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representative plays of Shakespeare*

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Abstract of a Thesis presented for the degree
of Master of Arts in the University of Durham,
entitled: Aspects of semantic change as exemplified
in some representative plays of Shakespeare.

A. BOWMAN.

1969.

A living language is constantly subject to semantic change, for there is no such thing as the fixed meaning of a word. Meaning is determined by usage. Every speaker of the language brings his own ideas and experiences to it. He does not find it ready-made, but has to re-create it for himself. Nevertheless, there is a central core of meaning which makes communication possible.

Many social, structural and psychological factors operate when changes of meaning take place. This involvement of factors which are not purely linguistic has often led linguists to by-pass the study of semantics. But, as Meillet has pointed out, language is a social fact.

This presentation studies meaning within a live context in an attempt to understand the kind of conditions under which changes of meaning operate. For this purpose the plays of Shakespeare have been chosen, because they provide rich material for many different senses of one and the same word. Six tragedies form the basis, but examples have been used from most of the plays. Each word has been studied in a variety of contexts and in connection with related words. Although the material has been divided into roughly five sections in an attempt to discover any general tendencies which might be at work, these divisions are not meant to be rigid, as many words could be placed in more than one group.

The approach is historical. An audience's understanding of the dramatist's meaning will be influenced to some extent by the time and

place in which they ^{members} live. For this reason each word has been studied in relation to both earlier and later senses, in an attempt to gain a fuller appreciation of the complexity and subtlety of Shakespeare's meaning and to observe the possible influence of one man on the English language. Finally, some general conclusions and suggestions with regard to the material have been made.

Aspects of semantic change as exemplified in
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My debt to various writers, to authorities old and new, and especially to the Master Dramatist himself, is apparent throughout this work. I should particularly like to thank Professor G. V. Smithers and Mr. V.E. Watts, my supervisors during various stages of this thesis, for their unfailing advice and encouragement.

FOREWORD.

I used six of Shakespeare's tragedies as the basis for my material, which is not confined to these, but ranges throughout most of the plays. The following were the plays which I used as a starting - point:-

1. Antony and Cleopatra
2. Julius Caesar
3. Hamlet
4. King Lear
5. Macbeth
6. Othello

References are by author to the works listed in the Bibliography.

Notes are given on a separate page after each word.

All Greek words are given in the form used by C.T. Onions in The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology.

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INTRODUCTION

A language which is alive is constantly subject to semantic change, for there is no such thing as the fixed meaning of a word. Meaning is determined by usage, and usage may vary from individual to individual, from group to group, from generation to generation. Every child has to learn the native language afresh, to recreate it for himself - he does not receive it ready-made. This does not mean, however, that there is not a central core of meaning for, if there were not, communication would be impossible. It means rather that each speaker's usage is influenced by his own ideas and experience. His usage may be different from the general usage, but if it becomes sufficiently well-established it may itself become general usage. The difficulty for the historian of language is to determine when a certain sense has ceased to be merely a speaker's meaning and has become the general usage.

What is meaning? This is a question which has caused endless discussion and to which there have been many answers. It is not my intention to weigh the merits of these, or to add yet one more interpretation to 'the meaning of meaning'. It is certain, however, that there is some kind of reciprocal and reversible relationship between referent, sense and name.¹ Now, the nature of the referent may change, or speakers' conceptions of it may change. The non-physical processes which occur in the minds of speaker and hearer cannot be measured, and can only be observed by a doubtful method of

introspection. These are some of the conditions which make semantic change possible, but they do not account for such change. Many structural, social, historical and psychological forces are at work in this process. It is this very involvement of factors which are not purely linguistic which has caused many linguists in the past to by-pass semantics as a fruitless study. But, as Meillet has pointed out, language is a social fact. It has no reality outside its use by speakers and cannot be divorced from such usage. This feeling has led to the popularity of the synchronic approach, that is the description of language as it stands. Although the former attempt of some historical linguists to organize and classify changes of meaning into complex and rigid schemes may have been pointless when no attempt was made to see them in relation to the contexts in which they took place, nevertheless the diachronic approach can have its value.

It is my intention in the course of this thesis to study some changes of meaning with special reference to a chosen context. My approach is historical. For this purpose I have chosen the plays of Shakespeare, as they provide such an abundance of different senses of one and the same word, and because Shakespeare's usage is so flexible. As Mrs. Hulme has pointed out, the influence of society, of the time and place in which people live, will be important to any understanding of the artist's meaning. "Shakespeare's meaning ... is something that is continually recreated between himself and his reader, his audience. Who that reader is will determine to some extent, what Shakespeare the dramatist can mean".² His first editors, Heminge

and Condell recognised the fact that the reader's apprehension is enriched each time he returns to Shakespeare's language, for even the Elizabethan hearer " was in some manifest danger, not to understand him".³ It is necessary to have some knowledge of the English language before Shakespeare if one is to appreciate how it was changing in his time. He was an innovator and an inventor of language himself, and his influence on later writers, and through them upon the language as a whole, has been considerable. For these reasons I have examined his usage with reference to both earlier and later meanings.

