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**Grant W. Smith, *Names and metaphors in Shakespeare's comedies*, Delaware: Vernon Press (Series in Literary Studies), 2021, xxiv + 348 pp., ISBN 978-1-64889-018-5**

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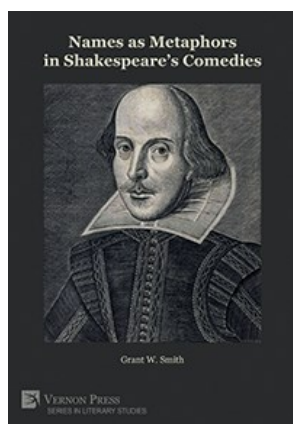
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With *literary onomastics*, one may safely assume that more often than not names are established in accordance with the “nature” of the characters that bear them. In harmony with all the other features of a text, names are active elements in the construction of the message of the text (be it intellectual or aesthetic). Thus, in *Names and Metaphors in Shakespeare's Comedies* Grant W. Smith does not concern himself with proving the idea that in literature – in Shakespeare's comedies, to be specific –, names assume an expressive function. His purpose is more practical and defined, surprisingly, not by the outcome, but by the reader's interests and power of comprehension: the study enjoys the quality of being at the same time very clear and precise in explaining the meaning of names (a goal that might be appreciated by laypersons, theatregoers, translators, etc.), and very subtle and refined in building a new frame for dealing with literary onomastics (a seminal achievement in the eyes of scholars in the field of linguistic and literary studies). However, the latter represents an endeavour undertaken anew, since the theory that comes to sustain the analysis of names in Shakespeare's comedies has already been tackled in Smith's previous works, i.e. “Theoretical Foundations of Literary Onomastics”, in Carol Hough (ed.) (2016), *Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming*, and “Names as art: An introduction to essays in English”, in *Onoma* 40 (2005: 7–28). Perhaps that is why (or, anyway, this is one of the reasons for which) the theoretical framework appears as a preliminary matter of the book – *Introduction* (Smith 2021: xiii–xxiv).

Smith starts from Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory, emphasizing the fact that, rather than being a mere conventional index of an individual, in literature the name is a *symbol*, i.e. a sign that “refers *indexically* to two or more referents at the same time, each with their unique sets of attributes (such sets may be thought of as ‘images’)”; thus, “it evokes an analogical relationship

that exists between the two referents (or series of referents), and it denotes thereby a presumed set of qualities/attributes partially shared by those dual or multiple referents” (Smith 2021: xvi).

In addition to the case of *Quince* (the example that Smith offers twice) and of other similar instances, generously summarized in two of the book’s front matters (see *Abstract*: [v], and *Introduction*, *passim*), a good illustration of the emergence of a new idea by means of cognitive blending might be (*Nick Bottom*: (1) a character in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (the *immediate referent*), and (2) a weaver’s *bottom* ‘the spool around which a weaver winds his thread’, ‘a ball of thread’ (Smith 2021: 181) (the *secondary referent*). The attributes of the secondary referent are partially transferred to the immediate referent. Thus, the understanding that *Nick Bottom* is a synecdoche for a weaver – with everything that follows from here in terms of suggested characterization – is simply and efficiently reinforced in the mind of the readers. However, the new idea expected to be formed would depend on the capacity of the readers to grasp the correct (i.e. intended) *signified* of a specific secondary referent assigned by the author... While Smith allows here a certain degree of fluctuation (“[names in literature] are interpreted at least slightly differently by different addressees”, Smith 2021: xiii), his book confines this liberty within the objective boundaries established by language (its state of the art in Shakespeare’s time), a play’s ideatic equilibrium, cultural and guild habits, intellectual achievements and various aspirations of the day, Shakespeare’s biography, Shakespeare’s linguistic imagination, etc.

The researcher analyses the 1.057 onomastic units (see the final section of the book, “Collated Index of Names and References in Shakespeare’s Comedies”, Smith 2021: 315–347) used in the fourteen plays listed as “The Comedies” in the First Folio edition of the Bard’s oeuvres: *The Tempest*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *As You Like It*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *All’s Well That Ends Well*, *Twelfth Night*, or *What You Will*, and *The Winter’s Tale*. Each play becomes a chapter in Smith’s book (Chapter 1 – Chapter 14: 1–301), of similar structure and consistency, and well-defined autonomy. The design of a chapter is thought to maximize the efficiency of the semiotic demonstration. It begins with the list of all the names that appear in the respective comedy and that subsequently come to be discussed further. Every chapter then reserves two sections for the presentation of the play (“Thematic summary” and “Plot summary”), before plunging into the central matters of name coinage and “what Shakespeare’s audience most likely understood” (Smith 2021: xiv) upon hearing them on stage.

