



The Significance of Name-Days in the Literature of German Romanticism Using the Example of E. T. A. Hoffmann

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The question of names is a question of identity: “As our names become extinct, so fades our memory”¹ (W i r d a 1800, VI). This conclusion seems simple, and it applies to real life as well as to fictitious characters. Human beings especially rely on names because they represent our identities in our social lives. Consequently, proper names are a very important component of our lives and an individual expression of personality.

Literary name-giving is a specific feature insofar as it is not a real but a fictitious process of name-giving, and the way names are chosen is necessarily quite different from a couple’s naming of their children. Every author must take care in choosing appropriate names because they must fit within the literary work’s context and must refer to the described characters. The choice of names happens, of course, not by accident; rather, it corresponds to the respective profiles of their characters.

In his study about names in narration, Dieter Lamping distinguished the following functions of poetical name-giving: identification, illusionizing, characterizing, accentuation, and perspectivizing. Identification, as the “most common function of the name in narration” (L a m p i n g 1983, 21), basically allows a “distinction” as well as a “recognition” of a character. Illusionizing, however, is aimed to make characters and plot become true – such as, for example, in the use of names of historical persons. Characterizing allocates a “functional distinctiveness” (Ibid., 41) to a figure by naming it. Names of this category can be self-documenting, vocal, prefigured, descriptive or symbolic. An accentuated name can grab the reader’s attention if the character’s identity is knowingly left undetermined. Finally, perspectivizing allows the expression of sympathy or antipathy – for example, if a single character is named differently by varied figures.

Literary name-giving works differently in each epoch and it depends on socio-political, cultural-aesthetic and anthropological factors. Topics, motives and

¹ „Erlöschet unser Name, so verschwindet auch unser Andenken“. (All quotations are translated from German sources by D. B.)

a modified philosophy of life will be anticipated by new ages, and, of course, the process of naming is part of this ideological change: “The preferred, frequently affected and strange-ringing names like Horribilicribrifax or Daradiridatumdarides (Gryphius), have been substituted by humorous names like Schelmuffsky (Reuter) in the 17th century, by realistic ringing and also talking names like Wilhelm Meister (Goethe) in the 18th century, whose literal meaning were directly comprehensible”² (Ibid.).

Romantic writers in particular are very inventive in creating names. Onomatopoeic or classifying names, which relate their character to a particular religious, national or social group, are typical for romantic name-giving. A constitutive feature of romantic characters is their singularity. Imaginary names, which are usually a sign of such individuality, are based on phonetic and formal connotations. Jean Paul, one of the most creative inventors of names in German literature, has remarked on their outstanding importance in his own works.

The impression of an euphonic name as well as a cacophonous name <...> will even be doubled, if the person acts according to the name that he is called. <...> If I immediately offer invaluable names to the world with a certain waste, whereto, as like as the virtues, nothing more has to be invented as the characters – because I have in my future biographies heroes and heroines enough, who are not able to exist without their exquisite names –: for that reason <...> I am not a bit disposed, to cede one of them to present novel writers, but herewith I denounce everyone as a namethief who is borrowing one name used in this letter or in Wiarda for his miserable characters and, of course, wear them out by use in this way, so after that my characters are not willing to bear this name just as little as an interleaved rummage-coat³ (J e a n P a u l, 138f.).

It is known that Jean Paul conscientiously collected his names for literary usage in an extended list, which even today has yet to be published.⁴ Eduard Berend,

² „Die bevorzugten, oft gekünstelten und fremdklingenden Namen, wie Horribilicribrifax oder Daradiridatumdarides (Gryphius), wurden im Laufe des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts mit humorvollen Namen, wie Schelmuffsky (Reuter), später im achtzehnten Jahrhundert mit realistisch klingenden, oft auch redenden Namen, wie Wilhelm Meister (Goethe), deren wörtliche Bedeutung unmittelbar verständlich waren, ersetzt.“

