Archetypal Molds: The Emotional Memory behind Literary Spaces
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Abstract

This paper will explore the potential link between the emotional characteristics of spaces and the form of name given to them, especially within the artistic realm of literature. It will argue for using thematic genres as a means of dividing works into related areas, before assessing the implications of any onomastic strategies, formed through semantic choices, made by the author. The processes by which emotional connections may be ascribed to particular landscapes or forms of space is the focus of a field known generally as terrapsychology; and it is the intention of this paper to propose that semantic, and onomastic as a result, considerations may also play a role in determining emotional attribution and effect. A discussion of some of the placenames encountered within Peake's *Gormenghast* novels will serve as a brief example of how stylized literary naming purposefully draws upon emotionally-driven semantics, forming an identifiable connection between the fields of literary onomastics and terrapsychology.

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There are many symbolic associations that may be worked into names when they are artistically crafted, but one recently-realized field of semantic psychology, and the role it may have in influencing perception of space or place, has not yet been explored in the context of names: that of ***terrapsychology***.

As a field unto itself, terrapsychology can be broadly defined as: the emotional response of the human mind to certain types of space and terrain. This is a personal analysis of the field, amalgamated from a variety of other researchers that contribute to the area (Brady, 2003; Chalquist, 2006; Foster, 2009). Unfortunately, there is no single cover-all description – or even a single title – that encompasses a full description of the field adequately. Any of the following names are used to refer to the subject area*: Gaia psychology, psychoecology, environmental psychology, green psychology, global therapy, re-earthing, nature-based psychotherapy* and *sylvan therapy*; and this is only a selection of the terms used by those interested in exploring the concept of the field. However, the manner of application can be used as a means of differentiating between two distinct – and very separate – psychological measures. What may be termed the ***practical application*** side of the field is focused around the exploration of the connection that mankind has to the natural world and using this connection as a means of psychological and emotional healing, through ***biophilic response***. The ***theoretical application***, however, is the aspect that may have an application within artistic, as well as scientific, analysis. By examining how and why these emotional responses to certain types of environment are created, and the processes by which they can be altered, be it purposeful or unintentional, we may look at the functional semantic bond between form and intended effect.

Despite the significant differences that separate these two approaches, they both share a common theme: exploring the dynamic interplay between man and environment.

In regards to how this potentially fits in with literary onomastic research, a clear line of inquiry can be identified as the means by which my personal attention was brought to this newly founded field. Shared stylistic and thematic demands may be taken to provide an

essential underpinning framework against which naming strategies may be assessed. Convenient identifiable literary categories have already been formed by critics around these very aspects (**genres** or, more specifically, **subgenres**), which serve as a means of dividing literature into distinct units. Taking core texts as an **archetypal base** from which other members of the literary subgenre may be assessed allows for studies focused around typical aspects, thematic and stylistic, to be undertaken. This methodology, as an attempt to bring the field of research closer to related onomastic areas, allows for comparative-based research to show that onomastics is a vital construct of any literary setting, and is as much a part of any genre as any other literary feature. Exploring onomastic utilization according to environment type need not be restricted to such manmade spaces, as it is mankind that ultimately names, and thereby defines and semantically constructs, everything. The extent to which patterns in onomastic form may be identified as being a cohesive and prominent element within separate subgenres, and the resulting semantic ties that become associated with and create lexical fields, presents a valid linguistic component for the study of terrapsychology.

It is this connection that encouraged an examination of the potential link between this interplay and the assignment of particular types of names to the spaces, and whether both of these may ultimately be governed – or at the very least influenced to a high degree - by the stylistic demands of a genre. To this end, every textual onomasticon has to be treated as a *paracosm* containing the specific elements that make each work unique. How, and why, particular elements feature consistently throughout a genre's corpus, and the emotional response they elicit in the reader works within, I propose, a socially constructed emotional continuum. These emotions, made up from archetypal imagery constructions that correspond to an individual's or group's stereotypical perception of a particular genre, form the initial instinctual response in the formation of a literary place's interpretation, against which the name is then applied. Every literary feature is created through layers of symbolic association or attachment, and this is especially true for fictional places. Names present the most efficient manner by which an author may express base information about an asset. Serving as the primary mode of reference, these lexical elements present the primary point of reference in the definition of a fictional space, and so shape perception of the space to which they are appended, even if no other descriptive information is given. That a name alone can depict a place, entirely on the basis of emotional assumption, is testament to their semantic and terrapsychological power.

It is vital to always take into consideration the created nature of these literary forms; they are purposefully shaped to serve particular narrative aims, and so every name presents an opportunity to explore the carefully executed **word-smithing** that is necessary to meet the demands from both space and genre. Every word an author chooses follows conventions that reflect intentions at all interpretative levels, and their form is "instrumental in suggesting a context and signaling the attitudes" that each location is meant to induce within the reader (Smith, 2005: 17). It is in the analysis of these intentions, and comparing the aptness of such designations with the carefully selected description of the space to which they are appended, that provides the quintessential undertaking of the literary onomast.

There is another classical concept, the **anima mundi** ('world soul') that can be argued as corresponding with the equivalence of the emotional association of a space. Such has been argued as being pivotal in understanding how "the ecological imagination and its entwinement in psyche and place is one such aspect of our place-relations" (Mitchell, 2006: 113). Just as '*Topography*' and '*Geography*' are disciplines concerned with '**earth description**' – the conveyance of the physical form of space, the *anima mundi* is concerned

with the emotional presence of place. Every location, whether formed from the constituent parts of a more generic archetypal framework or taken from a specifically named place, results in an emotional inference that is key to the interpretation of both the site and its significance within a text. This is the aspect that can also be referred to classically as the *genius loci* of a site, the fundamental emotional impact of a place through its most basic impacting characteristics. "Some ancient philosophers and architects have referred to the notion of genius loci, meaning the spirit of place, or a place that contains spirits," (Perluss, 2006: 207-208) has been a poetic argument put forward by literary critics, and in the sense that every place evokes an emotional response in those that experience it in some form, be it physical or reached solely through the imagination. It is tapping into this very essence that is the central concern of the terrapsychologist.

Names represent the most efficient means of construction within a literary space, and should never be regarded as superfluous or arbitrary details for a name encapsulates in its entirety the desired emotional referent. They are the most prominent means of reference, and so hold a descriptive power that overshadows any other form of textual description. In order to maximize their effectiveness, key semantic and cognitive links are formed, which are repeated and strengthened through inter-textual usage. It is the one manner by which man can shape the environment, without physical interference, and along an identical means of characterization, the most efficient means of creating a new space within literature, as and when such an environment or place may be required. Within the literary realm, the desired referent can only be constructed through textual description. Description requires familiarity with similar, known forms and, by way of this, archetypal images and the response formed from this ruling image form the basis for emotional and literary interpretation as a result of these qualities that work within artistic place formation. As a result, names function as the primary mode of imbuing a fictional space with an emotional property in conjunction with the base archetypal template a reader may associate with the referenced space. These two components alone provide the literary onomast with enough information to pursue the connection between archetypal form and reference, thus providing an efficient and universally applicable methodological means of analysis that is focused upon an identifiable literary characteristic. I propose that these very elements can be determined and charted, and in doing so, a base cognitive map of the dominant genre trappings can be created, which in turn can be used as the basis for comparative research on further textual sources.

Literary spaces exist on a different plane of functionality than their non-literary counterparts, and as a result they may be argued as being constructed according to an emotionally influenced interpretative matrix, from which their connotative qualities all complement one another towards an ultimate functionally interpretative state. Place names have been recognized as "a technique for binding us and the land together" (Algeo, 1985: 80), and so too do the names inform of the nature, be it actualized or idealized, of the space to which they are granted. No place, or character, found within literature, it may be argued, can be encountered as a blank slate; all objects are shaped for specific response through specifically defined aspects that are used in shaping the purpose of their creation and existence. This is a bold claim, but it is one that needs to be established in order to fully realize the importance of locational assets within literature – they are never a mere background alone, which in turn means any aspect of their construction may prove integral to understanding the motivation or intent of a text. Artists may be recognized as being "among the most sensitive and creative interpreters of nature," (Brady, 2003: 74) solely through their ability to potentially manipulate the emotional qualities of any subject, to meet their requirements. For authors, their working material is not a physical

medium, but that of language; and every detail of a name, from its base phonetic construction to the look of its written form, can have an effect on how it is perceived.

Despite not having a clear objective to guide research in the field, one of the aims of terrapsychological research may be identified as lying with the exploration of the archetypal properties of a location, before conventional literary criticism can focus upon the analysis of the additional details, which further shape the intentions of the place. Both of these set the scene for an onomastic investigation to take place, utilizing the information from both of these prior sweeps. The literary onomast requires a wide range of analytic skills in order to survey literary texts to their full extent, but the methodology just described represents the two crucial elements for analyzing the effects that the *genius loci* of a site may have in influencing other characteristics.

Peake's *Gormenghast* series shall serve as an example of the terrapsychological effect that a semantically focused onomasticon may impart upon a text. Within the entirely fictional world, we find such locations as: **The Twisted Woods**, **The Tower of Flints**, **The Blackstone Quarter**, the **Room of Roots**, the **Carver's Courtyard** (this group features heavily within the text and the castle itself) and one particular place named respectively the **Silent Halls**, the **Hollow Halls**, the **Lifeless Halls** or the **Stone Lanes**. Each buttress at the crown of the castle is individually named, some of which are given: **Stone Dogshead**, **Angel's Buttress**, **The North Headstones**, and the **Twin Fingers**. These entries illustrate nicely the convergence of space, name and genre, all intertwined into a distinct suite of information that can only be fully appreciated, and critically interpreted, as a whole formation. The key semantic elements may be seen as each bearing clearly identifiably gothic components. Each of these is used to convey to the reader additional information, from preconceived notions of what the reader presupposes to be stylistically gothic, in order to emphasize its thematic placement within this definable body of literature. The lexical components may all be seen to be thematically linked, in order to create an identifiably aesthetically stylized world, built from traditional gothic semantic structures. Even without any additional textual description of such places, a base form with certain attributes can still be generated, solely from the name. This referential capability may be argued as extending beyond just the tangible aesthetics, however, and it is in this resulting semantic space that the emotional impact of the spatial form may be functionally situated. It is for this reason that terrapsychology deserves to be brought to the attention of a wider audience, so that the extent of its structural capabilities may be fully explored from a variety of functional directions.

In describing the core essence of how Gothic literature may be defined, Truffin (2008: 5) surmises succinctly that it essentially is reducible to "a structure of feeling;" a sentiment shared by other critics who have an interest in looking at literature from a genre-based perspective (such as Gelder, 2004). It is the investigation of the viability of this very asset – of feeling, or emotional association – and whether such an element may serve to aid literary onomastic investigation that is of primary interest. For this sentiment is equally applicable across all other genres, each with their own stylistic aims, semantic requirements, and constructive elements. Every genre consists of its own oeuvre and stylistic elements constructed from commonly-utilized formations, both created and shaped by the texts that form its series. A genre can therefore be summarized as containing a unique set of emotional expectations that influence the structure of texts which together create its form, and it is the overall setting, itself constructed from individual identifiable spaces, that serves as a major part of creating these anticipations. This in turn relates to the importance of the name of these spaces, in order to truly establish a link between the literary space and the textual genre to

which it belongs. The association of particular stylistics of spaces encountered with certain genres, be they augmented with other trappings that may be keyed towards a particularly stylistic aesthetic or taken in their bare forms, presents an additional comparative aspect for critical literary discourse to cover, and a firm stylistic component for onomastic inquiry – even potentially outside of the artistic domain. Terrapsychology presents a means of exploring the emotional endowment of names, or what may be consequently termed the **onomasemantic component**. It presents a focused analytic component with appreciable linguistic, psychological and literary implications, spanning all three areas. It is an additional tool to potentially assist the academic in analyzing the reasons and motivations for the creation or application of particular onomastic forms for ultimate artistic effect.

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