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## LEXICAL CONVERSION IN SHAKESPEARE: A MORPHOSEMANTIC STUDY

The article is an empirical, corpus-based study of conversion sampled in the language of Shakespeare's plays. It surveys quantitative tendencies of conversion patterns occurring in the corpus, discusses the productivity of referential types, and looks into the qualitative aspects of N→V data. The latter issue is then placed against the context of general discussion on conversion that has been being held in the present scholarship.

KEYWORDS: conversion, zero-derivation, word-formation, Shakespeare, Early Modern English

### THE PLACE OF CONVERSION IN THE GRAMMAR: OVERVIEW

The main objective of the present article is to discuss structural and semantic aspects of selected zero-derived types sampled in the corpus of Shakespeare's plays with an ultimate view to relate the results of the morphosemantic analysis to the ongoing discussion on the place of conversion in the grammar. Since current scholarship on conversion focuses mainly on aspects connected with theoretical modelling of the process in question, an overview of selected theoretical approaches towards conversion will be offered below.

Formally, the mechanism of conversion seems to be pretty straightforward: it is a process that assigns an already existing word into a different syntactic category without any corresponding change of form of this word. However, this structural simplicity seems to be only apparent – conversion is notorious for its incompatibility with most morphological models that I am familiar with. It resists being neatly incorporated into any uniform theory of morphology, therefore the theoretical approaches towards conversion are numerous and diversified.

One of the problems is whether conversion is actually a word-formation process, or whether it functions as a mere syntactic recategorization of existing lexemes. Some scholars (e.g. Marchand 1969; Kastovsky 1968, 2005) place conversion into a structurally-oriented theory of word-formation, whereby the products of conversion are seen as morphologically complex and thus parallel to the products of affixation.

Hence the label *zero-derivation* is applied. Marchand (1969), for example, claims that in the cases of N→V (*hammer, milk*), V→N (*call, drive*), and A→V (*clean, smooth*) operations, the zero-suffix is employed, which can be justified by the occurrence of an overt suffixal analogue (cf. *white*, adj → *whiten*, verb).

However, the concept of a zero-morpheme as postulated by Marchand has raised some controversies. One problem has been signalled by Aronoff, who writes:

But the concept of a formless phonological substance like this is abhorrent, even ridiculous when we realize that for every WFR which has no associated phonological operation (and there are several in English (cf. Marchand (1969: 359–389))), we must posit a separate such entity, with a resulting proliferation of zeros, one for every rule: Ø1, Ø2, ... Øn.

(Aronoff 1976: 71)

Another way of looking at conversion is to consider it in terms of a functional shift. This approach assumes that the use of, for example, a noun with the grammatical functions and inflections usually associated with a verb is simply a borrowing of that word-form; in principle, it remains a noun, but with the ability to be used as a verb. Within this framework, conversion does not derive new lexemes, it is purely a matter of language use, and as such cannot be viewed upon as a word-formational process but rather a morphosyntactic phenomenon. Such a view is expressed in Cannon (1987: 67), who writes: “From a linguistic point of view, functional shift does not add a new form to the lexicon; but the inflectability or noninflectability of the new function shift requires it to be classed as a new form etymologically”.

More recent theories on conversion are frequently conceptually-based. Štekauer (2005), for example, totally rejects the concept of zero-derivation, and instead suggests a cognitively-based framework in which conversion is seen as a process which is distinct from derivation. He terms it Onomasiological Recategorization:

The onomasiological approach to conversion is based on the fact that each naming unit results from an intellectual analysis of an extra-linguistic object to be named. Within this analysis, the object is classed with one of four general conceptual categories: SUBSTANCE, ACTION (including ACTION PROPER, PROCESS, and STATE), QUALITY, and CIRCUMSTANCE. The individual aspects of extra-linguistic reality do not exist in isolation; on the contrary, they can be conceived of and subsequently linguistically expressed in various relationships, from different points of view. These different “angles of reflection” of extra-linguistic reality can be cognitively brought into a close relation by re-evaluating the already existing logical spectrum, which has its effects upon all the lower levels. Then, the most striking feature of conversion is that it linguistically expresses the conceptual (onomasiological) recategorization of extra-linguistic reality.

(Štekauer 2005: 219–220)

Following Štekauer’s approach, the interpretations of the lexemes *insert* and *clear* respectively can be outlined as follows:

- a. insert<sub>v</sub> – insert<sub>N</sub>: ACTION -----Object-----SUBSTANCE  
Interpretation: Substance as an Object of Action
- b. clear<sub>A</sub> – clear<sub>v</sub>: QUALITY ----- Result ----- ACTION  
Interpretation: Action Resulting in a certain Quality

A similar view, whereby conversion is seen as being grounded in human cognition, perception and categorization, is offered by Cognitive Linguistics. The unmarked word-class change is considered to be motivated by metonymy, and, consequently, converted words are treated as metonymic expressions (see Kövecses/Radden 1998).

The difficulties connected with modelling conversion also stem from the indeterminate boundaries between word classes. It is not clear whether adjectives used as nouns, as, for example, *the poorest, the old, the beautiful, the ugly* should be classified as conversion/zero-derivation, since they do not take nominal inflections. Marchand (1969) excludes such usages from the class of zero-derivation and calls them *syntactic transpositions*.

Similar problems arise in the case of secondary word-class changes, e.g.

- proper nouns as common nouns: *We don't need another Einstein.*
- non-gradable adjectives used as gradable adjectives: *He's more wooden than the other actors.*
- uncountable nouns used as countable nouns: *We bought two beers.*
- countable nouns used as uncountable nouns: *I need an inch of pencil.*
- transitive verbs used as intransitive verbs: *This book sells well.*

Most linguists (Štekauer 1996, 2005; Bauer and Valera 2005) exclude such usages from the domain of lexical conversion. Secondary word-class changes are, however, equaled with primary word-class changes by cognitivists (e.g. Dirven 1999).

## EMPIRICAL STUDY: METHODOLOGY

Having outlined the most important approaches towards the process in question, I will now proceed to the empirical part of the article. The data for the present analysis were extracted from First Folio of Shakespeare (Norton Facsimile, 2nd edition). Due to the lack of formal exponents of the process in question, all sampling had to be performed manually, and the sampled types were checked against the OED etymological data to confirm the directionality of derivation and the date of first attestation. The shortcoming of manual sampling, apart from its being time consuming, is that some conversion types might have been overlooked, especially those whose sense was not indicative of the word having been converted, or those that are well established in the language and therefore less evident as cases of

conversion. To make up for any potential losses, I have additionally searched the OED quotations for examples of Shakespeare's conversions.

Due to the difficulties with sampling, and the inconspicuous nature of the process itself, I have reservations about providing hard quantitative data regarding precise type and token frequencies. Nevertheless, the collected material is extensive enough to allow for identifying dominant tendencies as far as the productivity of individual patterns is concerned, and, more importantly, discussing qualitative aspects of the sampled types.

### CONVERSION IN SHAKESPEARE: INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The present article is a qualitative corpus-based study of the most common structural patterns and semantic effects of conversion sampled in the language of Shakespeare's plays. Thus far, historical accounts of conversion have been very scarce; apart from the study by Biese (1941) and several articles by Kastovsky (e.g. 1978, 2005), no comprehensive, historical research on the issue in question has been published. This fact constitutes one reason for my choosing the language of the Early Modern English period as the source of data. The second reason for which I have focused on the language of Shakespeare's plays as the corpus for further study is that it seems to be a good testing ground for the various theories discussed above. Although conversion has always played a significant part in the English language, the Early Modern English period witnessed an unprecedented productivity of the unmarked word-class change. There seem to have been several reasons for the high availability of conversion at that time: firstly, the decline of most of the word-class inflectional markers might have facilitated the large-scale emergence of formally identical items. Secondly, the popularity of conversion in the epoch may have had something to do with the general interest in exploiting native vocabulary to produce new forms, rather than borrowing them from other languages. And, thirdly, perhaps the fact that English was not yet codified at that time played a role in promoting conversion: in the epoch when monolingual dictionaries and reference grammar books were yet nonexistent, the idea of words belonging to distinct word classes might have been less strong and therefore less restrictive than today. Shakespeare took full advantage of this grammatical flexibility; as Crystal (2008: 149) has put it: "lexical conversion has become one of the trademarks of his style".

The quantitative analysis of the occurrences of conversion in the corpus confirms Crystal's words. In the corpus I have sampled 203 types of conversion that, according to the OED, were first attested in Shakespeare. Among the types first recorded in Shakespeare are:

- canary, v. (N→V): (1) *To ligge off a tune at the tongues end, canarie to it with the feet.* (L.L.L. 3.1.12)<sup>1</sup>
- casket, v. (N→V): (2) *I have writ my letters, casketed my treasure.* (All's Well 2.5.26)
- character, v. (N→V): (3) *the Table wherein all my thoughts Are visibly Character'd, and engrau'd.* (Two Gent. 2.7.4)
- humour, v. (N→V): (4) *To humour the ignorant call I the Deare the Princesse kill'd a Pricket.* (L.L.L. 4.2.52)
- import, n. (V→N): (5) *There's letters from my mother: What th' import is, I know no yet.* (All's Well 2.3.294)
- prodigal, n. (A→N): (6) *A bankrout, a prodigall, who dare scarce shew his head on the Ryalto.* (Merch. V. 3.1.47)
- sickly, v. (A→V): (7) *Thus the Natiue hue of Resolution Is sicklied o're, with the pale cast of Thought.* (Ham. 3.1.85)
- window, v. (N→V): (8) *Would'st thou be window'd in great Rome, and see Thy master thus...?* (Ant&Cl. 4.14.72)
- uncle, v. (N→V): (9) *Grace me no Grace, nor Vncle me, I am no Traytors Vnckle.* (Rich. II 2.3.85)
- shudder, n. (V→N): (10) *I know you'l sweare, terribly sweare Into strong shudders, and to heauenly Agues Th' immortal Gods that heare you.* (Timon 4.3.137)
- embrace, n. (V→N): (11) *Armes, take your last embrace.* (Rom&Jul. 5.3.113)

### THE PRODUCTIVITY OF REFERENTIAL TYPES

A. VERBALIZATION. It comes as no surprise that the most common pattern in the corpus is verbalization. Verbalization has always been very frequent in English, but Shakespeare seems to have had a specially strong tendency towards it: 85% of the neologistic conversion types sampled in the corpus are verbalizations.

Within the verbalization type, the most frequent pattern is N→V:

(12) *Goe to thy Ladies graue and call hers thence, Or at the least, in hers, sepulcher thine.* (Two Gent., 4.2.118)

(13) *Pretty fond adoptious christendomes That blinking Cupid gossips.* (All's Well 1.1.189)

(14) *Heauen... hath fated her to be my.. helper to a husband.* (All's Well 4.4.20)

(15) *Silence that fellow: I would he had some cause to prattle for himselfe.* (Meas. for M. 5.1.181)

<sup>1</sup> Line numbering and quotations according to the OED.

(16) *Why should I write this downe, thats riueted, Screw'd to my memorie.* (Cymb. 2.2.44)

Margreta de Grazia (2002: 57) writes that “Shakespeare was free to convert any noun to a verb”, but this seems to be an overstatement; although stating precise restrictions on N→V conversion would require a separate, in-depth study of grammatical and semantic properties of input nouns, it is still possible to discern some preferences as regards nominal bases that can be converted. Most Shakespeare’s N→V conversions are motivated by common and concrete nouns. Proper nouns as bases are infrequent and limited to the names of persons:

(17) *I warrant him Petruchio is Kated.* (Tam. Shr. 3.2.244)

Another possible factor that renders N→V conversion less likely is the length of the input noun: the optimal number of syllables in the base seems to be 1 or 2. Also, morphologically simplex bases are preferred (although conversion works well with compound bases). Moreover, it seems to matter how “old” a given candidate for conversion is: novel words of foreign origin are less likely to be shifted. One of few examples is the French or Spanish *barricado* used as a verb:

(18) *Man is enemie to virginittie, how may we barracado it against him?* (All’s Well 1.1.123)

Other, but significantly less common, patterns of verbalizations are motivated by adjectives:

(19) *The wilde disguise hath almost Antickt vs all.* (Ant. & Cl. 2.7.132)

(20) *The dreadfull summit of the Cliffe, That beetles o’er his base into the Sea.* (Ham. 1.4.71)

(21) *I do not so secure me in the Error, but the maine Article I do approue In fearefull sense.* (Oth 1.3.10)

There are also few Adv→V patterns:

(22) *That from their own misdeeds askance their eyes!* (Lucr. 637)

(23) *Then let me heare.. What yesternight our Councell did decree In forwarding this deere expedience.* (1 Hen. IV 1.1.33)

**B. NOMINALIZATION.** Nominalization, despite its general productivity in English, is considerably less frequent in the corpus. The most productive direction within the category of nominalizations is V→N. The representative patterns of this type are:

(24) *And dogged Yorke. By false accuse doth leuell at my life.* (2 Hen. VI 3.1.160)

- (25) *Shee discourses: shee carues: she gives the leere of inuitation.* (Merry W. 1.3.50)
- (26) *Get you gone, be strong and prosperous in this resolute.* (Rom&Jul 4.1.123)
- (27) *An exact command... That on the superuise no leasure bated.* (Ham. 5.2.23)
- (28) *Hyperions curls, the front of loue himself.* (Ham. 3.4.56)

I have sampled merely two types representing A→N conversion, the neologistic *prodigal* mentioned above, and the type *movable*:

- (29) *You were a mouable*  
*Pet. Why, what's a mouable?*  
*Kat. A ioy'n'd stoole.* (Tam. Sh. 2.1.198)

Other word-classes do not seem to have been nominalized by Shakespeare, at least no relevant data have been found in the corpus.

C. CLOSED-CLASS. As has been demonstrated above, conversion has been freely applied to open-class items, yielding numerous neologisms and nonce-formations, although not all directions of conversion have been equally exploited in the corpus. In the case of closed-class words, however, the quantitative data is scarce, which supports the oft-cited claim in the scholarship on conversion whereby closed-class words are far less susceptible to conversion than open-class words. In the corpus only 2 types representing closed-class conversion have been identified:

- (30) *and vses a known truth to passe a thousand nothings with.* (All's Well 2.5.29)
- (31) *yet what man / Thirds his own worth.* (Two Noble K. 1.2.96)

D. LEXICALIZATION. It is worth noticing that, compared to Shakespeare's affixal neologisms (cf. Kalaga 2010), very few of the neologistic Shakespearean conversions survived. Shakespeare's innovative conversions proved to be rather short-lived, and many remained just nonce-formations (e.g. *beetle*, v., *askance*, v., *able*, v., *supervise*, n.). Also, many forms are marked as rare and obsolete in the OED (*casket*, v., *gossip*, v., *abode*, v., *accuse*, n., *antic*, v., *arm*, v., *window*, v.)

#### THE SEMANTICS OF N→V CONVERSION

Having presented the structural properties, productivity, and the diachronic account of the sampled types, I will now proceed to discuss qualitative features of conversion in Shakespeare. Due to the fact that the best represented pattern in



the corpus is N→V conversion, this data will be subjected to further qualitative analysis.

The semantics of the N→V conversion types sampled in the corpus is to a large extent unpredictable without the context. In order to demonstrate the complexity of possible logical relations between the noun and the resulting verb, I have looked into the argument structure of conversions sampled in Shakespeare. The semantic categories have been taken from Clark and Clark (1979), Plag (2003), and Lieber (2004):

Table 1. Semantic categories of conversion in Shakespeare

Semantic category	Semantic effect	Illustrative quotations
Agentive	“Affect referent in the style of N”	(32) <i>I haue dogg'd him like his murderer.</i> (Twel. N. 3.2.81) (33) <i>Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going.</i> (Macb. 2.1.42) (34) <i>I good youth And rather father thee, then Master thee.</i> (Cymb. 4.2.395) (35) <i>I warrant him Petruchio is Kated.</i> (Tam. Shr. 3.2.244)
Instrumental	“put referent of base noun to use”	(36) <i>Why should I write this downe, thats riueted, Screw'd to my memorie.</i> (Cymb. 2.2.44) (37) <i>Pistoll him, pistoll him</i> (Twel. N. 2.5.37)
Locative	“Place referent in position as denoted by base noun”	(38) <i>Goe to thy Ladies graue and call hers thence, Or at the least, in hers, sepulcher thine.</i> (Two Gent., 4.2.118) (39) <i>I have writ my letters, casketed my treasure.</i> (All's Well 2.5.26) (40) <i>The seate Where loue is thron'd.</i> (Twel. N. 2.4.22) (41) <i>Would'st thou be window'd in great Rome, and see Thy Master thus?</i> (Ant.& Cl. 4.14.72)
Ornative	“to equip or adorn with N”	(42) <i>But she... Crownes him with flowers, and makes him all her ioy.</i> (Mids. N. 2.1.27) (43) <i>Oh! you haue, I know, petition'd all the Gods for my prosperitie.</i> (Cor. 2.1.187)
Performative	“perform/do N”	(44) <i>To ligge off a tune at the tongues end, canarie to it with the feete.</i> (L.L.L.3.1.12) (45) <i>The Owle shriek'd at thy birth, an euill signe, The Night-Crow cry'de, aboding lucklesse time.</i> (3 Hen. VI 5.6.45)

Semantic category	Semantic effect	Illustrative quotations
Resultative	“to make sb a N”	(46) <i>A Lady So faire... to be partner'd With Tomboyes.</i> (Cymb. 1.6.121)
Causative	“to make (more) N”	(47) <i>Silence that dreadfull Bell, it frights the Isle, From her propriety.</i> (Oth. 2.3.175)
Inchoactive	“become N”	(48) <i>That were the most if he should husband you.</i> (Lear 5.3.70)
Similitive	“act like N”	(49) <i>I good youth And rather father thee, then Master thee.</i> (Cymb. 4.2.395)
Privative	“remove N”	(50) <i>If I were now by this Rascall, I could braine him with his Ladies fan.</i> (1 Hen. VI 2.3.24)
Stative	“be N”	(51) <i>Pretty fond adoptious christendomes That blinking Cupid gossips.</i> (All's Well 1.1.189).
Motive	“move in N manner”	-----

Not all the conversions found in my data fitted neatly into the relationship patterns outlined in Table 1. For example, I have not identified any Motive verbs. On the other hand, many conversions exhibit context-dependent, idiosyncratic semantic structures that can hardly be assigned to the above-listed categories, e.g.

*history*, v.: “to relate in a history”:

(52) *And keepe no Telltale to his Memorie, That may repeat, and Historie his losse, To new remembrance.* (2 Hen. IV 4.1.203)

*uncle*, v.: “to address as an uncle”:

(53) *Grace me no Grace, nor Vncle me, I am no Traytors Vnckle.* (Rich. II 2.3.85).

Moreover, a common phenomenon is the polysemy of individual types. For example, the verb *father* has three different meanings:

- as a performative verb: (54) *Cowards father Cowards, & Bace things Syre Bace.* (Cymb. 4.2.26)
- as a similitive verb: (55) *I good youth And rather father thee, then Master thee.* (Cymb. 4.2.395)
- “to trace the father of”: (56) *The Lady fathers her selfe: be happie Lady, for you are like an honourable father*”. (Much Ado 1.1.111)

In order to better demonstrate the multifarious semantic patternings holding between the base noun and the resulting verb, I have looked into the semantic effects

of conversion of nouns denoting body parts. I have chosen these particular words for several reasons: firstly, because of their etymological and formal homogeneity: all of them being one- or two syllable words of native origin, secondly – they are monomorphemic, thirdly, they belong to the same semantic field, and fourthly, all of those nouns were converted into verbs roughly at the same time. The nouns are as follows: *hand*, *arm*, *elbow*, *lip*, *jaw*, *knee*, *heel*, *breast*, *eye*, *nose*, *brain*, and *rib*. All of these nouns came to function as verbs in the late 16<sup>th</sup>/early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the types *hand*, *arm*, *elbow*, *lip*, *jaw*, *knee*, *heel*, and *breast* were first attested as verbs in Shakespeare. As far as the semantics of the body-part verbalization is concerned, it will be demonstrated that those nouns feed verbs whose meanings are very diverse and largely unpredictable, because they derive from different sense aspects of the input noun. Therefore, the following semantic patterns can be identified:

1. group of instrumental verbs, where the argument structure is, roughly, “to use noun in a way that is characteristic to it”. These are the verbs *elbow*, *hand*, *jaw*, *eye*, *nose*, and *lip*:

*elbow*: “to thrust with the elbow”

(57) *A sovereign shame so elbows him.* (Lear 4.3.44)

*hand*: “to touch or grasp with the hand”

(58) *If you can command these Elements to silence.. we will not hand a rope more.* (Temp. 1.1.25)

*jaw*: “to seize or devour with the jaws”

(59) *I wreake not if the wolues would jaw me, so He had his fill.* (Two Noble K. 3.2.1)

*eye*: “to direct the eyes to; fix the eyes upon”

(60) *Full many a Lady I haue ey'd with best regard.* (Temp. 3.1.40)

*lip*: “to kiss”

(61) *To lip a wanton in a secure Cowch.* (Oth. 4.1.72)

*nose*: “to perceive the smell of something; to discover or notice by the sense of smell”

(62) *You shall nose him as you go vp the staires into the lobby.* (Ham. 4.3.38)