³ „Der Eindruck eines wohlklingenden Namen, so wie eines mistönigen <...> wird gar verdoppelt, wenn der Mensch so handelt, wie er heißt. <...> Ob ich gleich hier der Welt unbezahlbare Namen, wozu sie wie zu Tugenden nichts zu erfinden braucht als die Träger, mit einer gewissen Verschwendung anbiete – da ich in meinen künftigen Biographien Helden und Heldinnen genug habe, welche ohne die köstlichsten Namen gar nicht existieren können –: so bin ich doch, oder eben darum, nicht im Geringsten gesonnen, auch nur einen davon an die zeitigen Romanschreiber abzustehen, sondern ich erkläre hiermit öffentlich jeden für einen Namendieb, der irgend einen in diesem Briefe oder auch im Wiarda für seine erbärmlichen Helden abborgt und ihn dadurch natürlich so abnutzt, daß ihn nachher die meinigen so wenig tragen wollen als einen durchschossenen Trödel-Mantel.“

⁴ Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz: Faszikel X/17, Studier-Reglement, pages 36r–62r.

the leading 20th-century Jean Paul specialist, estimated the amount of the items at about 2000 toponyms and personal names. Jean Paul aligns them systematically on 49 handwritten pages and differentiates between “good” and “evil” names. Berend accentuates the writer’s particular serendipity for names, “which seems to be predestined for poetic application by a characteristic tone” because “the list anticipates some names which have been used by later writers” (Berend 1942, 832). Even such an important name as E. T. A. Hoffmann’s alter-ego-character Johannes Kreisler is mentioned there.

Also, Clemens Brentano’s literary name-giving relies in high degrees on aural connotations. The names of the five sons of schoolmaster Klopstock, for example, are considered as a paradigm of noisy, onomatopoeic names. “The names imitate the sounds that are typical for the profession of each figure and characterise in this way: Gripsgraps as a thief, Piffpaff as a hunter, Pinkepank as a pharmacist, Pitschpatsch as a ferryman, and Trilltrall as a singer” (Lamping 1983, 44). Also some of his talking names – King Eifrasius⁵, a character of the fairy “Gockel, Hinkel und Gackeleia”, for example – are built according to this onomatopoeic principle.

And there are also distinctive name features concerning romantic art’s enthusiasm. The ‘aesthetics of art’, which became manifest in literature as well as in painting and music, is an allegory of a search for oneself. Novalis’ postulate “Inwards leads the mysterious way. Within us or nowhere is eternity with its worlds, the past and future” (Novalis, 419), is picked up by later romantic writers and becomes a concept of the artist, who is confronted with himself in this intrinsic way. Especially connotations of names, which refer to the described art, are of particular importance.

There are plenty of possibilities of literary name-giving. Name-days, which trace back to Christian traditions, martyrs and saints, are of particular interest in German romanticism and especially in E. T. A. Hoffmann’s works because of their ability to establish an equivocal relationship between the real and the fantastic world. Hence in Hoffmann’s works name-days are frequently used. They fulfil multiple functions: first of all, they link the occurrence to a specific point in time. Therefore, name-days are part of the narration’s pretended authenticity. On the other hand, they relate the storyline directly to the characters, which must seem mysterious to the reader. Monk Medardus, the protagonist of “The Devil’s Elixirs” (1815), for example, achieves his name because of a vision his mother once had. On “Medardus Day” she saw him in the “habit of a Capuchin” (DKV 2.2, 31). Since Holy Medardus is applied for a symbol of remorseful penitence and reversal (already in Dolz 1825, 93), there is a clear relationship between name-giving and life mission – the expiation of the familial guilt. But it is also mysterious, because his fate is not accidental but predestined by an invisible lordship. Something similar happens on “Saint Anthony’s Day”. Medardus, comparing himself in his hubris

⁵ Eifrasius is a latinized compositum which includes the association of someone who gorges eggs.

to tempted Anthony, comes to his physical limitations in his homily and faints. This incident is at the same time the initiation of Medardus' provocation and fight against the devil. Hence the name-day relates the saint (Anthony's temptation) and the novel's character because the monk, who identifies himself as "Saint Anthony", is tested and tempted in many different ways (*DKV* 2.2, 39ff.).

In the frame conversation of the Serapion Brothers, the character of Holy Serapion is mystified in a similar way and, because of his name-day, he is chosen as the narrator-community's patron:

Just look here, my Cyprianus, look once again in this magnificent book full of incontrovertible trueness, in this grand calendar. On November 14th indeed you can find the disdainful name Levin, but throw a glance at the Catholic column! It is written in red letters: Serapion, martyr! – Thus on the day of the Saint he believed himself to be, your Serapion died! Today is Serapion's Day! – Come on! – I empty this glass to the anchorite Serapions' memory: do likewise, my friends!⁶ (A u f b a u 1994, 63ff.)

