

Linguocultural Features of Anthroponyms in “Almost Heaven” by Judith Mcnaught

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Abstract: The article analyzes how anthroponyms which are proper personal names reveal the linguistic and cultural identity of characters in Judith McNaught's 1990 novel "Almost Heaven" which represents American romantic literature set in the early nineteenth century British noble society. The study uses onomastics and linguoculturology and literary semantics as its theoretical framework to examine how character names in the story reveal social class distinctions and gender beliefs and national identification and cultural historical knowledge. The analysis shows that the novel's anthroponym system functions as an intentional semiotic framework which the author uses to display and interpret the cultural symbols of Anglo-American aristocratic society.

Keywords: anthroponymy, linguoculturology, onomastics, literary names, cultural semantics, proper names, semiotic function, aristocratic discourse.

INTRODUCTION

The academic research on proper names in literary works has existed since ancient times as a major research area which connects linguistics with cultural studies. The linguoculturology field studies how different communities use language to express their cultural values through their shared understanding of human naming systems which create links to historical events and present social standards and traditional artistic styles and fundamental belief systems [1]. The personal names which authors create in their fictional works serve as valuable research material because writers choose their names according to their creative goals which produce multiple meanings that help build character development and social critiques and thematic elements. Judith McNaught's "Almost Heaven," which first appeared in 1990 as part of her Sequels series, provides a rich environment for research study. The story takes place within the strict social hierarchy of early 1800s British noble society, and its characters bear names which originate from traditional Anglo-American naming customs. The romantic historical fiction genre uses character names to create social status and emotional connection, which makes the study of personal name usage in these works an important area for research in literary linguistics [2]. The present article proceeds from the premise that the names employed by McNaught in "Almost Heaven" are not incidental choices but culturally determined signs that participate actively in the construction of meaning, identity, and social reality within the fictional world.[3]



METHODOLOGY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The research methodology of this study integrates literary onomastics as established by Superanskaya and Bondaletov with the linguocultural method which originated in Russian-Uzbek academic traditions and was developed by Maslova and Tursunov [4]. Literary onomastics proceeds from the recognition that proper names in fictional texts function simultaneously on multiple levels: phonological, morphological, semantic, and cultural-symbolic. Linguoculturology provides the analytical methods which allow researchers to link different text elements with the cultural and historical background of the text's creation and reception process.[5] The research study uses McNaught's novel "Almost Heaven" as its primary source while analyzing all major and minor character names which exist throughout the story.

The analytical procedure requires researchers to trace name origins through their etymological roots which determines their meaning and cultural significance in the Anglo-American onomastic tradition and their function within the novel's social and thematic elements. The secondary sources examined in this study include Dunkling's research about English aristocratic naming practices [6] and Lotman's theoretical framework for understanding literary name meanings [7] and Radway's study about gendered naming practices in romance fiction and Superanskaya's comprehensive overview of onomastic research [8]. The research did not include any fieldwork or interviews or empirical testing which means that the analysis relies solely on textual examination and academic sources.[9] The research methods used in this study follow descriptive and interpretive literary linguistics because these methods require researchers to analyze texts through direct reading and textual comparison instead of using statistical methods to collect information [10].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The "Almost Heaven" film contains an anthroponymic landscape which shows British names that originate from both Anglo-Saxon and Norman-French roots. The name Elizabeth Cameron represents an ideological and historical meaning through its component parts. The name "Elizabeth" exists as one of the most prestigious names among English female names because it connects to both royal history and virtuous identity and national identity through its links to the Tudor and Stuart dynasties [11]. The character starts at a high social status that brings moral responsibilities because of this connection, which exists before the story reveals her complete character.

