerns projected into the outer world; they are, in every sense of that word, existential and create literally *Lebensraum*, living space. That is where their essential semantics and etymology lie, in other words, their whole content. There simply are no other kinds of names in a world thus viewed, its onomasticon is complete, and R. M. Ballantyne's youthful islanders know this instinctively.

Naturally, the general principles just outlined apply to most other works of literature also, except that one does not usually get the impression of the same burning necessity, as in the *Robinsonaden*, which forces inexperienced and unprepared namers to name quickly and strategically or perish perplexed and overwhelmed in a nameless wilderness. Thomas Hardy's *Wessex* (Nicolaisen 1975: 58—82), for example, and Anthony Trollope's *Barsetshire* (Nicolaisen 1976: 1—21), althouth not found on any map of nineteenth-century England, persuade as geographical entities not least through their topographical names which, on the one hand, bound them against the non-literary world, and, on the other, supply plausible links with it; one can travel from *Casterbridge*

[3] The history of the English translations or adaptations of *Der schweizerische Robinson* is so chequered and complex that I am quoting the original German names and generics to make my point. A study of their English equivalents would make an interesting study in the translatability of names.

(Hardy 1886) or *Barchester* (Trollope 1855—67) to London or to South Carolina. The fictitious reality of these counties is so little in doubt that, for example, Angela Thirkell's attempt to resurrect Trollope's *Barsetshire* of the mid-nineteenth century met with instant success a hundred years later and produced a voluminous series of topical novels (Thirkell 1933—61), undoubtedly also through her deft re-use and amplification of Trollope's place names. William Golding, too, in his novel *The Pyramid* (1967), can, without offering any explanation to the astonished reader, let the inhabitants of his small town of *Stilbourne* take the bus to *Barchester* in order to participate in a choir rehearsal or to catch a train at the station, or on other occasions, allow them to travel to *Oxford*. There is, it seems, a map of literary reality that is neither more nor less fictive than the maps of the non-literary world, and that sometimes achieves a degree of reality which, because of its linguistic condensation and the intellectual intensity behind it, is, or at least appears to be, more convincing than the not so obviously structured actual world in which we live.

Such dual mapping becomes problematical, hovever, if one takes both maps, the imaginary and the real, and tries to lay them on top of one another in search of dual identities, claiming, for instance, that Hardy's *Casterbridge* is identical with Dorchester, or Trollope's *Barchester* with Salisbury, or George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1872) with Coventry, or Mrs. Gaskell's *Cranford* (1853) with Knutsford (Nicolaisen 1978b). Such quests for congruity, positing identification through subsequent recognition justifiedly raise questions regarding the name as a marker of identity and the scope and range of its content, a literary problem on which writers like Hardy have commented with the conviction of experienced practitioners of the art. He refutes firmly the supposition that the town of *Christminster* in his novel *Jude the Obscure* (1896) is Oxford and contends strongly that this place only exists within the novel in question; *Christminster*, he insists, might be any old-fashioned university city in the decade 1860—1870. With a delightful touch of irony he rebukes those literary sleuths who make it their business to look for clues which will permit them to "recognize" counterparts of the places of fiction in the real world. In his *Preface* to the 1920 edition of his novel *The Woodlanders* (1887) he writes tongue-in-cheek:

> I have been honoured by so many inquiries for the true name and exact locality of the hamlet 'Little Hintock', in which the greater part of the action of this story goes on, that I may as well confess here once and for all that I do not know myself where that hamlet is more precisely than as explained above and in the pages of this narrative. To oblige readers I once spent several hours on a bicycle with a friend in a serious attempt to discover the real spot; but the search ended in failure: though tourists assure me positively that they have found it without trouble, and that it answers in every particular to the description given in this volume".
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> (Hardy 1912: VI—VII)

It would be difficult to convey more delightfully the artist's conviction that the process of recognition, usually so closely linked with the phenomenon of identity, is out of place here because literary cartography is simply not congruent or compatible with the cartography of the non-literary world, and that attempts at equating onomastic items in those two worlds are consequently bound to fail. There are no toponymic *romans-á-clef*, and the absurdity of the view which claims that they do exist, is exposed in the conjecture that both Trollope's *Barchester* and Hardy's *Melchester* are identical with the English cathedral town of Salisbury: for *Barchester* is undoubtedly not identical with *Melchester*. The same applies to names which are indeed to be found in an atlas of England; for Trollope's *Oxford* is also not Hardy's *Oxford*, and Trollope's *London* and Hardy's *London* not only differ in content from each other but also from Dickens' *London*, and of course from the many *Londons* which the various readers bring to the novels in question. Onomastic synonymity is an even less tenable notice than its lexical counterpart.

