ԱՆԻ ՄԱՐՏԻՐՈՍՅԱՆ

THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE SUFFIX - Y IN SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

In *Explorations in Shakespeare's Language* (3), Hilda Hulme writes, "In trying to analyse why the dramatist has so written we appreciate more closely the fineness of texture which he has achieved". And one of the large scopes for analysis in Shakespeare's language essential in estimating and understanding the richness of the texture is the word-formation techniques the Bard used, manipulated and developed throughout the plays. Explorations in Shakespeare's word-formation inevitably bring to a wider understanding of the context on the discourse level as well as to more intimate acquaintance and recognition of the characters, their intents, and hence the play.

Vivian Salmon (6) justly observes, "many critics of Shakespeare's style have commented on his lexical innovations, but only too often exemplification has consisted of random listing where neologisms such as *bare-faced, countless, distrustful,* [etc.] have been quoted without any analysis of the patterns on which they were formed, the underlying grammatical relationships in the compounds or the purposes for which they were coined".

Given their multi-dimensional and indeed multi-functional nature, Shakespearean word-formation techniques can be analyzed and explored in many different ways, in accord with the subtleties of orientation and purpose of analysis. The current paper takes up the study of the multidimensional perspective of the suffix *-y* in Shakespeare's text. An *inductive* approach to the exploration of the functions of the suffix *-y* in Shakespeare's plays is a way to highlight the *distinctiveness* and *originality* of Shakespeare's use of the suffix and his exploitation of its full *functional, semantic* and *stylistic* potential.

The suffix *-y* is one of the most productive affixes in modern English as well as in Shakespeare's language. It is used to form adjectives from nouns or adjectives. The formation of adjectives on noun-base is common enough practice in word-formation and has always been, apparent in such familiar words as *gloomy, cloudy, rainy,* etc.

CDE (1) notes that the suffix *-y* evolved in Middle English from Old English *ig*, and suggests the several meanings applied in adjectives formed on noun-base: 1. *full of or having* – salty; 2. *characterized by* – icy; 3. *somewhat* – chilly; 4. *resembling or suggesting* – sugary; 5. *inclined to* – sleepy. *CDE* also mentions that the suffix is occasionally added to other adjectives without a change of meaning – *stilly, vasty*.

Shakespeare's application of the suffix *-y* is fresh and dramatic due to his choice of peculiar noun-bases as he forms adjectives on the pattern *noun+y*. But what make Shakespeare's use of the suffix *-y* especially vibrant and different from the modern treatment of it are the blend formations of *adjective* – *adjective* **conversion** after the pattern *adjective+y*. The emergent meaning of the new word in either case results in a dramatically **compact denotation**. Modern theories do not seem to dwell much – if at all – on the latter pattern, *adjective+y*, e.g. *plump – plumpy*.

Akhmanova (1) draws an accurate distinction between the *-y* formations in the Old English period and those in modern English. Namely, she mentions that the suffix *-y* was used to form new words of the 'neologism' type denoting weather phenomena. Akhmanova explains the difference between the nature of earlier formations and modern ones – namely, that the suffix was **semantically** productive in OE, whereas now its productivity can be defined as **metasemiotic**. The term *metasemiotics* comes from Hjelmslev: he distinguishes between *connotative semiotics* which has semiotics as its plane of expression, and *metasemiotics* with semiotics as its plane of content. Hjelmslev also notes that the term *metasemiotics* is equal to the term **metalanguage**

As far as metalanguage is concerned, Shakespeare's manipulation of word-formation techniques on the whole vividly demonstrates the author's language feel and innate metalinguistic sense of language potential. In regard of Shakespeare's creativity in *-y* formations, both *semantic* and *metasemiotic* characteristics need be given a due regard – which here are generalized in the term **pragmatic**. Exploring the reasons for Shakespeare's pragmatic choice of *-y* usages, many of which are Williamisms[1], we are to take into account primarily the **metrical demands** of the verse which on many occasions call for brevity of expression. Hence, the pragmatic illumination of the *-y* items invites **phonosemantic** and **pragmapoetic** interpretation in reference to the *noun+y* formations, and **phonostylistic** and **phonopragmatic** explanation in regard to the *adjective+y* formations. Shakespeare's sense of beauty and eloquence too is an explanation for his graceful coinages, which can be classified as having *semantically aesthetic function*. The General Semantics movement of 50 years ago did sometimes use the term *semantesthetic*[2]; this in the Shakespeare contexts can be used in tandem with the term **pragmasemantic**, which is wider in application.