The name "Cameron" originates from Scottish Gaelic roots which define its meaning as "crooked nose" yet by the nineteenth century people in Britain used this name to signify Highland nobility and clan loyalty [12]. The combination of an emphatically English given name with a Scottish surname encodes within Elizabeth's anthroponym the complex politics of British national identity and aristocratic lineage that pervade the novel's social world. The male protagonist Ian Thornton presents a complementary case. The Scottish name "Ian" represents the English name "John" which derives from Hebrew roots that mean "God is gracious" while his character's Scottish pronunciation establishes him as culturally different from English nobility which he eventually joins [13].

The name "Thornton" originates from an Old English topographic surname which describes a location that was established near thorn bushes. The phonological texture of "Thornton" its hard consonants and compact two-syllable structure contributes to the impression of strength and self-determination that the character is designed to project, illustrating the principle that literary authors exploit the phonosemantic dimensions of names as part of their characterization strategy [8]. The novel uses secondary anthroponyms to create a social hierarchy which supports the main storyline. Characters who belong to high aristocratic ranks display names with Norman-French roots which connect to the English nobility who lived after the Conquest while characters of lower social standing or morally dubious character bear names that sound common within their cultural background or have less impressive phonetic qualities [14].



The naming system of this hierarchy exists to demonstrate and reproduce the ideological beliefs which define the romance genre because it shows that characters can achieve social advancement through their stories yet everything remains under a fixed system of symbols which names exist to sustain. The novel's female character names require analysis through the lens of gender-based societal beliefs which exist in the story. Female characters receive names that show their gentle nature and physical attractiveness and their ability to conform to socially acceptable behavior which Radway identifies as the essential elements which define female characters in romance stories. The name "Elizabeth" functions as a partial exception to this pattern because it brings forth meanings which show power and independence that match the heroine's development of her resistance and self-assertion character. The name creates a conflict because it represents cultural meanings which clash with the traditional expectation that women should be submissive according to the other female character names in the story.

The anthroponymic system of "Almost Heaven" functions as a secondary modeling system which operates alongside the primary linguistic system that exists in the text according to Lotman's semiotic theory. The names do not merely denote their bearers; they create a social environment which demonstrates and establishes the value system of the novel through its depiction of aristocratic customs and gender dynamics and national character. The names possess a culturally bound nature which restricts their complete meaning to those readers who possess the cultural knowledge required to understand the English naming customs used by nobles according to aristocratic English name conventions which directly affect how readers from different cultures understand the novel [15].

The naming process within "Almost Heaven" serves as an additional element for researchers to investigate because it establishes character moral standards and mental health conditions. The novel by McNaught follows a specific literary pattern which assigns special meaning to the hero's name because it contains a secret promise of redemption and transformation that Ian Thornton demonstrates through his choice of names. The name "Ian," as the Gaelic variant of the universally distributed "John," occupies an interesting position between familiarity and foreignness within the novel's predominantly English cultural setting: it is recognizable enough to convey reliability and moral groundedness, yet sufficiently marked as non-English to signal the character's status as an outsider whose integration into the aristocratic world must be earned rather than inherited. The character presents a state of onomastic liminality through his ability to use two distinct cultural systems without fully belonging to either. The character needs to navigate through his social boundaries because his birth does not automatically grant him access to the wealth and intelligence he possesses.

CONCLUSION

The research about anthroponyms which Judith McNaught used in her novel "Almost Heaven" proves that the book's naming system functions as an advanced cultural and linguistic system that serves various purposes. The names display social rankings and national affiliations and gender beliefs together with artistic standards which originate from the Anglo-American noble class through their use of name origins and sound meanings and particular cultural interpretations. The anthroponyms in "Almost Heaven" function as compact cultural markers which linguoculturology recognizes because they link to the complete social and historical context that the book creates. The study shows that onomastic and linguocultural methods bring value to the study of popular fiction which has received less academic research as compared to well-known literary works although both types of texts provide substantial resources for studying how language reflects cultural values. The research should explore the entire Sequels series through which McNaught creates different name patterns for her characters while studying how translations to non-Anglo-American languages affect the cultural significance of the novel's names.



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