Introduction to Literary Onomastics

Abstract

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Czech onomastics has been traditionally well advanced; it has a high-quality theoretical and methodological foundation and is highly regarded internationally. However, unlike in other countries, literary onomastics as one of its disciplines still lacks sufficient attention. R. Šrámek – along with his counterparts abroad, K. Gutschmidt and W. F. H. Nicolaisen – points out its terminological and methodological inconsistency, insufficient theoretical elaboration and the problem of defining its scope of research. It is this call that I want to answer with my dissertation.

The goal of my Introduction To Literary Onomastics is to provide a critical and complex summary and assessment of the current understanding of literary proper names and to further research the subject – especially by extending its scope with some new views of anthroponyms in fiction based on profound analyses of modern works of Czech and foreign literature of the 19th and 20th century. My research builds upon methodological-theoretical findings reached by the development of both Czech and foreign literary onomastics; at the same time, it draws on the latest findings of general onomastic theory. Excerpted works purposely represent a wide variety of literary genres, which allows us to observe some phenomena in a broader context and to trace some parallels that would remain unnoticed within the bounds of a single genre.

The dissertation is focused on several problem areas, which corresponds to its division into four parts. The first part is dedicated to literary onomastics as an independent field of study, presenting its history of research and dealing with its interdisciplinary nature and methodological problems. The second part is called “Literary Proper Name”. In it, I define the subject and scope of literary onomastic investigation, further analyze various factors that influence the selection and use of names, and point out the overall onymic structure of literary work (the so-called "Landscape of Names"). The third and most extensive part deals with the complicated problems of literary onymic functions, their breakdown and different views on them. In the final part of the work some further research sub-questions are presented– the issue of proper names in translation, pen names and book titles. In conclusion, I consider the
future direction of literary onomastic studies and other tasks that are still waiting for researchers. Part of my dissertation is also a complete list of bibliography of Czech literary onomastics from its beginning to the present day.

Partial results of the research were continuously presented at domestic and international conferences and published in the form of articles in peer-reviewed journals.

With my dissertation, I aim to strengthen the theoretical and methodological foundation for future researchers in this relatively young field of study. Thus, the topic of the monograph is highly relevant today and its outcomes will become an integral part of the important domain of Czech and international onomastics.