



The Politics of Naming and the Immigrant Identity: Studying Onomastics in Nabokov's Pnin

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ABSTRACT

Names, primarily used to identify individuals, also act as socio-cultural markers mirroring one's sense of belonging or lack thereof within a community. In an immigrant context, the host country's linguistic and cultural trends decide if a person will experience inclusion or exclusion. This paper, exploring Vladimir Nabokov's novel Pnin through the theoretical lens of onomastics, proposes that names have symbolic meanings. The name of a person, especially the one placed in an unfamiliar environment suggests curiosity, mispronunciation, or even rejection. The study seeks help from the frameworks presented in Names and Naming: Multicultural Aspects by Felecan and Bugheşiu to establish that the metaphors of the melting pot and salad bowl used in the book reflect how immigrant identities are perceived through names. The paper also compares Pnin's names with other characters, such as Victor, Liza, and Eric Wind, whose names symbolize adaptation and assimilation to dominant cultural codes. Through qualitative textual analysis and a close reading of the text, this paper argues that naming functions as a linguistic and narrative device.

Key Words: Pnin, Vladimir Nabokov, Symbolism, émigré literature, Onomastics

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1. Introduction

This paper argues that the names of characters, especially that of “Timofey Pnin” in Vladimir Nabokov’s novel *Pnin*, symbolize marginalization, alienation, and narrative control. It does so by employing the concept of names conceived as cultural representatives and carriers of social positioning within multicultural societies.

Vladimir Vladimirovich Nabokov, a Russian American writer, was born in 1899 in Saint-Petersburg to a wealthy aristocratic family. His life was marked by continuous displacements, first from Russia, then across Europe, and lastly to the United States. His repeated displacements informed his literary imagination. These experiences of exile, along with cultural dislocation influenced his writing, both in English and Russian. That is why his writings abound in the themes of identity crises, exile, cultural displacement, alienation, and the inner struggles of displaced people (Dubiaga, 2014). This paper focuses on one of his English novels, *Pnin* (1957), which encompasses these thematic concerns. *Pnin* is Nabokov’s fourth English novel and was originally written as a series of stories about the misadventures of a Russian émigré professor. However, it was later changed into an episodic novel, revolving around the life of Timofey Pnin, an old, eccentric, kind-hearted, and socially awkward man who teaches Russian at the fictional Waindell College. The inspiration for *Pnin* is associated with Nabokov’s colleague, the Russian émigré historian named Marc Szeftel (Dubiaga, 2014). *Pnin* centers on the misadventures of Pnin, who fled Russia during the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 to settle in America. The novel begins with the third-person narration of Pnin’s comical misadventure of boarding the wrong train en route to a university to deliver a lecture, mixing up papers, and losing his luggage, a comically tragic episode that sets the tone for the rest of the novel. With the aid of flashbacks and present-day episodes, Pnin is shown as a man who is constantly struggling in his everyday life, adjusting to different communities and places. He is constantly out of sync with his surroundings: culturally, linguistically, and emotionally. When Pnin interacts with people such as his ex-wife Liza Wind and with the various families he lodges with, they either dismiss his existence or find him amusing. Despite Pnin’s good intentions and brief moments of hope and happiness, like connecting with his stepson, hoping for a promotion, and finding a home, the novel concludes with him losing both his job and his sense of belonging. In the final chapter, the narrator is revealed to be a character named Vladimir Vladimirovich, who discloses his longstanding connection with Pnin and his role as Pnin’s successor.

This paper explores the symbolic and linguistic function of naming in *Pnin*, using theoretical concepts from the book, *Names and Naming: Multicultural Aspects*, edited by Oliviu Felecan and Alina Bugheșiu. Onomastics is the study of the history and origin of names and naming, and thus offers a lens to examine multicultural identity in literature. Among the various concepts, Laurel Sutton’s concepts of the melting pot and salad bowl portray a picture of American society that stands out. The metaphor of the melting pot refers to “A heterogeneous society becoming more homogeneous through the influx of the cultures of immigrants, largely non-white and non-European” (Bugheșiu & Felecan, 2021). This mixture allows for the assimilation of different





cultures into one without any distinction. The metaphor of the salad bowl, on the other hand, suggests that different cultures can exist in a society, but their identities cannot be mixed or assimilated completely (Bugheşiu & Felecan, 2021). Now this identity is made prominent through a person's name. If names are acceptable in the host linguistic norms, the person will enjoy the process of the melting pot (assimilated). However, if it is the opposite, the person will fall into the salad bowl (alienated). So names (be they nicknames, patronyms, or surnames) become more than linguistic labels; they act as markers of identity, inclusion, or exclusion.