By studying changes of meaning with reference to the work of a particular writer the advantage of being able to observe them in a live context is gained. The way in which one man's usage both coincided with and differed from the usage of his time or previous generations, and the influence of an individual user of language upon later usage can also be appreciated. If treated in this way the diachronic approach can be very valuable in enriching the appreciation of literature and also of the resources, flexibility and potential of the English language.

It is my purpose to study the different senses of certain words within a variety of contexts. Sometimes the context - both the immediate context and the wider dramatic situation - will help to make clear which sense is required. On other occasions it will not, but at least it will give a live example of the kind of ambiguous situation which makes a change of sense possible. Wherever I consider

it to be appropriate I shall try to suggest factors which may have contributed to such change.

I have selected six of Shakespeare's plays as a basis for my study, but I have by no means confined myself to these, for, in the case of each word, I have examined the uses of related words, and this has necessitated the use of material from most of Shakespeare's plays.

Although the mere classification of changes has no intrinsic value if it is an attempt to draw up complex and rigid rules with reference to semantic change, it is nevertheless necessary to put one's findings into some sort of order and to group them, if one is to be aware of any general tendencies which may be at work. For this reason my material falls roughly into five groups, although I hasten to say that these are not meant to be rigid divisions, for many of the words with which I have dealt could be placed in more than one section e.g. many words which have undergone a change of emphasis⁴ have done so by a restriction of sense⁴, or again, a word like emboss⁵ may be from a special vocabulary⁵, but its development owes something to the influence of a homophone.⁵ Such is the flexible and complex nature of language.

1. See Ullmann A. p.54 f.
2. See Hulme p.3.
3. See Hulme p.3 f.
4. See sections 5 and 4 respectively.
5. See sections 1 and 2 respectively.

CHAPTER ONE

A. SPECIAL VOCABULARIES

The divisions of society are reflected in the meaning of words. Words mean different things to different groups. Operation for instance will mean different things for a doctor, soldier and financier.¹ A person may belong to several groups, so that a word may mean different things for him at different times. There are many different kinds of groups apart from professional groups, for instance religious groups and sporting groups. People tend to keep using a word's special sense outside the group with the result that it gradually passes into the general vocabulary. Sometimes a word is copied because of the prestige attached to a certain group, or at other times because a certain sport or belief is popular. So the adoption of certain words may reflect the interests or ideas of a period. In modern times the development of space-travel is producing its own vocabulary.

As ideas and interests change, so a word may lose all connection with its former specific senses. Furthermore, as words pass from a special vocabulary into the general vocabulary they tend to become vaguer. This type of sense-development is complex, as words are constantly passing backwards and forwards between special groups and the general vocabulary.

There are many words which we use frequently, but do not connect with a special group. In this chapter I am dealing with some of

these words which once had specific technical senses. Section B deals with words which once had specific senses connected with earlier beliefs about the universe, man and supernatural powers.²

1. Meillet lists social divisions as one of his three main factors producing semantic change. See Meillet p. 230 - 271 also for his well-chosen example of operation.
2. Some of these words belonged to special vocabularies such as the astrological and medical terms.

FALCONRY

HAGGARD

HAGGARD (adj.) = 'wild, contrary'.

N.E. hagger = 'wild' was adopted in French as a hunting term during the 100 Years War. Then it was lent back again from French as haggard (adj.). cf. ~~German~~ hager (v) ~~and~~ ~~and~~ ~~and~~ (adj.) and ~~and~~ L.G. hagen (v) = 'grow thin'. (Kluge³).

< ~~Ger.~~ * hag (a) raz < I.E. *~~ka^h~~ *ka^h-

Haggard (adj.) manifests a two-way passage from the general vocabulary into a special hunting vocabulary and back again into the general vocabulary. When it was adopted in France in the C14, it was used to describe a hawk which was caught when it had adult plumage, and was thus wild. At the same time it was applied to wild, intractable persons. When it was re-adopted in C16 English it was similarly applied to both hawks and persons. Shakespeare uses it once in a hawking metaphor:-

... if I do prove her haggard,
Though that her jesses were my dear heart-strings,
I'd whistle her off, and let her down the wind,
To prey at fortune.

(Oth. III.III.264-66)

Similarly, he uses the substantive haggard to denote both a wild, untamed hawk (T.N. III.I.61) and a wild, unmanageable person:-

e.g. I will be married to a wealthy widow which hath
as long lov'd me,

HAGGARD (CONTD.)

As I have lov'd this proud disdainful haggard.

(Shr. IV.II.37ff.)

At the end of the C17 and the beginning of the C18 haggard (sb) was synonymous with hag (sb) and meant 'witch'. The fusion of the sense of these two words probably resulted from the fact that the first element of haggard was identified with both hag (sb) and hag (v) = 'to torment as a hag'. Consequently haggard was probably thought to be a formation like laggard (sb) and dotard¹ (sb) and to mean 'one who hags'.

The later senses of haggard (adj.) show the influence of hag (sb)² e.g. 'having a wild appearance like that of a witch, half-starved, gaunt'. As falconry ceased to be a fashionable sport, haggard (adj.) lost all connection with the wildness of a hawk, and having become associated with hag (sb) = 'witch', it ceased to be descriptive of temperament and came to be applied to appearance. Anxiety and privation take their toll and produce a gaunt, wild appearance - thus haggard developed its current sense of 'careworn' and was used to describe the injurious effect on the countenance of privation, anxiety, fatigue, fear etc.