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[1] David crystal's terminology for Shakespeare's lexical innovations, first recorded usages in the OED
[2] David Crystal's clarification

In the present study of the suffix *-y*, the terms *phonosemantic*, *phonostylistic* and *phonopragmatic* closely align with the term **pragmapoetics** which is broader in scope and can comfortably include the mentioned notions as its *functional variations*.

The notion of *pragmapoetics* is introduced by Arne Merilai (4) as a theory of poetic language and a parallel to the notion of *pragmalinguistics*, a study of ordinary language use. He explains that a central idea of *pragmapoetics* consists of a model of the two contexts of literary perception: the aspect of the *content*, or the *narrow context*, and the aspect of *expression*, or the *broad context* – single utterance but two levels of perception, of *meaning* and *force*. "On the broad plane, the composition of the story, the absorbed acting and expression of the performers is observed. It constitutes an attempt to participate in a dialogue with Shakespeare, Moliere, or the producer of the utterances" (*ibid.*, p. 9-10). The predominance of the term *pragmapoetics* in the present discussion of the suffix *-y* can be interpreted by that Shakespeare's application of the suffix is significant in his *verse,* not *prose.* Known for his subtle skill at *blank verse* and *prose* which alternate throughout the plays depending on the context, situation and the character who utters the lines – that is, the choice between *verse* and *prose* is of pragmatic value – Shakespeare's inventiveness at word-formation techniques is especially vibrant in his *verse. Blank verse* which is technically called **iambic pentameter,** is the usual poetic metre Shakespeare *used, manipulated* and *developed* throughout his writing career. Traditional iambic pentameter consists of five feet – each consisting of unstressed and stressed syllables, so that a line starts with an unaccented syllable and ends with an accented one. So, to keep the measure and regularity of the line[3], Shakespeare manipulated English words in a most unprecedented manner. Among other productive and pragmatically challenging affixes found in the Shakespeare canon, the suffix *-y* appears to be the first suchlike device as far as iambic pentameter is concerned.

Given the pragmatic distinction between Shakespeare's choice of verse and prose, the **sociolinguistic** aspect need be outlined alongside *phonostylistic* and *pragmasemantic* features. Shakespeare's kings and other characters belonging to social elite speak in verse, therefore no wonder, the three plays which are entirely in verse are *Richard II*, *King John*, and *Edward III*. Likewise, people of low-class belonging speak in prose; the play which is predominantly in prose is the comedy *The Merry Wives of*

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[3] This is not to imply however that Shakespeare strictly keeps to iambic pentameter. There are various diversions and deviation from the norm if situation calls for. And indeed it would have been quite monotonous and unnatural if his characters and their actors strictly spoke in de-DUM de-DUM de-DUM heartbeat of the English rhythm. More of like observations as to the vitality and direct participation of iambic pentameter in the way actors should speak their lines is accurately explored in Ben Crystal's *Shakespeare on Toast: getting a taste for the Bard* (2009).

Windsor. Hence, an interpretation of a speech in verse or a peculiar usage in a line in verse, like *-y* formations, can be more illuminating and rewarding if the social belonging of the user-character is paid attention to. Of high pragmatic value are the speeches where a speaker switches from prose to verse or the other way round. Such manipulations, which are quite often in Shakespeare, indicate a ***definite intention*** on the part of the character who plays with verse and prose. Therefore, the pragmatic interpretation of a single word-formation technique is such instances can be very much rewarding as to our understanding of the verbal efforts of the character as well as the broad situational context of the play. Thus, the plays yield a number of instances when an adjective is formed on a noun-base via the suffix *-y*. While many of the usages date from as early as circa XIII century, seen in such instances as *hasty, sleepy, sinewy, fiery, smoky*, still they transpire theatricality on several occasions alongside fresh coinages, like *nervy, womby, skyey*.

In *King Edward III*, a mariner describes the battle scene of English-French confrontation, much to the discomfiture of King John of France.

MARINER

E3 III.i.152	Like *fiery* dragons took their haughty flight,
E3 III.i.153	And, likewise meeting, from their *smoky* wombs
E3 III.i.154	Sent many grim ambassadors of death.