In many respects, authors would therefore be well advised to underpin their fictive geographical realities reaffirmingly through fictive place names, since they, the authors, have much greater control over the content of these names than over that of actual names, to which the reader potentially brings images, associations and thoughts which not only do not correspond to the author's images, associations and thoughts, but are also likely to distort them or interfere with them. In this sense, too, then, there is no semantic congruity of names, because of their aimed, deictic, denotative function which distinguishes them so clearly from the connotative functional breadth and looseness of words. Names, as we know, single out, exclude; words group, include.

Within a literary work it is, on the other hand, necessary — unless special effects are intended — to keep identities intact and therefore also to achieve onomastic congruity, not only in order to save both reader and characters from confusion and dismay. The question "What is Your Name?" and the degree of willingness with which it is answered, i.e. with which one is ready to make oneself accessible to a stranger, are for these reasons handled by most authors with great care and sensitivity. Anonymity can, like the closed vizer of an unknown or unrecognized medieval knight (as, for instance, in Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1819)), serve as a name in this respect but as a name the content of which remains dark and opaque, inviting hope, fear, distance, gossip, and under certain circumstances charity, rather than respectable trust, ingrained antipathy, or some other transparent inter-personal relationship (Nicolaisen 1979b: 29—39; 1980: 137—49). We *are* our names, and anonymity must not be understood as namelessness in this context, but perhaps rather as a kind of name change which does not so much create a new identity as lead into a temporary onomastic masquerade during which names do not function as labels or public signs but as temporary masks and illusions.

In the end, one has to know the right name so that one can place one's own name, one's own identity, in an appropriate relation to that other name, that other identity. It cannot be emphasized often and strongly enough that names really come into their own only in the field of tension of identities.

But what does the toponymy of a literary landscape look like that is not defined by the framing, bounding coastal strip of a small island and the involuntary experience of solitary castaways? From the large number of English novels interrogated (Nicolaisen: 1979a: 75–104), let me present two in this context — George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1872) and Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey* (1847). In both novels — and this is equally true of many others — there are no place names which do not have something to do with, or are not lingering symbols of, actions, experiences and incidents somehow involving one or more of the characters. There are therefore no superfluous names; there is no background toponymy, no nomenclature which is not directly or indirectly relevant. There is no name to spare in the sense in which hundreds of names exist round about us in the non-literary landscape of which we know only by hearsay and without personal involvement. In *Middlemarch*, the names mentioned are understandably in the first place intended to create a topography, geographical space, a feeling for landscape; one drives by carriage, for instance, the five miles to *Lowick* from *Tipton* where Dorothea and Celia Brooks have lived so far at their uncle's. Astonishingly, this is, however, not the main function of these names. As settlement names they communicate primarily an impression of populated habitat, of home, of space which has been adapted to serve human needs and which is used accordingly. Such names place people and indicate human constellations. They are obviously without content unless they symbolize social and personal relationships. The journey from *Tipton* to *Lowick* is consequently much more than a movement through geographical space, and the measurable five miles, the outer distance, which is covered in its course, foreground a much more important inner distance, much less measurable, a loss of innocence, deliberate and intentional motion from sensitive, avunrular shelter to emotional rawness superficially covered by societally acceptable courtesy. *Tipton* is where Dorothea lived as Mr. Brook's niece — *Lowick* is where she is to reside as Mr. Casaubon's wife. The two place names are so intricately knit into the web of human affairs, including their etymological contrast of *Tip*-ton and *Low*-ick, that the argument could be made that they would not exist without the people concerned.