1. laggard (sb) < lag (v) + -ard = 'one who lags, or hangs back.'
dotard (sb) < dote (v) -ard = 'one who dotes'.
2. Note the similarity in pronunciation of hagged (adj) ., a late C17 formation < hag (sb.) + -ed = 'like a witch'.
3. Kluge, F. Etymologisches Wörterbuch Der Deutschen Sprache, Walter de Gruyter & Co., Berlin 1963, 19th edn. (1st publ. 1883).

HUNTING

FLESH

Flesh (v) = 'to incite by giving a taste of blood'.

<O.E. flāesc (str. neut.)

CF. O.H.G. fleisc, O. Fris. flask & O.N. flesk.

Originally flesh (v) was used as a hunting term to describe the action of giving the hounds a share of the game's flesh in order to make them more eager in the chase by giving them a taste of blood. Then flesh was used in a more general way with the sense of 'make eager for prey by the taste of blood', and was not only used in the hunt. Next the word was applied figuratively to men, and had the sense 'to initiate in bloodshed or warfare', (by experiencing a first shedding of an opponent's blood). There are several examples of this kind in Shakespeare's plays.

Once flesh (v) passed into the general vocabulary, it became even less specific and was not necessarily used only in connection with hunting or fighting, but could denote a hardening or experience in any practice, and also the bringing on of ardour or rage by a foretaste of success, (i.e. by becoming 'fleshed', or figuratively 'receiving a first taste of blood'):-

e.g. With you, goodman boy, if you please: come,
I'll flesh ye; come on, young master.

(LR. II.II.48).

i.e. 'give you a first taste of blood, initiate you'.

FLESH (CONTD.)

Shakespeare formed the noun fleshment from this verb. His usage is the only example of fleshment recorded in NED:-

And, in the fleshment of this dread exploit,
Drew on me here again.

(Lr. II.II.124)

i.e. 'excitement arising from the action of fleshing,
or tasting success'.

The verb flesh could also be used to describe the action of plunging an object into flesh. Hence in the following quotation this sense is mixed with that of tasting blood for the first time:-

Come, brother John, full bravely hast thou flesh'd
Thy maiden sword.

(1.H.IV V.IV.29).

The notion of satisfying or urging on with flesh was further used in a figurative way in connection with rage and lust:-

This night he fleshes his will in the spoyle of her
honour.

(All's Well IV.III.14).

All these figurative uses of a term which once belonged specifically to the hunting vocabulary were in general usage until the end of the C18.

HUNTING

EMBOSS

1. Emboss (v) = 'to drive to extremity, lit. to drive to take shelter in a wood'.

M.E. embose (v), perhaps from O.F. emboscher (v), a variation of embuschier (v), (Mod. F. embusquer (v)), which gives Eng. ambush (v).

O.F. embuschier (v) < en + bos, bois (sb) = 'wood' < Rom. * imboscāre (v) = lit. 'put in a wood' < im - + *boscus (sb.) = 'wood'.

2. Emboss (v) = 'to cover with protuberances, to cause to project'.

Probably < O.F. * embocer (v), (apparently not recorded before 1530),

< en + boss (sb) = 'protuberance' < O.F. boce (sb)

< Rom. * bokja or * botja, of unknown origin.

Emboss (v) was a term of the chase describing the exhausted state of an animal when driven to the extremity, (literally 'driven to take shelter in a wood'). Shakespeare uses it in connection with a dog exhausted by hunting:-

Huntsman, I charge thee, tender well my hounds;

Brach Merriman, the poor cur, is emboss'd

(Shr. Ind. I. 14 & 15).

In the C16 and C17 the verb was transferred to persons and had the sense 'drive to the last extremity':-

But we have almost emboss'd him. You shall see his fall tonight.

(All's Well III.VI.90).

There may be some influence from ambush (v), which is from the

EMBOSS (CONT'D.)

same root, in this usage of emboss (v), which could be interpreted as 'trapped'.

During this period emboss (1) could also mean 'to foam at the mouth with rage, fatigue' etc. In this sense it probably shows the influence of the homophonic verb emboss (2) = 'to cover with protuberances',¹ as though emboss (1) meant 'to cover with bubbles of foam as a result of exhaustion'. In the following quotation both senses are present, for Antony is both driven to the extremity like an animal at bay, and enraged or 'foaming':-

O, he's more mad

Than Telamon for his shield, the boar of Thessaly

Was never so emboss'd.

(Ant. IV.XIII.3).

Although emboss (1) is no longer current, we can still see in it an example of a word which passed from a special vocabulary into general usage. It is also illustrative of the influence which homophonic words often exert upon each other.

1. Shakespeare uses emboss (2) several times e.g.

thou art a boil,

A plague-sore, or embossed carbuncle.

(Lr. II.IV.221).

TENNIS

BANDY

Bandy (v) = 'to toss backwards and forwards, to wrangle'.

Origin obscure. cf. Fr. bander (v) = 'to bandie at Tennis' (Cotgrave). Perhaps from bande (sb) = 'side'.

With the sense of bandy = 'to join in opposition' cf. Fr. se bandre contre, Sp. bandear and It. bandare, and cf. E. band (v).

