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Permanent Functions of Characters' Proper Names in Harry Potter

Martyna Gibka
Koszalin University of Technology, martyna@gibka.pl

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Koszalin University of Technology

ASKED ABOUT *HARRY POTTER*, Joanne Kathleen Rowling said: "The characters came first, and then I had to find names to fit them" (Fraser 2002, 24). The names of five hundred and eleven characters[1] confirm this statement, as no fictional figure has been named haphazardly, and the onomastic set of *Harry Potter* serves a great number of functions. Some of these are permanent and some only momentary, therefore they have to be identified on the basis of both the naming act in a novel and the act of using a proper name in a novel. Moreover, some of the functions emerge within the fictional world, but some exceed it and occur in relation to elements of the non-literary world. Therefore the aforementioned models should not be restricted to the fictional world only. This article's main aim is to demonstrate the wide variety of permanent functions served by characters' proper names in *Harry Potter* in different types of relations.[2]

1. Permanent functions

Within the approach to functions of literary *nomina propria* based on the act of naming, the term *permanent function of proper names* has been defined as a "role the name serves in relation to a given element of the naming act of the literary work" (Gibka 2015, 82). The model of the naming act[3] in question includes five elements from the fictional universe: the name, the denoted character, the namer, the situational context of the namer, and the user, and three from the non-literary world: the author, the situational context of the author, and the reader (see diagram 1).[4] Therefore, there are eight relations in which the name can perform a role, and thirteen functions have hitherto been proposed; these are: the identifying-differential, semantic, sociological, allusive, commemorative, camouflaging, expressive, poetic, humorous, conative, localizing, intertextual and didactic-educative functions.[5] Since a function identified on the basis of this act is performed from the moment of naming and does not depend on the circumstances of individual uses of the name, it was classified as permanent.

It is important to notice that the naming of a character is also the first use of his/her name. Therefore, if the moment of naming is presented in a novel, a function that is served at the time of this first uttering of the *proprium* might emerge not on the basis of the naming act but the act of using a name. This happens when the function is not permanent, when it is only served during this

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[1] The number of characters, their proper names etc. are introduced into the article on the basis of a database prepared for this analysis.

[2] Because the analysis of all secondary functions served by characters' proper names in *Harry Potter* exceeds the word limit of an article, the study was divided into two parts: the examination of permanent and of momentary functions. This paper concentrates on the permanent roles, and a second one, devoted to momentary functions, will be published subsequently.

[3] Due to the kind of form the examined material comes from, the models used for this analysis are prepared for the form of a novel. The models presented in this article are not suitable for the analysis of the functions of proper names in poems or dramas.

[4] For a detailed explanation of the model, its elements and creation see (Gibka 2015). The article is available online on the website of the journal.

[5] The list of relations in which a given function can be served is also presented in (Gibka 2015). Here, only functions that appear in *Harry Potter* will be discussed.

particular situation, and this occurs when the element in relation to which the function is performed does not belong to the model of the naming act but to the model of the act of using a name. Therefore, some of the names that serve their functions at the moment of the naming (at but not from) will be discussed separately, in another article.
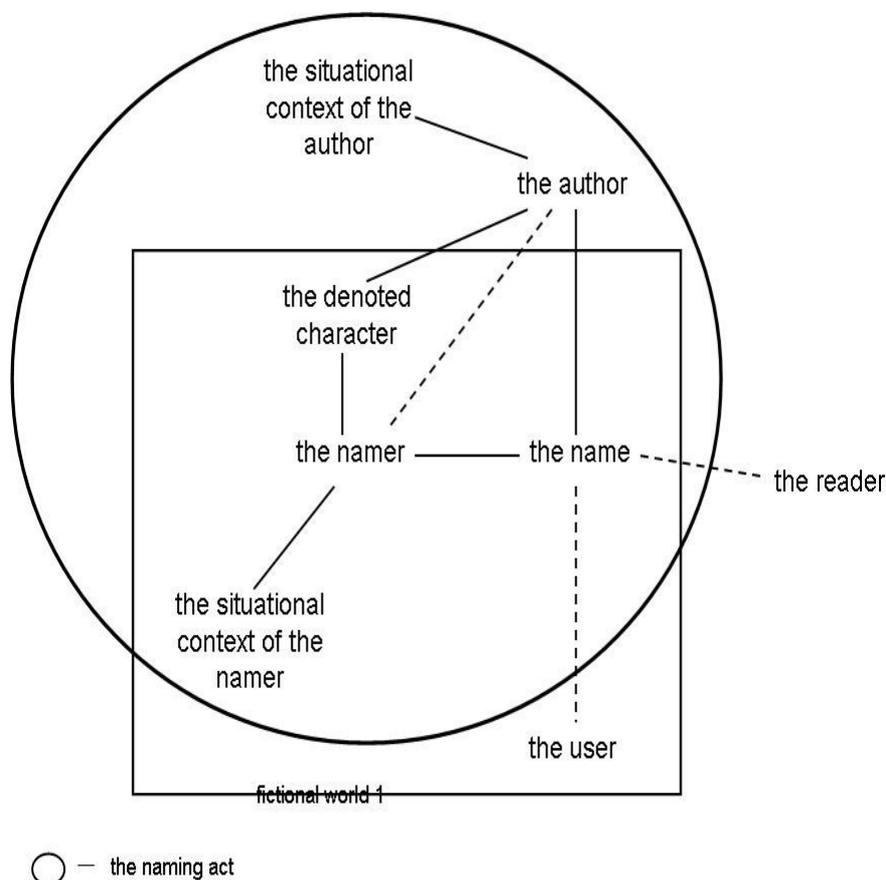
Diagram 1 – the model of the naming act in a novel[6]

