THE LITERARY FUNCTIONS OF THE SHIP NAME NAN-SHAN IN JOSEPH CONRAD'S TYPHOON

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Abstract. This article examines how the ship name Nan-Shan functions in Joseph Conrad's Typhoon. A close reading of the opening chapter and the storm sequence traces the name's relation to narrative continuity, maritime space, and personification. In the opening chapter, the name connects Captain MacWhirr's professional identity with a specific vessel and links its present voyage to its earlier commercial history. During the storm, it identifies the physical object whose motion is rendered through a simile of fear. The analysis distinguishes the naming function of the ship's proper name from the figurative effects created by its surrounding language. It also explains how the vessel provides a bounded setting in which geographical movement, the progression of the storm, and human decisions converge.

Keywords. Ship names, poreyonymy, literary onomastics, chronotope, personification, Joseph Conrad.

Introduction. The opening of Joseph Conrad's Typhoon introduces Captain MacWhirr through his association with the steamer Nan-Shan. This detail places the captain in a professional setting before the narrative presents the crisis that will test his judgment. As the story moves between the ship's earlier history, its voyage towards the Chinese coast, and its encounter with the storm, the name allows the reader to follow the same vessel across different locations and stages of the narrative [1, ch. I]. The name is treated as an individual ship name within the broader category of transport names, or poreyonyms. Because it identifies one vessel, it offers a

different kind of evidence from a make or model name. The article examines the reference established by the name, the organisation of space and time around the vessel, and the attribution of an apparently emotional response to its motion. The analysis focuses on three passages. The first introduces MacWhirr and the vessel in chapter I. The second gives the ship's commercial history, route, and position as the barometer falls, also in chapter I. The third describes the vessel's motion as the storm intensifies. Passages are identified by chapter or by a short searchable quotation because pagination varies across editions.

The method combines close reading with contextual analysis of the proper name. In each passage, the analysis identifies the referent, examines the wording attached to it, and relates that wording to the scene's narrative function. Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope provides a framework for discussing the relation between narrative time and space [2]. Here it is applied to the specific sequence in which the moving ship becomes a confined site of collective danger.

The opening phrase "Captain MacWhirr, of the steamer Nan-Shan" associates the character with a named vessel [1, ch. I]. The prepositional phrase identifies his command and establishes a relation that the ensuing action makes consequential. Later in the chapter, the chart-room scene places him inside the same ship, looking at a falling barometer. The name thus links the opening character portrait with the practical situation that confronts him.

The chapter also looks back to the ship's construction in Dumbarton and explains its connection to a merchant firm in Siam. Its subsequent transfer from the British register to the Siamese flag belongs to the history of that same vessel [1, ch. I]. The recurrence of Nan-Shan lets the reader connect these changes of location and registration with the ship introduced at the opening. These details give the vessel a history within maritime trade and make the route to Fu-chau part of a geographically specific fictional world.

The chart room is a local setting from which the weather can be assessed through instruments. The ship's route situates it in a much larger maritime space, while the fall in pressure gives the approaching storm a place in the sequence of events. At the outset, MacWhirr registers the falling barometer without showing the alarm that the narrative's description encourages the reader to feel [1, ch. I]. The difference between his practical reading and the ominous presentation of the weather creates tension before the ship enters the worst conditions.

The vessel remains in motion, yet its occupants have to deal with the danger within a limited space. The passage from routine navigation to emergency therefore changes the function of the setting. Areas of the ship that organise ordinary work become places where the occupants experience the same crisis from different positions. The proper name refers consistently to the vessel that contains these separate points of view. In chronotopic terms, its movement through maritime space and the progression of the storm give the confined setting its narrative force.

When the storm disturbs the vessel's regular rolling, the narration compares its abrupt movements to those of a being that had "gone mad with fright" [1, storm sequence]. The wording translates a mechanical response to waves into an image of fear. The reader can register the severity of the change through the contrast between regular movement and the sudden jerks and plunges described in the passage.

The name Nan-Shan establishes which vessel undergoes this change. The emotional quality comes from the simile and the verbs of movement. The feminine pronoun used for the ship follows a familiar maritime convention and gains expressive force here through its association with fright. This distinction is central to the analysis. A named vessel provides a stable referent, and the local figurative wording makes its movements appear animate.

The three passages show how the effects of the ship name depend on its relation to other elements in the text. In the opening, the phrase linking MacWhirr to his command supports professional characterisation. In the account of the voyage, the

same name links places, commercial arrangements, and phases of the vessel's history. In the storm sequence, it allows the reader to connect the threatened ship with the vessel already established in the earlier scenes.

This reading also clarifies what can be attributed to a transport name in a study of literary onomastics. The proper name identifies and maintains continuity. The route and the storm organise the relation between place and time. The simile makes the vessel's movement perceptible as a response resembling fear. Together, these elements support the interpretation of Nan-Shan as an integral part of the narrative's representation of human conduct under pressure. The findings apply to the selected passages in Typhoon.

Conclusion. In Typhoon, Nan-Shan names the vessel around which Conrad organises the captain's professional identity, the commercial history of the vessel, and the storm sequence. The continuity of reference allows the moving ship to serve as a coherent setting for events distributed across several places and moments. Conrad's description of its motion adds an expressive dimension through personification. The case demonstrates how the literary analysis of transport names can connect naming, narrative space, and stylistic form while identifying the specific textual evidence for each.

References:

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