There is no satisfactory explanation of the terminal - ie, -y. If the immediate source is Fr. bander (v), the extension of the stem can be paralleled in Eng. occupy (v) < Fr. occuper (v). The terminal-y has not been explained here either, although the change may have come about in the A.F. ending -ier.

Bandy (v) was first used in C16 English in the game of tennis to describe the striking to and fro of the ball. In the same century it came to be used generally with the sense 'to toss around'. It was figuratively transferred to other phenomena apart from tennis balls, and it could mean 'to give and take blows, words' etc., that is 'to wrangle, contend, fight'. There are several instances of this figurative usage in Shakespeare's plays:-

1. Do you bandy looks with me, you rascal ?

(Lr. I.IV.92).

2. ... to bandy hasty words.

(Lr. II.IV.178). i.e. 'to exchange'.

BANDY (CONTD.)

3. ... the Prince expressly hath
Forbid this bandying in Verona streets.

(Rom. III.I.85)

i.e. 'fighting, exchanging blows'.

Until the early C19 bandy (v) also had the sense 'to join together against'. In this sense it probably shows the influence of the C16 verb band, which had the sense 'to unite against'. Bandy (v) would be open to such influence as it already included notions of struggle and opposition. Thus to bandy = 'to fight' was probably thought to mean 'to join in a band against', and to be formed from band (v) + the suffix -y.

GAMBLING

COGGING

Cogging (p.pple. adj.) = 'cheating, deceiving'.

< cog (v) + -ing.

Cogging appears first as a substantive in Dice play in 1532.

It is a cant gaming term of unknown origin.

Originally cog (v) meant 'to practise sleights of hand in throwing the dice'. It has often been taken incorrectly to mean 'to load the dice'. Shortly after its first appearance it passed into the general vocabulary, where it was used to describe any form of cheating or deceiving, and also to describe fawning, i.e. employing false praise. The sense 'deceptive, 'cheating', is common in Shakespeare's plays:-

e.g. ... if ... Some cogging, cozening slave, ...

Have not devis'd this slander,

I'll be hang'd else

(Oth. IV.II.134).

CHESS

MATE

Mate (v) = 'to render helpless, to stupefy'.

Adoption of O.F. mater (v) < mat (adj.) < Pers. māt = 'at a loss, helpless'. cf. M.H.G., M.Du. & Da. mat & Sw. matt.

The Persian phrase shāh māt = 'the king is dead'.

O.F. eschec mat = 'checkmate'.

In Old French mate (v) was a gaming term which in chess meant 'to bring a piece into such a position that no move can be made' i.e. checkmate. From there it passed into general usage with the figurative senses 'to overcome, defeat, render helpless, stupefy', which are recorded in Middle English.

This is one of several terms which were originally used in the gaming vocabulary and developed generalised senses. There are several instances of its general use in Shakespeare's plays:-

e.g. ... my mind she has mated, and amazed my sight.

(Mcb. V.I.86)

i.e. 'stupefied, rendered helpless'.

CARD PLAY

CARD

Card (sb)

Gr. khartês (sb) = 'papyrus leaf, paper' > L. charta, carta
= 'leaf of paper, card, chart, map'.

> O.F. charte > Eng. carde, carte C15.

In C14 France the Italian carta was introduced in the adapted form carte to denote a playing card. By the C17 this form had gradually been extended to all the senses of the native word charte and at length it superseded charte.

In the late C16 in England, charte was introduced to denote 'map, chart' and replaced carte, carde in this sense. Thus in Shakespeare's English card = the modern chart = 'map'.

The earliest sense of card in English, as in French, is 'playing-card'.¹ Many figurative phrases arose from this original use in the gaming vocabulary. Sure card meaning 'a person whose agency will ensure success' is one of them. Thus card was figuratively applied to a person. Such figurative applications may have produced the modern slang term card meaning 'an eccentric, unusual person', which is elliptical for queer card (first used by Dickens).

As the word passed into the general vocabulary the links with card-playing and the background for this development were lost. As a result it is difficult for the modern speaker to see the connection between an eccentric person and the various stiff objects

CARD (CONTD.)

denoted by card.

Cooling card, a technical term belonging to some unknown card-game, was used in the general vocabulary of the Cl6 to describe anything which 'cooled' a person's passion, hopes or enthusiasm:-

e.g. There all is marr'd; there lies a cooling card.

(I.H.VI. V.III.84).

In subsequent developments the shape and stiffness of a playing-card were generally borne in mind.² The thirty-two points of the mariner's compass were marked on a piece of stiff paper; hence in the Cl6 card could mean 'face of a sea-compass':-

e.g. the shipman's card.

(Mcb. I.III.17).

This specific application of card to a compass is now obsolete.

Shakespeare uses it in a figurative way also:-

1. ... he is the card or calendar of gentry.

(Hm. V.II.111).

i.e. 'he is a person by whom one can steer a course, a person to be followed'.

2. We must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us.

(Hm. V.I.148-149).

i.e. 'with the utmost precision' (lit. 'by the compass').

It is interesting to note that in the later senses of card, a certain aspect,³ namely stiffness, was foremost.