Similarly, *Stone Court* has no content without its role as the residence, first of old Peter Featherstone and then of young Fred Vincy and Mary Garth. *Lowick Gate* contains "the handsome house" in which Dr. Lydgate and his wife Rosamund reside, and "The Shrubs" as a house name represents Banker Bulstrode and his endeavors of influencing Middlemarch society. The *Chalky Flats* are inhabited by Featherstone's poor and greedy relatives. *Houndsley* is created so that Fred Vincy might be cheated out of a horse; *Freeman's End* allows a brief encounter to take place between Mr. *Brooke*, the landlord, and Mr. *Dagley*, a small farmer, an encounter in which Mr. *Brooke* has the novel experience of being insulted for the first time on his own lands; *Frick* makes a brief appearance as a place where the building of the railway is actively resisted; *Riverston* seems to lie mainly at the other end of the "Riverston coach" and to be a place where well-to-do Middlemarchers build superior residence; *Ilseley*, ten miles from Middlemarch, is convincingly distant so that Mr. Bulstrode can offer to conduct the menacing, blackmailing Raffles to it, "either to take a railway or to await a coach"; and so on.

Middlemarch is therefore not without its surrounding countryside; the small number of places mentioned — barely a dozen — accomplishes its visible, tangible establishment with a minimum of effort, hinting at it rather than substantiating it, but doing so with so much conviction that one suspects behind them a large number of other names and a densely settled cultural landscape. *Middlemarch* itself derives its presence from similar indirect devices. The name itself is used most frequently as an attributive noun in connection with its young people, it families, its doctors, its institutions, its trade, its politics, its mortality, its goods and several other *Middlemarch* characteristics and habits. Although in some instances the mention of *Middlemarch* gossip, newspapers or elections indicates no more than a particular Middlemarch variety of a phenomenon also found elsewhere, other examples clearly point to special *Middlemarch* attitudes, practices and perceptions and to the implied presence of a homogeneous society bound together by certain unifying principles derived from the fact that this is Middlemarch and not some other place.

This impression of local identity, of local spirit, is strengthened through the remarkably effective use of another place name — *Brassing* — which is clearly intended to be a contrast to Middlemarch and to condense, as a toponymic metaphor, the notion of "non-Middlemarch". This name is mentioned twenty-one times but each occurrence is so subtly hidden, so seemingly accidental, so reticent, as to make the name almost invisible. Only a complete list of the quotations in which the name *Brassing* is to be found draws attention to the pattern of its use and then to its significant function; at election time, a speaker comes from *Brassing*; a doctor accompanies a patient to *Brassing*; a banker returns from *Brassing*; Dr. Lydgate buys a dinner-service in *Brassing*; the new editor of the *Middlemarch* "Pioneer" has an ambitious dream to make his paper "celebrated as far as Brassing"; and so on, and so on. Nobody is ever in *Brassing* for any length of time. *Middlemarch* people are either on their way to *Brassing* or on the journey back from it. Letters and bills come from *Brassing*, coaches go to *Brassing*, there are rumors about *Brassing*, and the inclusion of *Brassing* in the circulation of a Middlemarch

newspaper is considered a publishing success. *Brassing* seems to be larger than Middlemarch, seems to have more prestige, has a railway link, can influence *Middlemarch* elections or individuals through promises or threats. It is, it seems, "the other place", the non-Middlemarch *par excellence*, and is, in addition, a handy device for the author to remove a doctor or a banker from his house or from the *Middlemarch* scene when unwelcome visitors are coming or a clandestine plot is to be hatched: "He was away on business to Brassing!" From a structural point of view, *Brassing* is the toponymic counterweight to *Middlemarch* and, through its strategic opposition, in a certain sense makes *Middlemarch* possible, aids in the definition and honing of its identity. It would be profitable to examine what I like to call the "Brassing Factor" in other novels as well.

If, then, we were to draw a place-name map of the literary landscape of *Middlemarch*, it would contain fifteen names within the town, another fifteen (with derivatives) in an orbit of ten to fifteen miles, all situated within the county of *Loamshire*. Beyond the county boundary, there would be a sprinkling of English place names including *Dancaster*, *Hereford*, *London*, *Exter*, *Leeds*, *Manchester*, *Finsbury*, *Highbury*, *Cheltenham*, and *Yorkshire*, and outside England *Edinburgh*, *Lausanne*, *Freiberg*, *Rome*, *Paris*, as well as *Norfolk Island* and *Botany Bay*. Nobody could call this a world-open map; "regional" might be a better epithet for it. Because of the virtual absence of names of natural features, it also clearly depicts a cultural and social rather than a geographical landscape, pinpointing events and human configurations rather than topographic evidence.