Continuing with the broader societal implications of naming, Frank Nuessel narrows the focus to the personal level by highlighting the importance of surnames. He defines a surname as a "Person's family name as distinguished from his given name," which is inherited through parental lineage (Bugheşiu & Felecan, 2021). This lineage is the source of pride and identification for a particular group. Moreover, surnames carry threefold significance: they are genealogical markers, cultural representatives, and carriers of linguistic heritage. This paper will primarily focus on the latter two functions, as the processes of assimilation or marginalization are dependent upon them. It is the cultural and linguistic weight attached to the surname that can make a person's name a barrier to social acceptance.

Anna Tsepkova goes a step further and explains that these names can be changed to align with culturally dominant practices by adopting "phonetic" or "morphological" characteristics (Bugheşiu & Felecan, 2021). This means relying on phonetic accessibility, pronunciation, and other prevailing linguistic norms of the non-native dominant languages in the host society. In doing so, names acquire symbolic meanings that contribute to a person's degree of foreignness, acceptance, or unacceptance in society. For example, when a name resists pronunciation or fails to conform to the prevailing phonological system, it becomes a symbol of foreignness for a person and stops the process of assimilation. On the contrary, when a name is modified and can be pronounced easily in the non-native host country, the person can enjoy a solid sense of belonging and cultural assimilation. So, the extent to which foreign names are adapted, mocked, preserved, or erased in immigrant contexts symbolizes the issues of assimilation, marginalization, and power imbalances.

This paper investigates how naming in *Pnin* becomes a symbolic tool to highlight the themes of exclusion, inclusion, and identity formation by relying on the lens of names as cultural and linguistic markers. Through a close reading of character names and their socio-linguistic implications, the study underscores how identity in the novel is both constructed and challenged through the act of naming. It also explores how some characters have more agency than others through culturally adaptable names.

2. Literature Review

This research focuses on exploring the symbolism of names in the novel *Pnin* by Vladimir Nabokov. The study of names, known as onomastics, is an interdisciplinary field as it intersects with various disciplines due to name use being central to human interaction and identity. John and Katie Algeo argue that the study of names is not a narrow linguistic niche. Instead, it is





interdisciplinary as it intersects with fields such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, geography, history, religion, and literature (Algeo & Algeo, 2000). This makes the naming act, a universal human practice that carries historical, political, and cultural significance. Likewise, the usage of literary names has long been a subject of interest in the American Name Society. Over time, some of these names have entered everyday language. For example, the surname of the protagonist in Sinclair Lewis's 1922 novel *Babbitt* has made its way into the English language. It is used to describe "A business or professional man who conforms unthinkingly to prevailing middle-class standards"(Algeo & Algeo, 2000). The name itself is associated with words like "rabbit", "babble", and "babbitt metal", which is an alloy named after its inventor, Isaac Babbitt. In this way, names are not only used for identification. They are viewed as a means of power and records of social change, reflecting dominant influence, migration patterns, and cultural resistance or assimilation.

By 1981, literary onomastics became one of the major areas of literary scholarship, with a majority of people devoting their time to charactonyms. The term charactonyms was coined by Thomas Elliott Berry in 1941 and was popularized by Kelsie Harder. It translates to a "trait name," and is sometimes also referred to as a "label name, attributive name, and characterizing name"(Algeo, 1982). Authors have intentionally been crafting fictional names to add meaning and a deeper layer of context to the plot. On one hand, the scholars focus on charactonyms to understand the depth of the character and plot. On the other hand, they have sought to comprehend the implications, functions, and social, and cultural context behind these names. In "Magic Names: Onomastics in the Fantasies of Ursula Le Guin", John Algeo examines how Le Guin uses names to add meaning and magical elements to her fantasy works. In her fictional works, names are not randomly chosen but carefully created to bring a solid sense of authenticity, mystery, and relevance. The name "Omelas", for instance, is linked to Salem, Massachusetts, and the witch trials, demonstrating how names carry layered symbolism, historical, and emotional context (Algeo, 1982). By strategically creating and focusing on such personal names and hidden names, one can understand that names hold immense power, and knowing the true name of a person grants control and insight into the person's connection with themselves and society.