1. This is common usage in Shakespeare's plays.
2. e.g. invitation cards, visiting cards, Christmas cards etc.
3. cf. hectic (adj.), p.19 where firstly the wasting aspect of the hectic fever was foremost and produced the sense 'consumptive', and later the feverish aspect came to the fore to produce the sense 'feverish'.

Hectic (adj. & sb.)

Gk. hektikós = 'habitual, consumptive' > late med. L. hecticus
> O.F. étike > M.E. etik.

Gk. hektikós < héxis = 'habit, state of body or mind' < ékhein (v) =
'to have'.

Milton used hectic (adj.) in its strict, etymological sense
of 'habitual, constitutional':-

That hectick disposition to evill, the source of
all vice.

(Milton: 1641: Ch. Govt. II.III. (1851) 162).

There is one other example of this sense recorded in the O.E.D. for
C17. In Shakespeare's time, however, hectic (sb.) was the medical
name for a wasting fever which was accompanied by flushed cheeks:-

For like the hectic in my blood he rages.

(Hm. IV.III.69).

The substantive hectic, which is elliptical for hectic fever,
was used as the name for consumptives in the C17, and for a flush of
heightened colour in the C18 and C19.

All connection with medicine has been lost and the current
sense of hectic (adj.) is 'feverishly active, stirring'. This is
a C20 development which is first recorded in Kipling. No notion
of 'wasting, consuming' remains, the predominant feature in the

HECTIC (CONTD.)

development of the current sense being that of feverishness. Hectic is no longer descriptive of the body, instead it denotes a state of affairs e.g. a hectic rush, a hectic time.

NAUTICAL

RUMMAGE

Rummage (sb.) = 'displacement, turmoil, commotion'.

NED treats rummage (sb.) as an aphetic adoption of Fr. arrumage (sb.), but according to the evidence in Von Wartburg arrunage, arrumage (sb.) are C17 and C18 formations in French, whereas rummage is first recorded in the C16 in English.

Fr. arrumage (sb.) < M.F. arrumer (v) = 'place the cargo in order'

< M.F. run (sb.) C14 = 'a space in the hold of a ship where one arranges cargo'. M.F. Run is probably borrowed from O.N. rūm =

'splace in a ship for the oars'. 9/

M.F. run also had the non-nautical sense 'order, position' e.g.

bon run = 'good order'. It is difficult to decide which sense of run is the earliest in French, but one might decide in favour of the nautical sense, as rūm had a nautical force in O.N.

From the non-nautical sense of run, there develop rumer (v) and rumage (sb.) = 'displacement' in French. The sense of 'bustle, commotion', which appears in C16 English, is probably from the latter.

Rummage (v) did also have a nautical application = 'to arrange goods in the hold of a vessel' in English from the C16 until the C18.

In C17 English rummage (v) as a nautical term could mean 'to search a vessel'. This sense is probably a mixture of the nautical sense 'to arrange cargo', and the non-nautical sense 'to displace', as one has to displace objects when searching. Modern English rummage (v) = 'to make an overhauling search' has not this special

RUMMAGE (CONTD.)

nautical force, but the original nautical emphasis of rummage was present until the C19.

Shakespeare's one use of rummage (sb.) in the sense 'bustle, commotion, turmoil' is quite apart from the nautical sense of the word and close in sense to rummage (sb.) = 'displacement':-

... this post-haste and romage in the land.

(HM. I.I.107).

NAUTICAL

ALOOF

1. Aloof (adv.) = 'to the windward, at a distance'.

Originally the phrase a loof (< a (prep.) < on + loof = 'windward', probably < Du. loef (sb.) in te loef = 'to the windward'.

The ultimate origin is obscure.

2. Luff, loof (v) = 'to sail near the wind'.

< M.E. lof, loof:

cf. O.F. lof (sb.) = 'some kind of rudder or steering apparatus'.

Certain sea-terms came into the English Language as a result of England's nautical relations with the Dutch from the C14 until the C17.¹ Aloof is one of these words. It was originally a phrase and the order to a steersman to turn the head of the ship towards the wind. From the idea of keeping a ship's head towards the wind and thus clear of the lee-shore, or any quarter towards which she might drift, came the general sense of 'steering clear of' or 'avoiding'. As it passed into everyday usage, the sense of aloof became generalised to 'away from, at some distance from' and was figuratively applied to people in the sense 'taking no part in'. This is the current sense of the adverb and the only one in Shakespeare's plays, where it occurs several times.

In current English aloof (adv.) does not have any apparent connection with sailing, as loof [lu:f] has given place to the shortened form luff [lʌf] = 'windward'. The link had been lost

ALCOOF (CONTD.)

by the Cl9, for Smyth had to explain aloof as:-

The old word for 'keep your luff' in the act of sailing to the wind.

(Smyth: 1867: Sailor's Word Book: See N.E.D).

In Shakespeare's time, however, the verb was still spelt loof [lu:f], so the link with sailing would still have been apparent, although he never used aloof (adv.) in its technical sense.

She once being loof'd,

The noble ruin of her magic, Antony

... leaving the fight in heighth, flies after her.

(Ant. III.X.18ff).

i.e. 'brought close to the wind'.