2. verbs which stand in idiosyncratic, largely unpredictable, semantic relation to their corresponding base noun:

*arm*: “to take in one’s arms”

(63) *Come, Arme him.* (Cymb. 4.2.400)

*knee*: ° “to go down on knees”

(64) *Go... fall downe, and knee Thy way into his mercy.* (Cor. 5.1.5)

° “to supplicate by kneeling or bending the knee”

(65) *I could as well be brought to knee his Throne, Squire-like pension beg.* (Lear 2.4.217)

*brain*: ° “to dash brains out; to kill by dashing out the brain”

(66) *If I were now by this Rascall, I could braine him with his Ladies fan.* (1 Hen. VI 2.3.24)

° “to conceive in the brain” (first and only attestation)

(67) *Such Stuffe as Madmen.. braine not.* (Cymb. 5.4.147)

*heel*: “to tap or touch the ground with the heel in a rhythmical manner in dancing”

(68) *I cannot sing, Nor heele the high Lauolt.* (Tr. & Cr. 4.4.88)

*breast*: “to apply or oppose the breast to; to stem, face, meet in full opposition”

(69) *Brestring the Loftie Surge.* (Hen. V 3 Prol. 13)

*rib*: “to furnish or strengthen with ribs”

(70) *It were too grose to rib her searecloath in the obscure graue.* (Merch. V. 2.7.51)

The above examples demonstrate that a formally and semantically uniform class of nominal bases feeds a semantically heterogeneous class of verbs. The only sense pattern that the afore-discussed zero verbalizations have in common can be roughly formulated as “to perform an action related to the base N”, but the exact nature of this relation is difficult to grasp in any systematic, rule-governed manner. This aspect makes the concept of a zero-morpheme difficult to incorporate within the rule-governed framework of word-formation, like, for example, the one offered by Aronoff (1976). If we accept the common view whereby morphemes are “elements which represent a correlation between form and meaning” (Bauer 2003: 334–5), then the problem is that we are faced with the element which has neither a form nor clearly identifiable meaning. If we compare the semantic effects of the supposed zero-affix with other productive verbal affixes in Shakespeare, for example *-ate*, *-ify*, or *-ize*, it turns out that the degree of polysemy of zero is unsurpassed by any of those. It is possible, of course, to claim the existence of many distinct zero-morphemes, but to my mind it unnecessarily complicates the matters. Another possible explanation is that we have to do here with many different things: some types could be classified as zero-operations (e.g. instrumental verbs), others as contextually-motivated semantic

extensions (*heel*), still others are metonymy (e.g. *rib*, *nose*), but I guess that such a view would be unsatisfactory for most theoreticians.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The present article has offered a morphosemantic analysis of conversions extracted from the corpus of Shakespeare's plays. The high availability of the process has been confirmed by a high rate of neologistic conversions sampled in the corpus, high type frequency of individual patterns of conversion as well as its frequent occurrence in nonce-formations. The quantitative analysis has revealed strong verbalizing tendencies in the corpus, with the pattern  $N \rightarrow V$  being the most frequent one. The preferred bases for  $N \rightarrow V$  conversion seemed to be simplex, mono- or bisyllabic common nouns well established in the language of the epoch. Other patterns of verbalization identified in the corpus are  $A \rightarrow V$  and  $Adv \rightarrow V$ , although their type frequencies are much lower.

In contradistinction to verbalizations, nominalizations, despite the strong noun-forming tendencies in the English language, are rather infrequent in the corpus. The chief patterns are  $V \rightarrow N$ , and  $A \rightarrow N$ , but their overall type frequencies are low. Closed-class items were also available for conversion, which is evidenced in the types *nothing*, *n.*, and *third*, *v.*, although the scarcity of data allows to conclude that it was a rather marginal process in Shakespeare.

The most distinguished feature of the sampled types is, however, their non-transparent semantic relation with respect to their motivating bases. I have focused on the  $N \rightarrow V$  pattern as the illustrative data to demonstrate the manifold semantic effects of converted verbs. It has turned out that the proposed semantic categories, though numerous, are nevertheless insufficient to deal with possible meanings of conversion in actual context. The lack of transparency of the process in question is best evidenced in the semantics of body part verbalizations. The practical impossibility to identify a single, predominant sense of the "zero suffix" as postulated by some scholars, and the noncompositionality of the resultant forms seriously weaken the concept of zero-derivation as parallel to affixal derivation.

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