We can see the two *-y* adjectives in the small excerpt – *fiery* and *smoky,* both 1300 citations *(CDE)*. The mariner relates how the French and English navies started to shoot at one another on the battle field. The **metaphorical simile** *fiery dragons* in tandem with the highly **figurative collocation** *smoky wombs* have their powerful impact on the whole speech, which is an impressive, poetic and intense depiction of a war.

It is important to mention that Shakespeare uses the word *womb* on several occasions (52); several of the usages are highly figurative or semantically distinctive, like Falstaff's *"my womb, my womb, my womb undoes me" (2H4 IV.iii.22)*, referring to his big belly. But if we count up all the affixed forms of *womb* accompanied with functional shift, the number tangibly increases. The suffix *-y*, in its tiny way, provides for a highly dramatic citation.

EXETER

H5 II.iv.123	He'll call you to so hot an answer of it,
H5 II.iv.124	That caves and *womby* vaultages of France
H5 II.iv.125	Shall chide your trespass, and return your mock
H5 II.iv.126	In second accent of his ordinance.

Exeter delivers to Dauphin King Henry's audacious response to the tennis balls the French prince sent him as a mockery for his green years and well-renowned debauched youth. Exeter's *womby* implies a sense which CDE defines as *resembling or*

suggesting [the source object or phenomenon]. The collocation is profoundly original as we conceive the simile in "vaults resembling wombs".

Vaults, in their turn, can become attributive modifiers, providing for an impressive collocation. Here is a grieving mother, lamenting a son's loss. On the brim of insanity, Constance wails and vociferates over young Arthur's captivation.

CONSTANCE

KJ III.iv.25	Death! Death, O amiable, lovely death!
KJ III.iv.29	…And I will kiss thy detestable bones
KJ III.iv.30	And put my eyeballs in thy *vaulty* brows,
KJ III.iv.31	And ring these fingers with thy household worms,

As is the case with all Shakespearean monologues uttered in emotional state, the current speech homes novel usages and novel collaborations of meaning; this in its turn is conditioned by that Shakespearean monologues and soliloquies are largely in verse – hence, the constraints of the metre for semantic precision, in the above usage – *vaulty* – **succinctness**. Crystal & Crystal gloss the contextual sense of *vaulty* as *empty, cavernous, sepulchral*. The usage is obviously figurative which is reinforced by the noun it modifies – *brows*. The far from mundane **collocation** *vaulty brows* is dramatized further as we acknowledge the vivid **personification** of *death*. Constance's speech is a typical instance of **Shakespearean high drama**.

Another highbrow usage is applied by the Dauphin two acts away.

LEWIS THE DAUPHIN

KJ V.ii.50	This shower, blown up by tempest of the soul,
KJ V.ii.51	Startles mine eyes, and makes me more amazed
KJ V.ii.52	Than had I seen the *vaulty* top of heaven
KJ V.ii.53	Figured quite o'er with burning meteors.

The **elevated style** is still there, as we recall that Dauphin is moved by Salisbury's frank confession that he is not proud of having turned his back to England and King John. The French prince's expression of excitement is truly **pompous** as we come to see his concealed intentions in the end.

It need indeed be emphasized that **metrical demands** are very essential to the interpretations of Shakespeare's exploitation of word-formation techniques. In the above illustration, the suffix *-y* adds an extra unstressed syllable in between the stressed syllables to the right and the left. The addition of the unaccented syllable also helps to maintain the **musical proportion** of the entire collocation as the implementation of the suffix *-y* technically releases the vocal tension which else would have been there in the articulation of adjacent *t*'s of *vault top* – if Shakespeare had opted for *functional shift* of *vault* instead, a word-formation device in which he is as much prolific.

It should be noted, though, metrical constraints may be irrelevant in that the presence or absence of the suffix does not alter much the measure, and two adjacent variants can be encountered side by side.

OTHELLO

Oth I.iii.227	The tyrant, custom, most grave Senators,
Oth I.iii.228	Hath made the *flinty* and *steel* couch of war
Oth I.iii.229	My thrice-driven bed of down.