In this passage, the reader is aware of the general sense of aloof (adv.) = 'disengaged', especially as Cleopatra has withdrawn from the battle. According to N.E.D., the verb never simply means 'to withdraw', yet the idea of withdrawal seems very prominent in this passage. Shakespeare could be using the term in the strictly technical sense 'brought close to the wind', however, for 'the breeze' has been mentioned only a few lines previously:-

'the breeze upon her, like a cow in June,

Hoists sails, and flies ?

(Ant. III.X.14).

Such a connection with aloof (adv.) would not have occurred to the

ALOOFF (CONTD.)

reader if the verb had been spelt luff'd (iʌfd̄). In later usage a change in the spelling and sound of a technical term has helped to dissociate it from a word deriving from it.

1. See Barfield who notes certain phenomena of history preserved in the English Language, amongst them nautical relations.
cf. belay (v) Cl6. Barfield p. 55-57.

HERALDRY

BLAZON

1. Blazon (v) = 'depict in heraldic terms, proclaim, make public'.

< blazon (sb.) < O.F. blason (sb.) = 'shield', of uncertain etymology.

2. Blaze (v) = 'to trumpet forth, proclaim'.

O.E. blaest (sb.) < * O.E. blaesan (v).

The M.E. verb blaze is probably an adoption of O.N. blāsa (v) = 'to blow'.

Blazon (sb.) was originally the name for a war-shield. Then it was used as the name for a heraldic shield, or for a coat of arms. Its next sense was 'a representation or description according to the rules of heraldry', and from this it became generalised to 'a description of any kind, especially of excellencies and virtues'.

The verb blazon showed a similar generalisation of sense as it passed from the vocabulary of heraldry into the general vocabulary. Its non-technical sense 'to proclaim, trumpet forth' is a result of a cross-fertilization with blaze (v)¹ in the Cl6, when blazon (v) also developed the sense 'to publish in a vaunting or boastful way', (as though 'trumpeting forth' something).

Blazon (sb.) appears as the name for a coat of arms in Shakespeare's works. He commonly uses the verb in the general sense 'proclaim'. In the following quotation, blazoning (p.ppl.adj.) has the general sense 'proclaiming':-

One that excels the quirks of blazoning pens.

(Oth. II.I.62)

1. Blazon (v) was probably viewed as a formation from blaze (v) + the suffix -en, which was sometimes added to verbs e.g. hasten (v) < haste (v) + -en, listen (v) < list (v) + -en.

MILITARY

HARBINGER

Harbinger (sb.) = 'host, one sent before an army or royal train to purvey lodgings'.

M.E. herbergere, -geour (sb.) < O.F. herbergere (sb.) < herbergier (v) = 'provide lodgings for' < herberge (sb.) = 'lodgings' < O.S. heriberga (sb.) = 'shelter for an army, lodging' < heri, hari (sb.) = 'army' + * berg (v) = 'protect'.

N.B. The intrusive n occurred in harbinger in the C15 cf. messenger, passenger.

Already in O.H.G., this word had been extended from its original military sense to mean 'place of entertainment, lodging'. Hence in English the sense 'one who provides lodging, a host' in the C12, precedes the military sense, which one would have expected to come first.

In the C14 harbinger (sb.) was used in a special context and meant 'the person sent before an army or royal train to purvey lodgings'. When used in the plural it was the name for an advance company of an army who prepared a camping-ground. It is from this special use as a military term that the modern, general sense 'forerunner' has developed. The development of harbinger (sb.) bears a marked similarity to that of pioneer (sb.), although the former has remained more of a literary term than pioneer, which is a common term in everyday speech. Harbinger cannot, therefore, be said to have enriched the general vocabulary in the same way as

HARBINGER (CONTD.)

pioneer.

Shakespeare uses harbinger in its special sense of 'one going before a king to make preparations'¹:-

I'll be myself the harbinger, and make joyful
The hearing of my wife with your approach.

(Mcb. I.IV.45).

i.e. Duncan's approach.

He also uses the general sense 'forerunner' several times:-

e.g. And even the like precurse of fierce events,
As harbingers preceding still the fates.
And prologue to the omen coming on,
Have heaven and earth together demonstrated
Unto our climatures and countrymen.

(Hm. I.I.121-125).

1. Until the C19 in the Royal Household there was a Knight Harbinger, a relic of the original special function of a harbinger.

MILITARY

SHOCK

Shock (sb.) = 'an encounter of forces, a violent collision'.

< Fr. choc (sb.) Cl6 O.F. choquer (v).

It has been suggested that the original sense of choquer (v)

was 'to stumble against' < O.F. chogue (sb.) = 'tree stump'.

cf. M.L.G. & M.H.G. schocken (v) = 'to swing, wag, quiver'.

Shock (sb.) was first adopted as a military term in Cl6 England. The military sense 'an encounter, or violent collision of armed forces' is common in Shakespeare's plays:-

1. ... in this doubtful shock of arms.

(R.III. V.III.93).

2. ... come the three corners of the world in arms, and we shall shock them. i.e. 'meet with force'.

(John V.VII.116).

Shakespeare also uses shock (sb.) in a figurative way:-

e.g. the thousand natural shocks

That flesh is heir to.

(Hm. III.I.62-63).

i.e. 'encounters, setbacks'.

Here the sense has a much more physical impact than the current sense 'surprise, unpleasant, frightening experience'.

In the Cl7 shock (sb.) passed into the general vocabulary and came to be used in connection with any violent impact and not

SHOCK (CONTD.)

just that of armed forces. Another sense, 'a sudden and disturbing impression on the mind or feelings', developed in the C18. Then in the C19 the term received the special medical sense of 'a momentary stimulation of the nerve', which is one of its commonest senses in current English. The idea of 'impact' has been weakened and in some cases shock (sb.) merely means 'surprise'. The adjective shocking has lost its force through overuse and has joined the band of such colourless epithets as dreadful, frightful, awful etc.

The wider senses of shock (sb.) are partly due to its development in English, and partly to the re-adoption of the French word in specific applications.

B. Previous Beliefs concerning the universe, man and supernatural influence.

ASTROLOGY

ASPECT

Aspect (sb.) = 'countenance, glance, relative position of the planets'.

< L. aspectus (sb.) < aspect-, p.ppl. stem of adspicere (v) = 'to look at' < ad = 'to' + specĕre (v) = 'to look'.

In Latin, as later in French, aspect (sb.) had the general senses 'appearance, glance' and a special astrological sense. In astrology the term was used to describe the relative position of the planets and the way in which they 'looked' on one another, but in popular usage it was descriptive of their joint appearance to an observer on the earth's surface. With the death of mediaval beliefs on the relationship between the human body and soul and the cosmos,¹ aspect has lost its astrological significance in current English. Consequently, the deeper significance of aspect in the following quotation does not automatically strike the modern reader:-

Under th' allowance of your great aspect,
Whose influence, like the wreath of radiant fire
On flickering Phoebus' front

(Lr. II.II.107).

Here the sense is simply 'countenance' on the surface, but aspect is also an ironic metaphor, for the person in question is described as a star by way of mock respect, so that aspect has the deeper significance of 'planetary influence'.

ASPECT (CONTD.)

The current sense of 'appearance' is common in Shakespeare's plays. Until the C19, however, aspect also had an active force and could mean 'the action of looking, glance, gaze', as it frequently does in Shakespeare:-

e.g. ... there would he anchor his aspect.

(Ant. I.V.33).

Greater proximity to Latin meanings and former beliefs give Shakespeare's usage of aspect more flexibility and vividness.

1. The stars and planets were thought to be composed of the 'fifth essence' or 'quintessence' latent in terrestrial things, so that they influenced the lives of men.

ASTROLOGY

DISASTER

Disaster (sb.) = 'unfavourable aspect of a star, misfortune'.

Either < C16 Fr. désastre (sb.) or its source It. disastro (sb.)

< dis - +astro (sb.) < L. astrum (sb.) = 'star'.

Literally disaster = 'unfavourable aspect of a star'.

cf. Provençal & Sp. desastre (sb.)

cf. Provençal benastre = 'good fortune'

" " malastre = 'ill fortune'

" English ill - starred.

Astrology was still considered a serious study in Elizabethan times, when the relative positions or 'aspects' of the planets were thought to influence the lives of men, for example they could be born under a 'lucky star'. The previous popularity of astrology made its mark upon the English language and gave us words like jovial, mercurial, saturnine, predominant, retrograde etc. Disaster is another of these astrological terms. Shakespeare uses it in a strictly technical sense in the following passage:-

... stars with trains of fire, and dews of blood,

Disasters in the sun.

(Hm. I.I.117-118).

i.e. 'unfavourable aspects'.

He was one of the first users of the word in English, as disaster was not adopted until the end of the C16.'

Misfortunes were thought to be caused by the evil aspects of

DISASTER (CONTD.)

stars, hence disaster (sb.) came to mean 'mischance, misfortune':-

e.g. We make guilty of our disasters the
Sun, the Moone, and Starres,
(Lr. I.II.131).

There are several occurrences of this sense in Shakespeare's plays. r/

The word underwent a further development in the C17, when it was applied to calamitous happenings. As a result of the decline of astrology as a serious study, disaster (sb.) now simply means 'calamity', with no notion of stellar influence.

Shakespeare was the first person¹ to use a verb disaster which meant 'to bring misfortune upon, harm, injure', and which became obsolete in the early C19.

... holes where eyes should be, which pitifully
disasters the cheeks.

(Ant. II.VII.16).

1. There was a ppl. adj.: desastré in C16 French, but no corresponding verb.

ASTROLOGY

PREDOMINANT

1. Predominant (adj.) = 'having superior influence'.

< Cl4 Fr. prédominant < L. * praedominantem (pres.pple.)

< * praedomināri, -āre (v) < pre + domināri, -āre (v) = 'to be master, rule' < dominus (sb.) = 'lord, master'.

Originally predominant (adj.) was used as an astrological term and referred to the superior influence or ascendancy of a planet, as it does in the following quotation from Shakespeare:-

HEL. The wars hath so kept you under, that you must
 needs be born under Mars.

PAR. When he was predominant.

(All's Well I.I.183-4).

Similarly, Shakespeare uses the substantive predominance in connection with the spheres and elements:-

1. Knaves, thieves and treachers by spherical predominance.

(Lr. I.II.134).

i.e. 'superior power or influence'.

2. Is't night's predominance, or the day's shame,
 That darkness does the face of earth entomb,
 When living light should kiss it ?

(McB. II.IV.7).