Moreover, that history of origins has its correspondence in real life. The friends Hoffmann, Hitzig, Koreff, Fouqué, Chamisso and Contessa met on October 12th in 1814 for a literary evening. As they were looking for a name for their symbolic club, Hoffmann's wife, Michalina, recommended the patron saint of this particular day. So they first founded the Seraphin-Fraternity, which became – according to the day Chamisso returned from his journey around the world – the Serapion's Brothers a few weeks later. This shows the importance of name-days and their meaning in reality concerning romantic writer's life and literature, and it also exemplifies Hoffmann's literary paradigm of a dualistic world. Reality and Fantasy are closely connected to each other like two sides of a sheet of paper.

Another example is the name-day of Hoffmann's beloved pupil musician Julia Mark, a niece of the famous Doctor Adalbert Friedrich Marcus and great aunt of the expressionist painter Franz Marc. Julia's name is enmeshed in the storyline of "Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr" (1820). Although it seems to be about the name celebration of the princess, master Abraham speaks about a "dark mystery" that is until now kept secret from the main character, Johannes Kreisler: "Come to know, Johannes, I have looked deeply inside you and recognized the dangerous, threatening secret which rests therein <...>. For that reason I concealed carefully from you what I have seen <...>. Know, Johannes, the princess' name-day correla-

⁶ „Aber schaue her, o mein Cyprianus, schaue nochmals in dies herrliche Werk voll unumstößlicher Wahrheit, in diesen sehr stattlichen Hauskalender. Bei dem vierzehnten November findest du zwar den schnöden Namen *Levin* verzeichnet, aber werfe deinen Blick in diese katholische Kolonne! – Da steht mit roten Buchstaben: *Serapion*, Märtyrer! – Also an dem Tage des Heiligen, für den er sich selbst hielt, starb dein Serapion! Heute ist Serapionstag! – Auf! – ich leere dieses Glas zum Gedächtnis des Einsiedlers Serapion: tut, meine Freunde, desgleichen!“

tes with Julia's name-day <...>⁷ (DKV 5, 26). The name Julia is scattered all over Hoffmann's works and is used frequently and in different ways. Another relationship between real world and fiction is based on the names in his most famous modern fairytale, "The Golden Pot" (1813). It is surprising that this name is not once mentioned in the text, for it is a significant part of Hoffmann's name-giving. The main character's beautiful and dreamy name is Anselmus. And it is no accident that the patron's day is March 18th, the birthday of Julia Mark. And it is also no accident that the contract with Hoffmann's publisher Kunz concerning the publication of the fairytale closed on March 18th, as well. Hence there is an invisible but deep connection between Anselmus, Julia and the writer. It is at least a literary way of approaching the unreachable Julia in real life and it points out that reality and fiction are intrinsically tied to each other.

Sometimes name-days appear without concrete dependencies on literary characters. But they also play a decisive role for the storyline. St. John's Day, for example, mentioned in Hoffmann's stories "The Errors" (1821) and "The Mines of Falun" (1819), is the day of midsummer and a symbol of starting anew with the aid of a cathartic fire. This day is already marked in Novalis' "Henry von Ofterdingen" as a turn in the protagonist's life and the initiation of his self-awareness. In "The Mines of Falun", for example, the former sailor Elis Fröbom becomes a miner and enters a mine full of gemstones. According to a story first told by Gotthilf Heinrich Schubert in 1808, he doesn't come back alive because he is not able to resist the temptation of prosperity. St. John's Day is Elis Fröbom's turning point. It is the day he should marry his fiancée, Ulla, and it is also the day of his death in the deep while looking for a red gem. Fifty years later – people don't know what happened before – Ulla is only known as peculiar "Johannismütterchen" (St. John's Day Gammer). Every year on St. John's Day she comes back to the mine's entrance, where Elis went in, crying and complaining.