Upon examining the comedies name-wise, Smith identifies two main types of references upon which Shakespeare coins names, each with multiple subtypes and subsets: *associative references* (either *borrowings*, or *topical*

*references*); *lexical equivalents* (either *etymological*, or *phonological*); and one additional category: *references by the characters* (either *epithets*, *endearments*, and *forms of address*, or *personifications*) (see a synopsis by Smith 2021: xix–xxiii). This framework is used time and again throughout the fourteen chapters to sort the onomastic material and to draw certain conclusions regarding Shakespeare’s method of character construction and dissociation between plots within the same play. Smith notes, e.g., that the distribution of the onomastic types varies, observing however a logic that is constant throughout the comedic work of the Bard:

[c]oinages for aristocrats are most often etymological, and coinages for commoners are more often phonological. The etymological coinages usually come from Latin for important characters, but others come from French, Spanish, Italian, and English (often archaic). The phonological coinages are usually based on English, but some are French or Italian. Also, *lexical equivalents* are generally descriptive of appearance (*Aguecheek*), action (*Belch*), or attitude (*Malvolio*). (Smith 2021: xxii)

In his insightful and comprehensive analyses, Smith does not discriminate *a priori* between major and minor characters, since one and all carry a necessary weight in the economy of the text and are key to its thematic development (see p. xxii). Nonetheless, they do not receive the same amount of scrutiny. Names that do not pose problems of understanding in terms of their relationship with a secondary referent may appear only as exponents of a certain type (see, e.g., the case of *Ceres*, *Cupid*, *Jove*, *Neptune*, *Venus* – borrowings from classical mythology; “The Tempest”, Smith 2021: 12). On the contrary, names indicating a complex character, a proper Shakespearean construction – like *Prospero* (“The Tempest”, Smith 2021: 6–7) or *Miranda* (“The Tempest”, Smith 2021: 7–8) –, require a lengthy discussion, whose gist is to reinforce (or unfold) the richness of their suggestive power. With *Prospero*, the overlapping of multiple secondary referents allows for a plethora of possible meanings, even including one that might have transgressed the spontaneous perception of the Elizabethan public:

The Italian adjective *prosperus*, derived from Latin, means ‘fortunate,’ ‘favorable,’ ‘lucky,’ or ‘prosperous.’ The idea of *prosperity* also suggests *hope*, which characters often refer to in contrast to their *despair*. Relative to the central character, the verbal *prospero* means quite literally ‘I cause to succeed,’ and the name states in a simple fashion that this character causes the central action. His preoccupation with books prompted his brother’s ambition; he raises a tempest with his magic; he prevents the murder of himself and a fellow king; and he arranges a love match for his daughter. (Smith 2021: 6)

Because *Prospero*’s references to his art sound very much like Shakespeare commenting on his theatrical career, critics have sometimes argued that Prospero is an allegorization of Shakespeare himself, a valediction to his

profession. However, such an interpretation is only partly true, like any other analogy. [...] Nonetheless, the meaning the name *Prospero* seems to suggest a great deal about the author thinking about his professional success and certainly about art theory and the theatrical arts in particular. (Smith 2021: 7)

The other situation that demands extensive scholarly clarifications is represented by proper names whose appropriate etymological meaning might be overlooked or obstructed by further development of a language. I have already alluded to two cases of this kind: *Bottom* and *Quince* (“A Midsummer Night’s Dream”, Smith 2021: 181–182), bearing in mind the delicate matter of the translation of Shakespeare’s names which fulfill the function of characterization. When one’s (or an epoch’s) traductological principles are sensitive to the need for such an endeavor, identifying the correct secondary referent of a name is crucial for the preservation of auctorial intentions, textual cohesion and the comedic force of a text. The wrong path of linguistic inferences would lead to solutions like Romanian *Fundulea*, instead of *Mosor* (cf. Romanian *fund* ‘hinder part’ vs. *mosor* ‘reel, bobbin’) for *Bottom*; and *Gutuie*, instead of *Iculeț* (cf. Romanian *gutuie* bot. ‘quince’ vs. *ic* ‘wedge, quoin’) for *Quince*. The effects reach far and might touch upon the grotesque on stage! (See George Volceanov, *Un Shakespeare pentru mileniul trei: istoria unei ediții* [A Shakespeare for the third millennium: The history of an edition], Bucharest: Tractus Arte, 2021, esp. pp. 201–212.)

It might be superfluous by now to iterate that through its approach, purpose and result, Grant W. Smith’s *Names and Metaphors in Shakespeare’s Comedies* brings service to semiotics, literary studies, literary onomastics, as a humanistic field, and to the study of onomastics in national literatures, by force of example. It also indelibly marks the traductological aspects concerning Shakespeare’s works, and mediates and gives a sturdy foundation to various (theatrical, intimate) experiences that the public may have with the comedies of William Shakespeare.