If the toponymic harvest in such a weighty novel as George Elliot's *Middlemarch* is surprisingly meagre, we have to be content with even less in works like Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey* (1847). One has the impression that the toponymic tactics employed in this novel — there are only four full names — are more intended to present disguises which prevent recognition rather than to offer identities. "... shielded by my own obscurity, and by a lapse of years, and a *few fictitious names*, I do not fear to venture, and will candidly lay before you the public what I would not disclose to the most intimate friend", says her first-person narrator (Brontë 1847: 1). Thus we have *Wellwood House* where Agnes spends an unhappy time as governess to the Bloomfield children; *Horton Lodge* which witnesses her second, more mature venture at the Murrays'; *Ashby Park*, the residence of Rosalie Murray after her marriage to Sir Thomas Ashby; and *Moss-lane*, in the vicinity of Horton, place of secret assignations and of private hopes and intrigues. Onomastic disguises are, however, even more effective and more tantalizing when they consist of nothing but an initial, especially when even the initial is false. There is *O-*, for example, "a large town and not a manufacturing district" near which Horton Lodge is situated and through which one has to pass on the way to the Murrays. Then there is *A-*,

"a fashionable watering place" where Agnes' mother opens her school after her husband's death, and *F-*, "a village about two miles distant from *A-*', where the Rev. Edward Weston is vicar. The few clues which we are given for any of these names would not allow identification, and the masquerade of initials is therefore never endangered. Beyond them there is, as a third onomastic disguise, one anonym which is represented in the text as a dash, audibly as a blank. This is the ultimate in obscurity, and yet it would be unreasonable to deny that anonymity is also a form of a name. Naturally, both *acronyms* (names represented by initials only) and *anonyms* (names represented by a dash) exclude etymology but their name content can paradoxically be richer and more extensive then that of names presented in full.

The measurable and measured seventy miles from "blank" to *O-*, and the ten miles from Horton Lodge to Ashby Park again foreground inner distances, the first the distance between homely shelter and loving protection and the harsh world of the young working woman, the second the distance between Rosalie Murray and Rosalie Ashby, between maidenhood and another loss of innocence. Once *Rome* is mentioned as a place visited by Rosalie on her honeymoon, and once *Port Nelson* in New Zealand is conjured up as the diapodic symbol of extreme distance and otherness; otherwise the world of *Agnes Grey*, as mapped out in its few toponyms, acronyms and anonyms, is a world to which one has little access toponymically and one in which the nameless and the unsaid are of astonishing importance. It is a secretive world rather than a secret one.

Even on the basis of this small sample what, then, is the toponymy of the literary landscape, at least as we find it in some nineteenth-century English regional novels? It is a place nomenclature (by which I mean a structured name inventory, not a name thicket but rather a name garden or a name park). It is a place nomenclature which records and locates, which responds to the environment in traditional human fashion, making habitation out of wilderness through human experience. It is never, not even in Hardy, mere background symbolism, designed to create an atmosphere; nor does it give us a well structured landscape. Rather it relates to plot and theme and to the characters caught up in both. It clarifies social and personal relationships, it provides inner space through the outward patterning of localities. On the whole, its landscape is social rather than topographical. It allows outlets and otherness — "the *Brassing* factor"; it accounts for the origin of the stranger; it juxtaposes and compares; it contrasts and parallels; it forms deliberate constellations, supplies discernible texture. Above all, it allows the author to use it iconically, to fill it with his or her own content, to be generous or miserly in the provision of knowability, of onomastic meaning. One might even venture to say that such nomenclatures, when thoroughly and properly investigated, may lay bare the inner structure of a literary work as never

before and that through such investigations we get a glimpse of *homo nominans* at work, ably supported by *homo cogitans*, *homo faber* and *homo ludens*, but that would be too glib and too smug a conclusion.

I therefore want to finish on a different note, a note both sobering and exhilarating. From time to time — and the quotation from Hardy's *The Woodlanders* was a good example — I have had the pleasure of discovering in the course of my reading that the great creative authors whom we try to analyze and interpret are in some disconcerting way ahead of us in the onomastic game and know not only their craft but also the whole business of names much better than we, their interpreters, do.