1.1. Functions served in relation to elements that belong to the fictional world

Apart from the localizing function that emerges when proper names set the plot in a specified time or place (Wilkoń 1970, 83)[7] all hitherto identified functions are served by the characters' names in the *Harry Potter* series, although not in every possible relation. Firstly, being the only primary and thus obligatory role, the identifying-differential function (which occurs in relation to the denoted character as a proper name denotes an individual entity and differentiates it from other, similar entities) is served by all six hundred and ninety- eight examined *nomina propria* in the analyzed novels.

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[6] This model is quoted from my doctoral dissertation entitled *The functions of characters' proper names in a novel. A theoretical approach and its application*. Moreover, the theory of "Two Acts" used in this article to analyse functions of characters' proper names in *Harry Potter* is proposed and explained in this thesis.

[7] Within the fictional world of *Harry Potter*, the localizing function is served by some toponyms, which however, transgresses the topic of this article.

Not only does this enable referring to the identified characters by name, it also shows which fictional figures are important to the story to an extent requiring their identification, and which are not. It can be illustrated by this excerpt: "He [Harry] shook hands with the *Hufflepuff Captain*, and then, on Madam Hooch's whistle, kicked off and rose into the air" (Rowling 2005, 387). Despite the exceptionally high position of Quidditch Captains among other students, this one was not considered sufficiently significant for his name to be revealed, or, in other words, to be given a name.[8]

In relation to the denoted character, the analyzed proper names in *Harry Potter* serve also the semantic, sociological and conative functions. The first occurs when a proper name "characterizes a fictional figure (…) according to the metaphoric or literal meaning of the name" (Wilkoń 1970, 83). The names performing this function are called meaningful and there may be up to eighty-five such *nomina propria* in the analyzed series.[9] The exact number may vary depending on the agreed level of directness and/or significance of the characteristics the appellations refer to, characteristics that can generally be divided into two categories: physical and non-physical. The meaningful names in the *Harry Potter* series include thirty-one *nomina propria* of the first kind; they refer to hair color (*Albus, Ginger, the Weasel, Regulus Arcturus Black, Rufus Scrimgeour*), feature of one body part (*Krum, Nearly Headless Nick, Sir Properly Decapitated-Podmore, Prongs, Scarhead, Mad-Eye, Padfoot, Snuffles, Madame Maxime, Olympe, Big D, Crookshanks, Mr Paws*), general appearance (*Pretty-Boy Diggory, Fleur Delacour, Marvolo Gaunt, Merope Gaunt, Boris the Bewildered, the Bloody Baron, Riddle-Harry, Riddle-Hermione, Boggart-Voldemort, Professor Boggart Snape, Dobby, Nagini*) and the material the entity is made of (*Dusty*). The meaningful names referring to non-physical traits are difficult to categorize not only due to the number of possible groups, but also because some names incorporate the attributes of more than one category. The fifty-four proper names in question could, for instance, be divided into the categories of: occupation (*Mr Magical Maintenance, Adalbert Waffling, Emeric Switch, Phyllida Spore, Arsenius Jigger, Newt Scamander, Vindictus Viridian, Ollivander, Cassandra Vablatsky, Cassandra Trelawney, Professor Sinistra, Professor Vector, Colonel Fubster, Rosmerta, Inigo Imago, Hippocrates Smethwyck, Libatius Borage, Bowman Wright, Death, Hermes*), experiences (*Harry I've-Faced-Worse Potter, Viktor, Sir Cadogan, Odo the Hero*), behavior and personality traits (*Cornelius Fudge, Voldemort, Severus, Dolores, Narcissa Malfoy, Draco Malfoy, Madam Pince, Mr Brilliant, Little Miss Perfect, Lupin, Moony, Scabbers, Ludo Bagman, Bellatrix, Xenophilius, Xeno, Slytherin, Serpent-tongue, Ripper, Sanguini, Moaning Myrtle, the Wailing Widow, Peeves, Wendelin the Weird, Barnabas the Barmy*), destiny (*Karkus, Bane*) and sheer metonymy (*Mrs Number Seven, Mrs Next Door, Grawp*).