Shakespeare might have said – "hath made the flint and steely couch of war", or opted for two conversions – "hath made the flint and steel couch of war". The line starts with a proportion of unstressed and stressed syllables, following the first stressed syllable of *flinty* there are two unstressed syllables, and if we decide to stress *couch* – then these are followed by two stressed syllables. If we drop the suffix altogether, the change is minor, the number of double unstressed syllables in the middle is reduced to one, so the result in only one deviation from the five-foot proportion, and this in case we stress *couch*. And if Shakespeare had added the suffix to *steel* which here is a functional shift to adjective – and there are 3 citations of *steely* in the canon – in this case, we would indeed encounter an exactly proportioned five-foot iambic pentameter (*couch* stressed) – with a weak and a strong syllable following each other. So, the musicality and rhythm of the line allow deviations, and here the **subjective preference** of the author must needs be appreciated.

Shakespeare's manipulations can be there to express **poetic exquisiteness – elegant beauty**, as D. Crystal puts it in reference to a similar point in Shakespeare's use of language. Here is a Williamism.

HELENA

MND II.ii.104	What wicked and dissembling glass of mine
MND II.ii.105	Made me compare with Hermia's *sphery**[4] eyne?

Poor Helena, tired of chasing Demetrius in the nightly forest, comes to a desperate conclusion that she has nothing like Hermia's *celestial, star-like* eyes – a prerequisite, she may think, for Demetrius to fall out of love with her and in love with Hermia.

Another Williamism is coined by Oberon.

OBERON

MND III.ii.360	Like to Lysander sometime frame thy tongue,

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[4] Asterisked are the usages recorded in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as Shakespearean coinages, first recorded usages in the English language. D. Crystal's term for Shakespeare's lexical innovations is *Williamisms*, recurrent in the present paper. The list of Williamisms can be found on David and Ben Crystal's website www.theshakespeareportal.com.

MND III.ii.361	Then stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong,
MND III.ii.362	And sometime rail thou like Demetrius;
MND III.ii.363	And from each other look thou lead them thus
MND III.ii.364	Till o'er their brows death-counterfeiting sleep
MND III.ii.365	With leaden legs and *batty** wings doth creep.

The long excerpt is illustrated therefore to make a full show not only of the metrical regularity and accuracy of the fairy king's speech – but the **rhyming** and **melody** of the utterance. The first four line-endings which in modern English can make up only awkward and strained rhymes, sounded perfectly **musical** in OP[5]. In its tiny way, *batty – bat-like* – is in total **musical integration** with the mood of the fairy world. *Bat-like* would have as neatly preserved the iambic pentameter, but the suffix *-y* is more **phonoaesthetically delicate** to add a **magical resonance** to the lines.

Giving deserved merit to the usages and coinages of adjectives on noun-base via the suffix *-y*, it must be, however, noted that Shakespeare's exploitation of the suffix appears still more impressive and pragmatically multidimensional as we come to discourse on the use of adjectives derived from adjective-bases. The morphological subtlety of like coinages is that two types of techniques of word-formation are involved in the process in a peculiar way – *affixation* and *functional shift within one part of speech*. The dissimilarity of the suffix *-y* from the above-mentioned as added to adjective-base to form adjectives, hence the **pragmatic merit** of it lies therein that there is **lack of semantic assimilation** within the adjectival denotation – the suffix is (almost) **superfluous** from the **semantic viewpoint**.

However, there are **phonological issues** loud in the process, whereof is discoursed below.

All in all there are counted several instances of adjective – adjective conversion via the suffix *-y*. The current discussion should with full rights start with the Williamism *vasty*, it appearing on five occasions, three of which in *Henry V* alone, one in *Henry IV, part 1*, and the last in *The Merchant of Venice*.

Hotspur does not spare efforts to provoke Glendower, a living terror to his enemies. The aging lord tries to keep composure and gently reminds the young warrior what he is able to do.

GLENDOWER

1H4 III.i.50	I can call spirits from the *vasty** deep.

[5] For Shakespeare's original pronunciation see David Crystal's *Pronouncing Shakespeare* (2005 Cambridge: CUP)

Vasty means the same as *vast*, so a semantic interpretation is of little help as to the author's pragmatic choice. The reasons for the suffix being there need be explored outside the scope of semantics – and within the scope of **phonostylistics**.

The line is in verse as are the precedent speeches of Glendower. Opting for an extra letter, Shakespeare opted for an extra unstressed syllable. If the Bard had chosen Glendower to say *vast deep* – and indeed there are 13 instances of *vast* as an adjective and 2 instance of noun-function (the word dating from 1575-85, *CDE*) – there would have been two stressed syllables awkwardly side by side. Besides, the absence of the suffix would have obscured the articulation of the words, voiceless *t* being followed by voiced *d*. D. Crystal reflects why Shakespeare did not choose another disyllabic adjective. He mentions that *immense, enormous* and *massive* were available at the time, but the first two had the wrong rhythm, the last the wrong meaning *(2)*. So, Shakespeare opted for a pragmatic solution: "this kind of word creation was commonplace at the time", notes D. Crystal *(ibid.)*.