Recent studies have also illustrated the multifunctionality of literary names, especially in how they reflect ethnic identity, cultural background, and values. Bugheşiu and Felecan (2021) claim that this process, in turn, allows readers to place characters within specific temporal and social frameworks, offering glimpses into the struggles, habits, and views of various communities. Additionally, this well-thought-out selection of names contributes to the memorability of characters besides enhancing the reader's understanding of themes of cultural diversity and its impact, be it inclusion or exclusion.

In this context, Vladimir Nabokov's *Pnin* becomes a rich text site for exploring the symbolic representations of names within minor literature. Minor literature refers to writing written by or about a minority (in this case, an émigré) but in the language of the majority (Deleuze & Guattari, 1975/1986). So, this kind of literature is marked by a dual sense of displacement. First, it tries to





portray the lived experiences of minority groups. Second, it is marked by the effort to convey that particular experience through a language formed by dominant cultural norms. In doing so, the act of writing in a non-native language also becomes inherently political. It starts to affect everything from what stories are told, and how they are told, to what is left unsaid (Syeda et al., 2021). For example, authors have a range of writing techniques to follow for this purpose. They can also adopt different tones, such as a serious or comic tone, to articulate this experience. Nabokov chooses the latter tone in *Pnin*, using comedy to control the reader's perception and create an emotional distance between the reader and the protagonist's struggles. In doing so, the author also presents a politically charged portrayal of cultural displacement and marginalization, where even the protagonist's name is a symbol of alienation or resistance within the host society.

Vladimir Nabokov's *Pnin* is structured in alignment with the psychological, cultural, and emotional journey of its protagonist rather than the achievement of a definitive circular ending (Toker, 1989). In this process, the chapter positions the novel as a modern quest narrative in which the pursuit or journey itself is marked by cultural dissonance, displacement, and a sense of disorientation. *Pnin*'s misadventures, such as misreading English or misinterpreting social signals, become symbolic of his alienation as an émigré surviving in an unfamiliar and indifferent American society. Moreover, Nabokov's self-referential style points out how motifs and narrative techniques in *Pnin* mirror his wider body of work as if the author might be "remembering" future writings (Toker, 1989). So, *Pnin* is not about reaching a narrative or structural goal; instead, it is about capturing the fragmented, non-linear, broken, and absurd experience of an old man who does not quite belong in America.

3. Research Questions

This paper aims to answer the following questions:

- How effectively and to what end does Nabokov use names, especially that of *Timofey Pnin*, to symbolize cultural marginalization and alienation within the context of immigration and multiculturalism?
- How does the narrator's treatment of names lead to the protagonist's erasure and power?
- What role do secondary characters' names play in contrast to *Pnin*'s?

3.1. Research Objectives

- To examine the socio-linguistic symbolism of names in the novel, primarily focusing on the protagonist's name, *Timofey Pnin*.
- To explore how the narrator's naming choices reflect power structures, leading to *Pnin*'s alienation, while promoting the assimilation of other characters.
- To analyze how other characters in the novel are given agency and power over *Pnin* through their names.

3.2. Scope of the Study





The existing studies on *Pnin* have analyzed the novel by focusing on the linguistic difficulties, narratology, and tragi-comic elements. However, no study has contributed to the naming symbolism present in the novel. The study underscores how names operate symbolically within the text, drawing upon theoretical concepts in onomastics, particularly from *Names and Naming: Multicultural Aspects*. For this purpose, the paper employs a qualitative method, mainly close readings of character names and their socio-cultural implications.

4. Research Design

5. Data Analysis

Vladimir Nabokov is a Russian-born American writer who is celebrated for penning down the experiences of immigrants in his works. *Pnin* is such a novel revolving around the life of the emigre professor Timofey Pnin. Despite linguistic barriers and cultural differences, Pnin tries his best to adjust to the unpredictable life of America. Sometimes, his accent and actions get in the way. Other times, his non-English name sets a wall between him (non-American) and his fellows (Americans). By the end of the novel, Pnin ends up losing his job and his home. Frank Nuessel and Laurel Sutton focus on the linguistic importance of names and how they function as markers of identity in a foreign land. Anna Tsepikova, on the other hand, talks about the aftereffects of the modification of names in order to assimilate into the dominant host country. This establishes that names, especially Pnin's name, constitute a major barrier to his acceptance and assimilation in America.

Naming is considered a social act, especially in multicultural societies where identity is usually defined through language (Algeo & Algeo, 1982). When immigrants settle in a new country, they change their names to adapt to the dominant cultural and linguistic norms. The case of Pnin's stepson, Victor Wind, shows this process. His first name is *Victor*, which is a very common and culturally neutral American name. Plus, Victor carries the positive meaning of "winner" or "conqueror" (Merriam-Webster, 2024). His last name, Wind, symbolizes "movement" and "change". Together, they symbolize a new accepted identity and assimilation, qualities often found with second-generation immigrants. As Laurel Sutton (2021) explains, the concept of the melting pot model is that some people seamlessly blend into the dominant culture by adapting names, habits, and linguistic styles that align with majority expectations. Victor, unlike Pnin, does not struggle with cultural legibility or pronunciation. His name shows that he is already assimilated into American society despite the fact that his roots belong to Russia. This assimilation is further highlighted by his privilege to go to any institution anywhere in America (Nabokov, 1957). His habits might be his issues, but his language and name are not.

The title of the novel is based on the main protagonist's name, "Pnin." Pnin is a fictional name that is considered unusual and difficult in the English language for two main reasons. First, it starts with the consonant letters "P" and "N," which is a rare combination in the English language. Second, it fails to integrate into the phonological patterns of the English language. Tsepikova opines that this phonetic resistance becomes the root cause of a person's alienation, as she notes, "Multicultural influences can be reflected in unconventional nominations on the levels of form phonetic, graphic, morphological patterns" (Bugheşiu & Felecan, 2021). On the phonetic level, it





becomes apparent when native speakers do not know how to pronounce such a name. As a result, they consciously alienate that person based on the structure of the name. This is very obvious in the first chapter when Pnin is heading to present a paper, the host named Judith Clyde introduces him by saying, “I am proud to say, the Russian-born, and citizen of this country, Professor--now comes a difficult one, I am afraid--Professor Pun-noon” (Nabokov, 1957). This scene shows that his Russian name fails to secure a place in the dominant English language through pronunciation (phonetic resistance) and the structure of his name (morphological expression). Claude also separates him from his American identity by highlighting his Russian-born identity. So, his name makes him automatically fall into the category of otherness, which, in turn, results in social alienation rather than integration.

In a multicultural background, names function as sites of negotiation between a person’s identity and dominant cultural norms. According to Laurel Sutton, American society is similar to a “salad bowl” model, where all cultures can live while maintaining their own distinct identities, just like all the ingredients in a salad bowl (Bugheşiu & Felecan, 2021). Moreover, they get to celebrate their distinctness. This distinctness is expressed through traditional mores and manners, lifestyle, or the retention of foreign names. Yet, for Pnin, this amalgamation of retention of distinct qualities and coexistence leads to alienation and foreignness. He is deprived of the “familiarity” that is promised in this co-existence (Bugheşiu & Felecan, 2021). His name never acclimatizes, nor is it seriously accepted as distinct. He even struggles to adapt to informality in terms of the naming system. When he meets his stepson, Victor, he confesses embarrassment at being called “Tim” after just one social gathering. He discloses, “In the beginning I was greatly embarrassed...by the ease with which first names were bandied about in America: after a single party”(Nabokov, 1957). Beyond being personal, this embarrassment and discomfort mirror power dynamics around name pronunciation and choice. He has no power over maintaining his name, as it is a norm in dominant American society, as explained by Tsepkova. She points out that nicknames are considered a form of natural naming that simply shows the current needs and trends of society and nothing else (Bugheşiu & Felecan, 2021). It promises inclusion into society. That’s why a person chooses to be called by his nickname. Unlike formal or proper names, nicknames are also considered dynamic, flexible, and open to constant change (Bowe & Martin, 2007). So, they are created informally and quickly time and again and are employed to replace ordinary or plain names with something more meaningful or expressive. Their dynamic nature makes one acquire acceptance into society. In the novel, Pnin’s insistence on calling him Tim is not about replacing his ordinary name with something more meaningful. Instead, it is modifying his name with that of something more expressive in the dominant language, owing to the need of the hour. This decision also reflects his negative feelings associated with it. This renaming or mispronunciation of minority names, even when well-meaning, is a form of racial microaggression (Bowe & Martin, 2007). This becomes a way to undermine identity and self-worth, which Pnin shows in the form of discomfort and embarrassment.