Next, the sociological function emerges when a name "indicates the character's social, group or national affiliation" (Wilkoń 1970, 83) or when it expresses (or suggests) the social inferiority or superiority of the character (Kuffner-Obrzut 2003, 493). The national affiliation is indicated by twenty-eight characters' proper names: *Cho Chang, Victoire, Ali Bashir, Dimitrov, Ivanova, Zograf, Levski, Vulchanov, Volkov, Connolly, Ryan, Troy, Mullet, Moran, Quigley, Lynch, Hassan Mostafa, Ladislaw Zamojski, Monsieur Delacour, Madame Delacour, Poliakoff, Gabrielle, Fleur Delacour, Mademoiselle Delacour, Pierre Bonaccord, Seamus Finnigan, Mr Oblansk*, and *Madame Maxime*. However, the matter of expression or suggestion of social position of the fictional figures is more difficult to resolve, as its indication involves more and less direct methods. The first subgroup of such "sociological" *nomina propria* comprises sixteen mistaken names used by characters for whom their addressees are not significant enough to remember their actual names: *Perkins* - used by Professor Binns to address Harry, *Barry* -

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[8] On the lack of superfluous names in a literary work see (Nicolaisen 2003).

[9] As summarised by Gerus-Tarnawecky, the meaningful names have also been referred to as figurative or significant names or *redende Namen* (1968, 312).

Muriel to Barny (Harry), *Mr Dumberton* - Mrs Cole to Dumbledore, *Dunderbore* - Mrs Cole to Dumbledore, *Miss Grant* - Professor Binns to Hermione, *Ralph* and *Rupert* - Slughorn to Ron, *Peter Weasley* - Draco to Percy Weasley, *Weatherby* - Crouch to Percy Weasley, *Arnold Weasley* - Rita Skeeter about Arthur Weasley, *Weezly* - Quidditch World Cup organizers who made a campsite reservation for Arthur Weasley, *O'Flaherty* - Professor Binns to Seamus Finnigan, *Miss Pennyfeather* - Professor Binns to Parvati Patil, *Bibble* and *Buggins* - Luna about Cadwallader while commentating on a Quidditch match, and *Blinky* - Percy about Winky. An opposite situation occurs only once: Harry, Ron and Hermione want to know a wizard's name, but they do not, finally their need to be able to refer to him prompts Harry to name the man *Mr Magical Maintenance*, which is based on the only piece of information about the man the three friends possess. Next, the social superiority may be said to be expressed or suggested by thirteen names. The first six simply contain titles: *Sir Cadogan*, *Sir Nicholas de Mimsy-Porpington*, *The Bloody Baron*, *Sir Patrick Delaney-Podmore*, *Dr Filibuster* and *Lord Voldemort*. The next five suggest their owners' belief in their social superiority due to the language they originate in, namely Latin – which was undoubtedly of unique significance within the wizarding world – *Lucius Malfoy*, *Narcissa Malfoy*, *Draco Malfoy*, *Scorpius*, and *Voldemort*. The last confirms that for people aspiring to a higher social status Latin is one of the means to achieve it – as Voldemort chooses his new name for himself abandoning his English based one: Tom Riddle. The last two *nomina propria* expressing social superiority of their bearer are created by Peeves, a poltergeist spreading mischief and chaos, who has respect for only one wizard: Albus Dumbledore, whom he does not dare insult and addresses: *Your Headship* and *Professorhead*. The last four sociological characters' names were created to mark the namers' believed social inferiority of the denoted characters. These are: *the Weasel* - created by Draco to address Ron, *Little Miss Question-all* - by Umbridge to Hermione, *Miss Prissy* and *Little Miss Perfect* - by Skeeter to Hermione.