The coinage appears further in succession, *Henry V* and *The Merchant of Venice* being written thereafter, each separated by a span of another play.

The chorus of *Henry V* thus speculates.

CHORUS

H5 I.chorus.11	Can this cockpit hold
H5 I.chorus.12	The *vasty** fields of France? Or may we cram
H5 I.chorus.13	Within this wooden O the very casques
H5 I.chorus.14	That did affright the air at Agincourt?

The four lines are an exchange of **trochaic foot** and **iambic foot**, as is the whole chorus. The addition of the suffix -*y* keeps the regularity of the iambic pentameter of the line and disperses the tension which might otherwise have accumulated at the junction of the two voiceless consonants – *t, f*.

Cockpit refers to the *theatre pit*, and – to intercalate an extralinguistic observation – the *wooden O* has been a clue to the original layout when Sam Wanamaker took up the the reconstruction of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in 1970.

Shakespeare may want to **emphasize** the attribute by adding the suffix -*y*. In Shakespeare's verse, there is a sensitive distinction of vowel – consonant succession, and at times the Bard may want a proportioned distribution of vowels and consonants than an awkward collision of consonants, to have his audience tune their ears to a particular contextual nuance he wishes to make important.

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This is not, of course, to say that Shakespeare pursues modern RP accuracy[*], and his language is full of contractions and elisions, as EME[7] pronunciation in general (2).

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the amateur actors gather in the forest to rehearse their performance of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe. Here is Flute, speaking out his lines.

FLUTE as Thisbe

MND III.i.86	Most radiant Pyramus, most lilywhite of hue,
MND III.i.87	Of colour like the red rose on triumphant briar,
MND III.i.88	Most *brisky* juvenal, and eke most lovely Jew,

The versification of the lines is rhythmically variegated and the author's wish to make the collocation translucent and distinctive in term of vowel – consonant succession is apparent. The suffix *-y* in the current usage of *brisky* seems to bear a certain **contextual subjective connotation** – an air of **softening** and **tenderness** on the part of Thisbe to her beloved.

Having observed the adjectival innovations so far, it might be indeed that Shakespeare saw a **semantic perspective** in the *-y* device. On the one hand, there is the **pure phonostylistic issue** predominant in the **pragmatic intention** of the author with lack of semantic shift, like in *vasty*, on the other hand, we can observe the **evaluative connotation subjectively manifested by the character**, like in *brisky*.

Thus, the **multidimensional *perspective*** of the suffix *-y* to form adjectives on noun-base to meet **semantic originality** pursued by the author as well as the metrical demands – on the other hand, the purely **phonostylistic function** of the suffix and lack of semantic issue are juxtaposed with adjectival innovations bearing as much **connotative perspective** as phonological needs – hence showing the **pragmatic force** implemented by the author via the **multidimensional *device -y***.

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[6] Note that there was no such notion in Shakespeare's time as Received Pronunciation, and no regional accent was socially preferable or sacrosanct. The emergence of RP came much later, in the 19[*] century, an entailment of the two-century-long prescriptive views.

[7] Early Modern English

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ԱՄՓՈՓՈՒՄ

-y վերջածանցի ներունժային իրականացումները Շեքսպիրի պիեսներում

Հաշվի առնելով իրենց բազմաչափի և բազմագործառույթային յուրահատկությունը, Շեքսպիրի գործածած բառակազմական միջոցները կարելի է վերլուծել և հետաքրքրել տարբեր եղանակներով` կախված աշխատանքի նպատակից: Սույն աշխատանքը ներկայանում է Շեքսպիրի տեքստում -y վերջածանցի բազմակողմանի ուսումնասիրություն: -Y վերջածանցի գործառույթերի ինդուկտիվ մեթոդով վերլուծությունը հնարավորություն է տալիս լուսաբանել Շեքսպիրի -y վերջածանցի գործածման առանձնահատկությունը, ինչպես նաև հեղինակի կողմից տվյալ բառակազմական միջոցի գործառույթային, իմաստաբանական և ոճաբանական ներուժի իրականացումը: