

THE LINGUISTIC MIX OF NAMES IN *LLL*

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Abstract: The names in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* present a delightful linguistic mix. The names of major characters are Anglicized names of actual French nobles, which emphasizes the thematic parallelism of historical and fictive events. Other names broaden the international landscape, including *Nathaniel*, a biblical association, *Forester* (which is French as well as English), and *Armado*, a Spanish tag. The length of this paper does not allow room to describe many names in detail. However, the cross-cultural puns make this play especially interesting; e.g., *Moth* has at least two meanings in English, but pronounced *mot* in French means 'word,' 'remark,' 'cue,' or 'answer to a riddle' – which points most clearly to a thematic meaning. A full analysis of this play will appear soon in my book *Names as Metaphors in Shakespeare's Comedies* (Vernon Press).

Key words: names, narratives, analogies, sounds

1. INTRODUCTION

As my title states, this paper is about the linguistic mix of names in *Love's Labour's Lost* (hereafter *LLL*) by which Shakespeare alludes to recent French events to develop a unique narrative context that ridicules French hypocrisy in general. That is to say, *LLL* presents a narrative in a French context in which the action parallels different action that is historical but also in a French context. The purpose is to ridicule both the fictive action and the historical action as silly and hypocritical.

The plot alludes to Henry of Navarre, who had been a military leader and hero of the Protestant cause during the French religious wars, but in 1593 he renounced his Protestant faith (as he had done at opportune times before) and converted to Catholicism in order to capture Paris and solidify his claim to the French throne as Henry IV. He is said to have commented, "Paris is well worth a Mass." In England, Queen Elizabeth was personally chagrined because she had provided Navarre with material aid in several battles (Bullough, 1957, pp. 428 – 429). As a result, the English nobility then buzzed about Navarre's outrageous religious hypocrisy (Woudhuysen, 1998, p. 68).

Shakespeare's play doesn't make the slightest allusion to anyone's religious hypocrisy but presents a new plot (possibly inspired by reports of "*La Guerre des*

Amoureux” or early copies of Marguerite de Valois’ *Memoires*) to ridicule pretentious learning, especially when it is exalted above romantic love.

We see a similar theme at the beginning of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Tranio agrees with Lucentio that they should “suck the sweets of sweet philosophy” (1.1.28), but he adds, “Let’s be no Stoics nor no stocks, I pray, / Or so devote to Aristotle’s checks / As Ovid be an outcast quite abjur’d” (31). As Tranio suggests, Lucentio falls in love with Bianca at first sight and entirely forgets about studying philosophy at the famous university in Padua.

Lucentio, thereby, is a hypocrite when it comes to choosing love or philosophy, and in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* Shakespeare buttresses the existing image of the French king and other nobles as foolishly philosophical, and thereby ineluctable hypocrites when it comes to love. That is to say, this play is not about religion, but adds a new and totally different story about Navarre’s supposed hypocrisy. It is a different story that shows a different kind of hypocrisy and develops a different kind of meaning around the names of the characters.

Of course, the names in this and every play are integral parts of Shakespeare’s narrative art, and it is important to see that these names have meaning in several ways. At one level they acquire meaning just from the narrative contexts in which they are used, i.e., from the development of the plots themselves.

Secondly, names also evoke meaning analogically, i.e., by referring not only to the characters on stage but also figuratively to phenomena, actions, or appearances familiar to the audience.

Thirdly, every name also evokes some measure of meaning from their phonological and morphological structures. These three types of meaning are especially clear in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* because of the international context and the linguistic mix of names.

2. THE NARRATIVE FUNCTION

Names obviously function differently in literature than in other forms of discourse. In everyday contexts names are most often used with little lexical value, i.e., as simple designations of individual items of a certain sort, often with intentional disregard for their phonological, morphological, or semantic suggestiveness.

Even though lexical meaning can be traced to the coinage of a name, it is usually suppressed by our day-to-day interests in simplicity – i.e., for the ease of one-to-one identification. In literature, however, names inevitably acquire symbolic values just from their narrative contexts.

That is to say, the names of characters inevitably acquire symbolic meaning as we get to know the characters from their thoughts and actions. As things happen, the names of characters and places acquire a memorable significance.

For example, we witness and feel the crushing of Billy Budd’s moral innocence by Captain Vere. Even without reading *The Prince*, we understand the many allusions

to the name *Machiavelli*. We also get to know the profundity of evil by watching Iago, or the erosion of intellect by watching Lear, or the lure of ambition by watching Macbeth. These meanings become epitomized by what we see or read in either the fictive or the non-fictive world.

As we watch *Love's Labour's Lost* we see the absurdity of pretentious learning and a special kind of hypocrisy among the French nobles that may have been of personal interest to Shakespeare. He ridicules them for their fixation on academic learning and their presumed neglect of elemental human interests – i.e., romantic love.

The plot of this play is simple. In the French province of Navarre, the King proposes to his courtiers that they adopt an austere regimen of philosophic study, forswearing any contact with women. The absurdity of the proposal and inevitable hypocrisy of the King and his courtiers would have appealed to the English interest in any foibles that could be assumed typical of the French.

The name of the king in this play is *Ferdinand*, the most common name for European kings in Renaissance times – twenty-three in the sixteenth century. However, the names of the King's courtiers, *Berowne*, *Longaville*, and *Dumaine*, are Anglicized versions of contemporary French nobles. As such, they contextualize the play in terms of sixteenth century France and draw a clear analogy to the career of Henri, previously King of Navarre but newly installed as Henri IV of France, and thereby symbolic of French hypocrisy.

Berowne, for example, is almost certainly an Anglicized version of *Duc de Biron* (*Armand de Gontaut*), who was an early supporter of Henri d'Navarre, serving under him as *Maréchal* in the French Wars of Religion, including the siege of Rouen where they were aided by 6,000 English troops commanded by Essex (from late November 1591 to January 1592). Because of mutual acquaintances, Shakespeare would have likely heard at least some first hand reports. Maybe he was even there.

Duc de Biron was killed by a cannonball on July 26, 1592, but he had already been a decisive influence in persuading Navarre to accept Catholicism as the price to be paid for the French throne and for a realistic resolution to that nation's religious wars and egregious suffering. His son, Charles de Gontaut, duc de Biron, was appointed *Maréchal* of France in 1594.

Of course, the character in this play, *Berowne*, is not portrayed as a military adviser but serves the King of Navarre just as loyally in the choices between academic learning and romantic love. He is the most articulate character in the play, and he persuades Navarre to abandon his Neo-Platonic philosophy and to pursue romantic love actively.

Thus, Shakespeare seems to have been well aware of Duc de Biron's influence and borrows the name as well as the type of personal relationship he had with the King in the political and military struggles of the time. In his development of characters, he applies this type of relationship, analogically, to a comedy about pretentious learning and bungled courtship.

The names of the other two courtiers were less well-known in England, but they clearly help to reinforce the French context. *Longaville* (spelled without the final *e* in F1) is likely an Anglicization of *Duc de Longueville*, who was also a follower and supporter of Navarre during the French Wars of Religion. He was with him at a meeting in Nerac to sign a truce and in Navarre's renewal of the hostilities known as *La Guerre des Amoureux*.

The 1578–1579 meeting in Nerac might also be viewed as a highly ironic parallel to *Love's Labour's Lost*. Catherine de Medici, the mother-in-law to Navarre but a supporter of the Catholics, promoted the meeting with Navarre to arrange terms of peace and to seek reconciliation between Navarre and her daughter, Marguerite de Valois, who had married Navarre in 1572 but was soon estranged.

A treaty was indeed signed, but there was no reconciliation of the married couple. In fact, the nobles, led by both Marguerite and Henri, spent their time in “such a quantity of adulterous love-making . . . [that the] hostilities of 1580 [was] called ‘La Guerre des Amoureux’ after them” (Lamb, 1958, p. 56; see also Seward, 1971, pp. 53 – 58). Thus, Navarre was, in fact and ironically, a very free spirit and a hypocrite in both love and war – as well as religion.

The third name of the courtiers in this play, *Dumaine*, appears to be a phonetic approximation of *Duc de Mayeene*, who was anything but an early supporter of Navarre, much rather a fierce opponent throughout the Religious Wars. In 1589 he assumed the presidency of the general council of the Holy League and served as the military leader of the Catholic Leaguers. He supported the bid for the French crown by the old Cardinal de Bourbon in a last ditch effort to prevent the accession of that Huguenot, Navarre.

Furthermore, Mayeene did not readily accept Navarre's conversion. However, in September of 1595, Mayeene finally submitted to Henri IV, in part because of very generous terms offered by the King. As a result, the submission of *Duc de Mayeene* epitomized French hypocrisy even from a Catholic point of view.

Thus, the names of *Berowne*, *Longaville*, and *Dumaine*, as well as the play's setting, make the narrative context meaningful as a humorous look at French hypocrisy – in matters of love as well as religion. As direct references to recognizable nobles, they provide the basis for a narrative context analogous to actual events as perceived by the English audience.

In addition, the Anglicized spellings of the names signify an aural transmission and give the play a distinctive English point of view. They are spelled the way an English speaker would have heard and transliterated them, and when the actors pronounced the names, they might easily have exaggerated a French accent. The French context would then be emphasized, and the English audience would be offered a patriotic sense of superiority while laughing at the French hypocrisy and romantic failures.

3. THE ANALOGICAL FUNCTION OF NAMES

In their initial coinage, all names depend on some type of analogy. Name coinages use words or syllables with previous meanings that are partially transferred, as we can observe in various types of figurative language.

In semiotic terms, names are a type of sign that evokes at least two images, an *immediate* referent and a *secondary* referent, and *relational* meaning emerges as selective attributes are shared, transferred mainly from the *secondary* referent, as from the *vehicle* to the *tenor* in a metaphor (as described by Max Black, 1962, pp. 38 – 47).

For example, the character commonly known as *Dogberry* in *Much Ado About Nothing* is almost always referred to as “Constable” or “Master Constable” by the other characters (i.e., 22 times). However, on one single occasion, Verges addresses him as “neighbor Dogberry” (8). It is a joke that does not need repeating. It refers to something familiar to the audience, similar to a *cow-pie* amid the squalid conditions of Elizabethan England.

Because of his verbal ineptitude, the “Master Constable” becomes a temporary impediment to Hero’s happiness, much like the impediments commonly dodged by London pedestrians. Analogies of this sort are a basic part of creative thinking and can be seen throughout literature – and especially in Shakespeare’s plays.

The names of the nobles in the main plot of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* evoke images familiar to Shakespeare’s audience, and they thereby establish a non-fictive context for an analogous fictive one. At the same time, names of the commoners in the minor plot are fictive but draw verisimilitude from their *secondary* references to common experience – i.e., to things familiar to the audience.

A good example is the wordiness and romantic hypocrisy of Don Adriano de Armado. Armado, “a refined traveller of Spain” (1.1.163), has been hired by the King to entertain the four studious courtiers with “high-borne words” (172) between their hours of study. However, in violation of the King’s strict order to have no contact with women, Don Armado pursues the love of Jaquenetta, a country wench.

When parsed, Armado’s name is an amalgam of references to topical issues and stereotypes. First, his surname is the masculine form of *Armada*, and Shakespeare’s audience would have easily associated the name with Spain’s vainglorious attempt to invade England in 1588.

Secondly, his given name, *Adriano*, was often used for strutting lovers in *commedia dell’arte*. Stage directions and speech prefixes refer to him as *Braggart*, a descriptive label often applied to a distinctive comedic type (e.g., Thraso in Terence’s *Eunuchus*).

Thirdly, when Costard mispronounces the name as *Dun Adramadio*, as he mispronounces many words, he specifies both the tawny complexion of the actor (*Dun* rather than *Don*) and ridicules his histrionic behavior by saying *a-drama-dio* meaning ‘a drama god.’

In the last scene, Costard tells the King that Armado has impregnated Jaquenetta, to which Armado responds with false bravado: "Dost thou infamozize me among potentates? Thou shalt die" (5.2.678). But when Costard accepts the challenge, Armado's bravery wilts with senseless words: "Gentlemen and soldiers, pardon me, I will not combat in my shirt" (5.2.704).

When pressed to explain, the pretentiousness of Armado's flowery words is made explicit: "The naked truth of it is, I have no shirt; I go woolward for penance" (710). He then vows obedience to the King henceforth and to work as a farmer for at least three years. Don Adriano de Armado is thereby brought to penance in ironic contrast to his name – and in parallel time to the penance forced by the women on the four nobles.

Analogy is even more clear in the name *Costard*. The character refers to himself as "a most simple clown" (4.1.140) and is designated as the "Clown" by the speech prefixes and stage directions. However, the clown's name is a word that Shakespeare frequently used to mean a "large kind of apple" and occasionally applied metaphorically to a human head (Crystal – Crystal, 2002, p. 101).

In this play, Shakespeare uses the word as a name to suggest size and rotundity. Costard explains to Berowne that he is perfect for playing the part of "Pompion the Great" (5.2.502) in the *Nine Worthies* pageant. The Elizabethan meaning of *pompion* was 'pumpkin,' and a bit later Costard introduces himself as "Pompey surnam'd the Big" (5.2.550). Berowne then inflates his metaphorical meaning, "Greater than great, great, great, great Pompey! Pompey the Huge!" (5.2.685).

Thus, the name *Costard* has at least two references. One is to a fat character on stage, and the other is to common type of apple; their shared attribute is rotundity. The size of the character is then augmented by an analogy to pumpkins, and also ironically to the Roman general.

The actors who played Costard and Armado were evidently physical contrasts, which might help explain Armado's cowardice when challenged. In Act 4 Costard refers to Armado, "O, a most dainty man" (1.144).

Costard's name is also a homophone for the modern French word *costaud*, meaning 'stalwart.' That word is not found in sixteenth century French dictionaries but might have been in use and be an example of Shakespeare's linguistic playfulness.

4. THE PHONOLOGICAL/MORPHOLOGICAL FUNCTION OF NAMES

Word play is an important element of name meaning, and the names in *Love's Labour's Lost* are a delightful mix of Anglicized French and humorous coinages that highlight the fictive context and the presumed French hypocrisy. The best example is the name *Moth*, who is Armado's page. Shakespeare's pronunciation of this name had a short 'o' and no 'h' sound (i.e., as *mot* or *mott*), and it could refer (in a *secondary*

sense) either to the ‘insect’ commonly attracted to light, or to a ‘particle’ (i.e., *Moth’s* tiny size). *Moth* is the spelling used consistently in the quarto and folio editions of this play, but some editors change the spelling to *Mote* to emphasize the meaning of size.

Such a change eliminates a possible reference to a fluttering insect, even though Costard calls *Moth* a “most pathetic nit” (4.1.148), which the OED (1971) says could mean “gnat, or small fly.” However, George Richard Hibbard argues persuasively: “What the play insists on most is not his diminutive stature but his youth. . . . a quality of living, growing things not of inanimate objects such as specks of dust in a sunbeam” (Hibbard, 1990, p. 246).

However, a third meaning of this name is most important. Intended or not, it is an obvious pun on the French word meaning ‘word,’ ‘remark,’ ‘cue,’ or ‘answer to a riddle’ – i.e., the word *mot*. According to John Kerrigan, the French word *mot* “had a sounded final ‘t’ in the sixteenth century” (Kerrigan, 1996, p. 161). According to Randle Cotgrave’s 1611 *Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues*, the words *mothe* and *motte* “signify more or less the same word” (Woudhuysen, 1998, p. 345).

Thus, based on the sounds heard by Shakespeare’s audience, the pun on *Moth’s* name situates the character in the narrative context of the play, i.e., faux French, and describes his dramatic function, which is to ridicule the other characters with word play, especially Armado and Holofernes.

The French pun is made explicit when *Moth* describes the two windbags as having “been at a great feast of languages, and stolen the scraps” (5.1.36). Costard then playfully refers directly to this clever young page as “a word” (40) that might be eaten. It is an unmistakable pun on the French word, and in the following dialog, it is Holofernes’ verbal battle with *Moth* that makes the learned Frenchman, Holofernes, appear most foolish.

It is not unusual for Shakespeare to pun across languages. He puns on the Spanish meaning of *Borachio* in *Ado*, and he puns on the French meaning of *Parolles* in *MM*. In *LLL* most other names have a French association, including the commoners *Jaquenetta*, a diminutive form of the French *Jacques* with its scatological suggestions, and *Holofernes*, borrowed from François Rabelais (1946). This play often evokes common English biases about French society.

Thus, the French meaning of *Moth’s* name seems central to the play. At the same time, it is the sound of the name that gives it dramatic significance. Changing the quarto and folio spelling to *Mote* narrows the meaning of the name far too much and overlooks the linguistic mix of languages as an important theme of the play in and for itself.

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