Finally, the conative function emerges when a proper name causes a reaction in the denoted character. The examined material includes three names that serve this function in relation to their denotations: *Rodent* – denoting Fred (indignation), *Nymphadora* – Tonks (anger and disgust) and *Mollywobbles* – Mrs Weasley (pleasure).

Next, in relation to the namer (the fictional figure who names a character), a part of the examined material serves the expressive function which emerges when the name articulates the namer's feelings and emotions towards the denoted character. In *Harry Potter*, there are as many as one hundred ninety-four expressive names, seventy-two of which serve this function as identified on the basis of the naming act. Nearly half of them (twenty-nine) are constituted by diminutives conveying positive, warm feelings the namers have towards the denotations (*Al* - Ginny,[10] *Sev* - Lily, *Penny* - Percy, *Wormy* - Lily, *Bella* - Voldemort, *Miss Bella* - Kreacher, *Cissy* - Bellatrix, *Miss Cissy* - Kreacher, *Beaky* - Hagrid, *Grawpy* - Hagrid, *Ab* - Neville, *Rosie* - Ron, *Ronnie* - Mrs Weasley, *little Ronnie* - Mrs Weasley, *Perce* - George, *Georgie* - Mrs Weasley, *Ced* - Amos Diggory, *Teddy* - Harry, *Dora* - Ted Tonks, *Dromeda* - Ted Tonks, *Figgy* - Fletcher, *Peevesy* - Peeves, *Peevsie* - Peeves, *Vi* - the Fat Lady, *Duddy* - Mrs Dursley, *Dinky Duddydums* - Mrs Dursley, *Ickle Dudleykins* - Mrs Dursley, *Diddy darling* - Mrs Dursley, *Diddy* - Mrs Dursley). However, diminutives are also created to communicate negative emotions such as contempt or anger; these *propria* include: *Freddie* - Bellatrix, *old Sluggy* - McLaggen, *ickle Ronnie the Prefect* - Fred, *Ickle - Prefect* - Fred, *Vicky* - Ron, *Ickle Diddykins* - Harry, *Dinky Diddydums* - Harry, *Diddykins* - Harry, and *Xeno Lovegood* - Dirk Cresswell. The next big group (twenty-eight) of expressive proper names is constituted by nicknames. They are sometimes created to express positive (*Popkin* - Mrs Dursley, *Dudders* - Mr Dursley, *Big D* - Piers, *Mollywobbles* - Mr

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[10] The first proper name in each pair is the expressive one and the latter is the name of the namer. This is also true for the "negative" diminutives and expressive nicknames.

Weasley, *Won-Won* - Lavender, *Tuney* - Lily), but usually negative feelings (*Dung* - Sirius, *Dobbin* - Trelawney, *Harry I've-Faced-Worse Potter* - Ron, *the Chosen Captain* - Draco, *the Boy Who Scored* - Draco, *Mr Brilliant* - Aberforth, *Queen Slug—* - Ron, *Humungous Bighead* - Fred, *Bighead Boy* - Fred, *Perfect Percy* - Fred, *Pinhead* - Fred, *Weasel King* - Draco, *Master of Mystery* - Hermione, *King Slug—* - Ron, *Wormtail* - James, *Snivellus* - James, *Pretty-Boy Diggory* - Seamus, *Batty* - Skeeter, *Darling Dodgy* - Skeeter, *Dodgy Doge* - Skeeter, *Dog- breath* - Hogwarts students, *Dung-head* - Hogwarts students). The remaining six expressive *nomina propria* are neither diminutives nor nicknames; they are proper names that were given to the denoted characters based on the feelings towards them. This group includes: *Hedwig* (named by Harry who cared about her too much to give her a Muggle name), *Pigwidgeon* (named by Ginny who reckoned the name to be sweet), *Voldemort* and *Lord Voldemort* (chosen by himself, showing the man's hatred for his previous name), *You-Know- Who* and *He Who Must Not Be Named* (given to Voldemort by wizards who feared him).

Then, in relation to the situational context of the namer, some of the examined names serve the commemorative function, which occurs when the name "commemorates an entity from the namer's world (for instance a person or an event)" (Gibka 2015, 86). This role is served by seven of the examined *nomina propria*, the majority of which commemorate the namer's family members. *Ted* Lupin was named after his grandfather who died shortly before the boy's birth, *Lily* and *James* Potter, the children of Harry and Ginny, were named after Harry's parents and *Tom Marvolo* Riddle after his father and grandfather. However, there is also one character whose names remember and honour non-family members. *Albus Severus* Potter was "named for two headmasters of Hogwarts" (Rowling 2007, 607).

Finally, in relation to the user (fictional characters), the only element of the fictional world that does not have to, and seldom does, participate in the act of naming, the *proprium* can serve the conative, didactic-educative and camouflaging functions. The first "occurs when the name provokes a reaction in the user (…) for instance disgust, anger or aversion" (Gibka 2015, 87). There are three such names in *Harry Potter*, the first, *Voldemort*, induces fear, then, *Pigwidgeon* is considered stupid by Ron, who finally changes it into *Pig*, which astonishes Harry.

By its definition, the didactic-educative function is supposed to occur when the proprium "enriches or preserves the knowledge of the reader" (Kęsikowa 1988, 81), this, however, can be applied only in relation to the reader. Nevertheless, this function emerges also in relation to the user, and it happens simply when it is the user's knowledge that is being enriched or preserved. It arises when the user encounters names that denote historical figures (historical for the fictional world). These names may also be accompanied by pieces of information about the people they refer to or may be presented in metaphorical uses. In the *Harry Potter* series there are eight such names introduced without specific information: *Agrippa, Ptolemy, Morgana, Hengist of Woodcroft, Alberic Grunnion, Circe, Paracelsus* and *Merlin* and thirteen which are accompanied by some facts about their denotations: *Cliodna, Wizard Baruffio, Elfric the Eager, Wendelin the Weird, Bowman Wright, Egbert the Egregious, Emeric the Evil, Godelot, Hereward, Loxias, Barnabas Deverill, Arcus* and *Livius*.

The last role served by a part of the analyzed material in relation to the user is the camouflaging function, which emerges when *nomen proprium* conceals the identity of its denotation from all or some fictional characters. There are forty-seven proper names that perform this function: *Barny Weasley, Rodent, Rapier, Romulus, Snuffles, River, Royal, Witherwings, Goyle, Neville Longbottom, Neville, Barny, Runcorn, Albert, Dudley, Vernon, Vernon Dudley, Mafalda Hopkirk, Mafalda, Penelope Clearwater, Madam Lestrange, Bellatrix, Crabbe, Reg Cattermole, Cattermole, Reg, Reginald Cattermole, Bardy, Bardy Weadley, Barny, Dragomir Despard, Dragomir, Wendell Wilkins, Monica Wilkins, the Half- Blood Prince, Barty Crouch, S.P.T., A.P.W.B.D., R.A.B., the Gray Lady, L.E., Mad-Eye, Mad-Eye Moody, Moody, Alastor, Professor Moody, Scabbers*. Some of these appellations hide the identity of their denotations only from a few characters and for a short period of time (for instance *Neville Longbottom* and *Vernon*

Dudley – both camouflaging Harry) while others hide them from a great number of fictional figures and for a long time (for example *Mad-Eye Moody* – Barty Crouch or *Scabbers* – Peter Pettigrew).

1.2 *Functions served in relation to elements that belong to the non-literary world*

In relation to the situational context of the author two functions are performed. The allusive function emerges when *nomina propria* are used "as more or less ciphered allusions to real people" (Wilkoń 1970, 83). This function is served by five *Harry Potter* characters' names: *Agrippa* (which is an allusion to Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim), *Ptolemy* (Claudius Ptolemy), *Paracelsus* (Paracelsus born Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim), *Nicolas* and *Perenelle Flamel* (Nicolas and Perenelle Flamel). What is more, the author not only alludes to these people, but also uses the last two allusive *propria* to confirm the legend surrounding Nicolas Flamel. Next, four of the analyzed *nomina propria* serve the intertextual function that occurs when a character's proper name in the examined novel "was taken over from another literary work" (Gibka 2015, 87). The names *Morgana* and *Merlin* are taken over from the Arthurian legend, and *Circe* and *Cliodna* from the Greek and Irish mythology respectively.