A name can offer a glimpse into the history of a person’s origin, signaling where they come from and how they are received by others. This very history is disguised as something as simple





as a surname, determining a person's social standing: how they are seen, how much they are respected, and to what extent they are dismissed. This way, a surname becomes more than a genealogical record; it serves as a social marker that sheds light on community lineage and inherited cultural positioning. Nussel maintains that the role of the surname in this process cannot be ignored for assimilation and marginalization are dependent upon it (Bugheşiu & Felecan, 2021). A surname is fixed and is not subject to change, even in a multicultural society like America. For émigrés, fixation upon a name that is already phonetically resistant further alienates the man. This is also prominent in *Pnin*, as the narrator mostly calls him by his surname, denying him the due social status that titles or full names confer. However, he avoids dignifying it. Instead, he mocks him by using his name and by associating it with something foolish. For example, he writes, "Pnin...was not altogether miscast as a teacher of Russian" (Nabokov, 1957). It is an ironic statement that undermines both his intellectual credibility and the cultural dignity that his surname has to offer.

Sometimes, Shakespeare is seen as a symbol of Western culture, which limits his work to a particular audience, probably the dominant culture. However, calling his work revolving around one dominant culture ignores two important things. First, the wide range of names (real, fabricated, and modified) he employs for his characters. Second, the portrayal of minority and marginalized characters in his works (Bugheşiu & Felecan, 2021). When one looks closely at the names in his plays, one can see the multicultural aspect, as there is a clear pattern of including people from various social and ethnic backgrounds. In the novel, *Pnin*, Nabokov also employs a fictitious name to draw attention to the inclusivity and the chain of troubles that follow it. For example, Pnin is socially alienated as he does not have true friends. He is culturally displaced, for Pnin never totally understands America. Lastly, there are linguistic barriers where he cannot pronounce his words without having the touch of his "extra Russian moisture" (Nabokov, 1957). Nabokov begins highlighting all these issues by fabricating a name that is quite unusual in English-speaking society. It is through the name that the reader delves deeply into Pnin's story as a displaced one.

Tsepikova preaches that names carry linguistic weight and become cultural representatives, especially in a multicultural society (Bugheşiu & Felecan, 2021). In the novel, naming serves to highlight the power structure rooted within social and cultural relations. As discussed earlier, the selective naming of the protagonist in *Pnin* is one of the main rhetorical strategies to reflect his social marginalization and symbolic alienation. On the other hand, that very strategy gives power to the narrator. Wayne Booth notes that naming within the narrative is one of the obvious signs of authorial or narratorial alignment (Booth, 1961). When a narrator changes a name or uses only half forms, it mirrors an intentional distortion of sympathy. Throughout the novel, the narrator rarely refers to him as "Professor Pnin" or "Timofey Pnin" and never as "Timofey Pavlovich". "Timofey Pavlovich" is only used by Pnin when he introduces himself (Nabokov, 1957). However, the narrator reduces his naming existence to the bare surname, *Pnin*, and it is not a stylistic minimalism. Instead, it is a form of narrative control that denies the protagonist the social status and cultural assimilation typically afforded by full naming.





As Justyna B. Walkowiak argues "The use of full forms, including patronymics and titles, reflects institutional recognition and cultural respect" (Bugheşiu & Felecan, 2021). In the novel, the narrator strips Pnin of his full name to not only deprive him of cultural respect and recognition but also to reclaim power over the narrative. This power play erases Pnin's identity and leaves him with no power or choice.

J. B. Walkowiak states that patronyms are an integral part of the full name, especially in the Russian naming pattern. The removal of patronyms in the majority language can lead to conflict (Bugheşiu & Felecan). This conflict takes the form of erasure of identity for Pnin. As Nabokov writes (1957):

My name is Timofey... Second syllable pronounced as "muff", ahksent on last syllable, "ey" as in "prey" but a little more protracted. "Timofey Pavlovich Pnin", which means "Timothy the son of Paul." The patronymic has the ahksent on the first syllable and the rest is sloored--Timofey Pahlch. I have a long time debated with myself--and have concluded that you must call me simply Mr Tim or, even shorter, Tim. (p. 57)

The above passage directly reflects Pnin's inner conflict about losing his Russian identity in American society. His reluctant conclusion of calling him Tim represents how he butchers his own cultural and linguistic naming tradition to conform to American norms. Just as the name "Nikolai Gogol" in Lehari's *The Namesake* represents his cultural confusion and representation. So, he chooses to rename himself *Nikhil*, representing his attempt to reclaim power over his identity (Khrais, 2020). Nonetheless, he experiences a similar sense of failure as Pnin.

By contrast, Liza Bogolepov is given authority over nominal practices throughout the novel. Her name is not reduced to first or last name. Instead, her patronymic name changes as per the tradition from Liza Bogolepov to her married surname "Pnin" and "Wind" (Nabokov, 1957). This change of name does not affect her identity or culturally alienate her. This mainly owes to the fact that changing surnames is a part of cultures in different parts of the world, as explained by Frank Nussekl. He writes that "Surnames pass from one generation to another and they constitute a stable element in a cultural group" (Bugheşiu & Felecan, 2021). So, readers see her changing name after name, but she is not alienated or mocked by anyone. Her power is also made prominent by her manipulative skills.

In contrast to *Pnin*, her personal name is preserved throughout the story. Personal names refer to the names that are owned by individuals (Bugheşiu & Felecan, 2021). Liza's first name remains intact while *Pnin*'s first name is either completely abolished or replaced with "Tim", or "Tim Pnin" (Nabokov, 1957). The binary of an intact first name and a changing last name makes her a socially mobile and empowered figure who has some authority over her identity. For example, she chooses to remarry time and again and uses Pnin to her own advantage. Pnin, on the contrary, is a powerless and socially awkward man.

On one hand, it is argued that names simply have an "identifying function, to discriminate one place or person from another (Does et al., 2017). On the other hand, Algeo confers that names are





compressed codes used to signify cultural positioning along with individual identity (Algeo & Algeo, 1982). *Pnin* consists of four letters similar to his ex-wife's husband's name, Eric, who is devoid of any ethnic markers or linguistic resistance. He stands in stark contrast to the protagonist's own name and underscores the ease with which certain identities (names) are absorbed into the dominant social culture. However, they are treated differently by the narrator. First, on a literal level, because Eric marries Liza and assumes Pnin's place. Second, symbolically, as he takes his place by marrying Liza, and shows confidence. Just like Pnin, he is described as linguistically handicapped, "A completely humourless pedant who believed that his English (acquired in a German high school) was impeccably pure (Nabokov, 1957). At the same time, he is given more authority than Pnin. His name fits into the American academic and familial system far more comfortably than Pnin, and he is not portrayed as a comic character. This unequal and unfair treatment reflects once again that names aligned with the dominant phonological and cultural expectations of the host society receive authority and social acceptance easily (Bugheşiu & Felecan, 2021). In the novel, Eric is still treated by familial and societal structures as the legal and institutional patriarch, despite his emotional rejection and detachment from his son. Pnin, on the contrary, is denied both parental authority and biological legitimacy, even though he shares a genuine connection with Victor. It becomes prominent that names not only identify people, they also determine access to power and social recognition.

6. Conclusion

In a nutshell, this study has examined how Vladimir Nabokov's *Pnin* employs naming as a powerful literary and socio-cultural symbol to highlight themes of identity, alienation, and cultural displacement. By focusing on *Timofey Pnin's* name, its morphological unfamiliarity, phonetic resistance, and symbolic treatment, the novel shows how immigrant identities are challenged within dominant linguistic frameworks. Pnin's name makes him different, which further acts as a barrier to his assimilation, both emotionally and socially. The paper illustrates that the linguistic burden of names in multicultural societies determines whether a person is respected or ridiculed, included, or excluded. By applying onomastic concepts of metaphors, such as the "melting pot" and "salad bowl," the research observes that naming in *Pnin* operates on personal and structural levels. It offers a struggle between preserving one's identity and conforming to a new one. In doing so, the novel also critiques the limitations of multiculturalism and underscores the forms of exclusion experienced by those whose names resist assimilation. The study further establishes that the narrator's control over Pnin's name is an act of narrative erasure. In contrast, characters, like Eric Wind and Liza Wind, experience smoother assimilation within the same cultural space due to names that conform to American norms. This unequal treatment adds to the idea that naming practices in literature are not neutral but rather strategic in deciding power structure, cultural place, and identity politics. Future research can investigate comparative onomastic analysis across émigré narratives or analyze how phonetic resistance in names overlaps with gender and race in multicultural societies.

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