"On St. Lawrence Day", it is said in "Little Zaches, Called Cinnobar" (1819), "the boy turned three and a half years" (DKV 3, 533f. Compare Knauer 1995, 160). It is the day of the martyr Lawrence, a third-century Roman deacon who was responsible for social work. And he also declared the municipal's poor and ill as a treasure of the church. The same does the merciful fairy Rosabelverde with deformed Zaches when she finds him needy on St. Lawrence Day. She gives him social prestige and tries to reintegrate him into society. The consequences are as fatal for the enlightened society as they are for Zaches. Hoffmann's story is a highlight of romantic enlightenment-criticism, not least in his naming and characterising his figures with specific intentions.

Name-days are of special interest in the context of literary name-giving and especially for E. T. A. Hoffmann. If they are mentioned as days of remembrance of

⁷ „Erfahre es jetzt Johannes, ich habe tief in dein Inneres geschaut und das gefährliche – bedrohliche Geheimnis erkannt, das darin ruht <...>. Darum verhehlte ich dir sorglich was ich in dir erschaut <...> Wisse Johannes, daß der Fürstin Namenstag zusammentrifft mit dem Namenstage Julias“.

Christian martyrs and saints, they organise, on the one hand, the temporal frame of the storyline and they relate strongly, on the other hand, to important content. It becomes apparent that the events strictly correspond to a certain symbolic day. If the name-days allude to a specific character, an identification with the patron is possible and the storyline could be infused with mystery – as, for example, in “The Devil’s Elixirs”. In particular, the connection between the real and the fantastic world as it is exemplified in *The Golden Pot* is last but not least constituted by names. Names that are used in this way are even part of Hoffmann’s aesthetic programme, the Serapiontic Principle, and thus a central focus throughout his literary writing.

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Vardadienių reikšmė vokiečių romantinėje literatūroje, remiantis E. T. A. Hoffmanno kūrybos pavyzdžiu

S a n t r a u k a

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: vardadieniai, vokiečių romantizmas, E. T. A. Hoffmannas, literatūrinė onomastika.

Išgalvoto veikėjo vardas nėra tik vardas; tai individualios ir gerai apgalvotos personažo charakteristikos dalis. Net tais atvejais, kai vardas atrodo niekuo neišsiskiriantis iš kitų,

jis atlieka įvairias literatūrinės funkcijas ir gali apibūdinti charakterį vien tik jį įvardydamas. Vokiečių rašytojai romantikai ypač daug dėmesio skyrė poetiniam vardų suteikimo procesui. Pavyzdžiui, Jeanas Paulis, atkreipęs dėmesį į vardų suteikimo meno problemą, traktavo vardų kūrybą kaip lobį. Hoffmannas vartoja vardus įvairiais būdais, suteikdamas jiems įvairių funkcijų. Šiame straipsnyje aptariamos literatūrinės vardadienių taikymo intencijos, remiantis dualistine Hoffmanno pasaulio samprata. Vardai susieja fantaziją su realybe ir leidžia įgyvendinti Hoffmanno estetinę programą, vadinamą Serapijono principą. Literatūrinio vardų suteikimo funkcionalumas atskleidžiamas pateikiant pavyzdžių iš kai kurių romanų ir apsakymų, tokių kaip *Velnio eliksyras*, *Aukso puodas*, *Mažasis Cachesas*, *pasivadinęs Cinoberiu*, koncentruojant dėmesį į svarbias vardo dienas.

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The name of a fictitious character does not only act as a simple proper name but it is basically a part of an individual and well-considered characteristic. Even if the chosen names seem to be common they add literary functions in many different ways and are able to constitute a character just by naming it. In particular German romanticism writers attached much importance to the process of poetic name-giving. Jean Paul for example, who gave notice of the problem of art of name-giving in multiple text passages of his works, watched his name-inventions like a treasure. E. T. A. Hoffmann uses and functionalizes his names in many different ways. In this contribution it is about the literary application of real name-days and its intentions according to Hoffmann's dualistic world view. The names connect fantasy and reality with each other and allow for Hoffmann's aesthetic programme, the Serapionic Principle. On the basis of some novels and stories – amongst others such as *The Devil's Elixirs*, *The Golden Pot*, *Little Zaches*, *Called Cinnobar* – the functionality of literary name-giving is revealed exemplarily by concentrating on important name-days.

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