Finally, in relation to the reader the camouflaging and humorous functions occur. The first emerges when the identity of a character is concealed not from the user but from the reader. However, when an identity is concealed from the reader, it is usually also concealed from the user simultaneously. And this is exactly what happens in *Harry Potter*. There are thirteen names that hide their denotations' identities from the reader and they were enumerated at the end of the list of appellations serving this function in relation to the user.

Then, some of the characters' proper names in *Harry Potter* can serve the humorous function which appears when the name causes the reader to laugh. It is important that these names can, but not necessarily do, serve the humorous role, as to actually prove a name to be humorous one would have to examine the reactions of all readers to the given name. It is, however, possible to establish if a *nomen proprium* has a humorous element as one of its external qualities. Based on the incongruity theory in Veatch's specification,[11] the examined characters' names include seventy-three potentially humorous ones: *the Chosen Captain, the Boy Who Scored, Humungous Bighead, Pinhead, Draco Malfoy, Phlegm, Dung, Sir Properly Decapitated-Podmore, Prongs, Scarhead, Potty, Potty Wee Potter, Crackpot, Dumby, Voldy, ickle Ronnie, ickle Ronniekins, the Weasel, Wheezy, Ickle Prefect, Weasel King, Weatherby, Freddie, Forge, Gred, Moony, Snivellus, Snively, Poppy, Madam Hooch, Longbottom, Loony, Loooooooony, Padfoot, Lav-Lav, Pretty-Boy Diggory, Batty, Fudge, Wormtail, Darling Dodgy, Dodgy Doge, Dogbreath, Skeeter, Xeno, Dog-breath, Dung-head, Bibble, Buggins, Ernie Prang, Madam Marsh, Libatius Borage, Filch, Peeves, Duddy, Dinky Duddydums, Ickle Dudleykins, Big D, Ickle Diddykins, Diddy darling, Popkin, Dinky Diddydums, Diddykins, Diddy, Mrs Number Seven, Mrs Next Door, Pig, Pigwidgeon, Fluffy, Ludo Bagman, Arsenius Jigger, Won-Won, Madam Malkin* and *Dobby*. The incongruities present in these names range from the most simple and common: meaningless-meaningful and high-low, to more specific, for instance secret-overt and dangerous-harmless.

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[11] The humorous function of characters' proper names in *Harry Potter* has been a separate subject of study presented in (Gibka 2014; Gibka 2016). Therefore, the detailed description of the process of arising of the incongruities leading to humour and the analysis of particular examples will not be included in this work. However, this paper will introduce a proposition of embedding the humorous function on a theoretical foundation – which is not included in the article mentioned.

2. Conclusions

The analysis of characters' proper names in *Harry Potter* based on the naming act in a novel demonstrated that the names serve eleven permanent functions – one primary and ten secondary. The majority of roles are served within the fictional world, however, the exclusion of the elements of the non-literary world from the analysis would limit the number and scope of functions discovered. The reason for such a great difference in the number of functions and names serving these functions in relation to the elements of the fictional world and the real one may be the degree to which the material can be examined in particular relations. The analyzed novels suffice only to determine the functions served within the fictional world, and roles served by characters' proper names in relation to elements that belong to the non- literary world require a close examination of additional materials which, however, does not guarantee a complete analysis. Yet, every occurrence of every function contributes to the building of the fictional universe, its society, politics and education and to the reader's reception of the works and should not be, therefore, disregarded.

As observed by Windt, research within literary onomastics "is limited by an obvious deficit of theory and method" (2005, 58). The theoretical approach used to analyze the *Harry Potter* series might be considered to be one of the first if not the first methodology of literary onomastics as opposed to methodologies of onomastics and literary theory taken over and used by literary onomasticians. Moreover, it enables the examination of permanent functions of characters' names in any novel, therefore the onomastic trends in particular genres or literary periods can be analyzed.[12] Furthermore, comparative studies of functions served by literary *nomina propria* in novels belonging to different genres or literary periods or written by authors of different nationalities are possible. What is more, this approach enables also the comparative studies of novels and their translations, which in turn can not only demonstrate what happened to the set of functions served by proper names in the original and reveal the hierarchy of functions the translator adopted, but also reveal which of the techniques and methods used to translate *propria* (in individual works or different genres for instance) are most effective and preserve functions to the greatest extent.

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[12] Of course, the complete analyses (of both permanent and momentary functions) need to be conducted on the basis of not only this approach, but also the other one (mentioned in the introduction), which will be the subject of another article, entitled "Momentary Functions of Characters' Proper Names in *Harry Potter*".

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