In order to illustrate this point let me give you, in conclusion, two examples which delighted me when I first came across them and which I have savored ever since. In the first chapter of his novel *Die Geschwister von Neapol*, translated into English as *The Pascarella Family*, the German novelist Franz Werfel introduces the reader to the several children of the family portrayed by commenting on their names and personalities:

> It is sometimes claimed that the name of a person stands in profound relationship to his nature. Maybe this is mere thought play, maybe such an inter-penetration of person and designation really happens—in the case of the brothers and sisters Pascarella at least the names were quite well suited to their bearers. Iride had the glistening and the unreliability of the rainbow, Lauro the gentleness and the dark stillness of the laurel. And Gracia was well derivable from the graces or from grace. But here this rash allegory has already come to an end. For, even with the best will in the world it is not possible to bring the other three into harmony with their names, without torturous constructions. Ruggiero, the youngest and liveliest brother, who attended commercial school, bore at least a nickname, "Orso", bear, through which his astonishing physical powers and their clumsy application found expression. But after what ministering and humble saint would Annunziata have to be called, since she had to carry the whole burden of the order imposed by her father? As the eldest, she was responsible for the running of the household. But not only that. As she had overtaken the others by far in years, her own path seemed to be already on the decline, without fulfillment. For some months her face had taken on a repellent pallor and leaness. If Placido had indeed been named after the Roman general Placidus, then the theory of the kinship between name and character stands on very shaky foundations.[4] (Werfel 1931 : 10).

Would it be fair to say that Werfel might well have smiled at that ubiquitous clan of scholars who claim, on the basis of plausible examples, that the names which autor X gives to his characters are "appropriate" and that such names are an "integral" part of his art? Is there not delectable irony in discovering the analyser analyzed and the interpreter interpreted and perhaps proved smilingly just a little off the right track?

The other example comes from Faulkner's *Light in August* and is more

[4] Since it has proved impossible for me to gain access to the English version, I am offering here my own translation of this passage.

than just knowing comment on our onomastic endeavor; it provides one of its very foundations:

> The newcomer turned without a word. The others watched him go down to the sawdust pile and vanish and reappear with a shovel and go to work. The foreman and the superintendent were talking at the door. They parted and the foreman returned. 'His name is Christmas', he said.
>
> 'His name is what?' one said.
>
> 'Christmas'.
>
> 'Is he a foreigner?'
>
> 'Did you ever hear of a white man named Christmas?' the foreman said.
>
> 'I never heard of nobody a-tall named it', the other said.
>
> And that was the first time Byron remembered that he had ever thought how a man's name, which is supposed to be just the sound for who he is, can be somehow an augur of what he will do, if other men can only read the meaning in time. It seemed to him that none of them had looked especially at the stranger until heard his name. But as soon as they heard it, it was as though there was something in the sound of it that was trying to tell them what to expect; that he carried with him his own inescapable warning, like a flower its scent or a rattlesnake its rattle. Only none of them had sense enough to recognize it. They just thought that he was a foreigner. . ." (Faulkner 1932 : 26—27)

Not "just the sound for who he is", not just a name as identification, then, but carrying its very essence "like a flower its scent or a rattlesnake it rattle". Can any of us claim that a lifetime of research could have come up with a more convincing definition of what a name is, and how it is omen and portent as well as label? That is why, although I fully support and am personally committed to, recent demands for greater rigor in the discipline of onomastics, for higher standards, for more articulated theory, and for a satisfactory methodology, I would also just as strongly urge greater sensitivity, and more, well, more love, certainly at least more sympathy and more understanding, even more vulnerability, so that we will no longer be smugly content with dissecting the names we study and with exposing them to the cold glare of the arc-lamps of science and to the invasion of the microscope, but that sometimes we will cup our hands around them to enjoy their beauty and their fragrance, or beat them with a stick to eliminate their serpentine hurt or venom. For names are that, too, aren't they, promise and threat, caress and bruise, delight and dismay, healing and destruction.

Perhaps, for me, that is the most important reason why I study names in literature, and why I wanted to talk to you about my scholarly infatuation (Nicolaisen 1982: 19—20).

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