This term was also used in physiology, where it was frequently

PREDOMINANT (CONTD.)

used in connection with the humours.¹ Shakespeare applies it to qualities influencing men:-

1. Two such opposed kings encamp them still
In man as well as herbs - grace and rude will;
And where the worsser is predominant
Full soon the canker death eats up that plant.
(Rom. II.III.27ff).

2. Do you find
Your patience so predominant in your nature,
That you can let this go ?
(Mcb. III.I.87).

With the obsolescence of former beliefs about the stars and the human make-up, predominant has lost all connection with these for the modern speaker and predominant simply means 'controlling'.

1. It was thought that the relative amounts of the four humours in a man's body determined his temperament e.g. if the sanguine humour was predominant he would be of a cheerful nature.

ASTROLOGY

RETROGRADE

Retrograde (adj.) = 'going backwards'.

L. retrogradus (astron.) < retro + gradus (sb.) = 'step'
cf. Fr. rétrograde (adj.).

This is yet another term which originally had a special application to the planets. It was used to describe their movement in a direction contrary to the order of the signs. Chaucer used it in this way and it has an astrological sense in the following:-

HEL. The wars hath so kept you under that you
 must needs be ... born under Mars.

PAR. When he was predominant.

HEL. When he was retrograde, I think, rather,

PAR. Why think you so ?

HEL. You go so much backward when you fight.

(All's Well I.I.183ff).

i.e. 'going backwards, in decline'.

By the end of the C16 retrograde had passed into the general vocabulary and was used of any movement backwards, especially towards an inferior condition. Shakespeare is the first to use it in the general sense 'opposed to, contrary to, in opposition', which adds a notion of struggle to the simple idea of backward movement:-

RETROGRADE (CONTD.)

e.g. It is most retrograde to our desire.

(Hm. I.II.114).

This sense of 'reactionary' is the main current sense, and like disaster, predominant and aspect, retrograde is no longer connected with the stars by speakers.

MEDICAL

HUMOUR

Humour (sb.) = 'moisture, fluid, disposition'.

< L. (h)ūmōr = 'fluid, moisture' > O.F. humeur > A.F. humour.

This word has undergone a remarkable shift of meaning since its passage into everyday language. Its original Latin sense of 'moisture' appears in Shakespeare:-

e.g. Suck up the humours of the dank morning.

(Cae. II.I.262).

In ancient and mediaeval physiology the body was thought to contain four fluids, the so-called cardinal humours i.e. blood, choler, phlegm, melancholy. A person's constitution, and hence his disposition, were determined by the relative proportions of these fluids which his body contained e.g. Chaucer's Doctor of Physic:-

'knew the cause of evirich maladye,
Were it of hoot, or cold, or moyste, or drye,
And where engendred and of what humour.

(Prol. 419-21).

The belief can be illustrated from Othello also:-

.... the sun where he was born drew all such
humours from him. (with reference to jealousy).

(Oth. III.IV.26).

i.e. 'fluids producing a jealous disposition'.

HUMOUR (CONTD.)

Both habitual states of mind and temporary moods were thought to be determined by the humours:-

1. My lord is not my lord; nor should I know him,
Were he in favour as in humour alter'd.

(Oth. IV.II.165).

i.e. 'disposition, temperament'.

2. I pray you be content, 'tis but his humour.
The business of the State does him offence.

(Oth. IV.II.167).

i.e. 'mood'.

These two senses are both common in Shakespeare's plays.

In Every Man out of His Humour (1599), Ben Jonson defines humour as an overwhelming quality or characteristic:-

As when some one peculiar quality
Doth so possess a man, that it doth draw
All his affects, his spirits, and his powers
In their confluxions all to runne one way,
This may be truly said to be a Humor.

(L. 98 - 109).

Thus humour came to mean 'a particular inclination', and even 'a whim, caprice', senses which are common in Shakespeare's plays. When Shakespeare talked of the humorous man, he did not mean the 'funny man' or 'clown', as the modern speaker might, but the actor who represented the fantastic character who was usually capricious

HUMOUR (CONTD.)

or quarrelsome and subject to sudden changes of mood:-

... the humorous man shall end his part in peace.

(Hm. II.II.339).

In the C17 Dryden could speak of a 'humorous wind', i.e. 'a capricious wind':-

From hence on ev'ry hum'rous wind that veer'd

With shifted sayls a sev'ral course you steer'd.

(Absalom & Achitophel (1682) II.212-13).

Capricious or odd behaviour would naturally excite amusement, so that towards the end of the C17 humour could also be applied to speech or behaviour which excited amusement. Previously humours also meant 'fantastic turns of speech, much misused phrases of fashion', and these are scornfully regarded in Shakespeare:-

e.g. ... these are compliments, these are humours.

(L.L.L. III.18).

Today humour (sb.) denotes the quality of exciting amusement, or the faculty of perceiving it. Ideas about the bodily constitution have changed vastly and the word has lost all connection with physiology. The contrast between the current sense of the term and the Shakespearean sense is marked in the following passage, which has a decidedly antithetical ring for the modern reader:-

... my often rumination wraps me in a most

HUMOUR (CONTD.)

humorous sadness.

(A.Y.L. IV, I.18).

i.e. 'caused by the bodily humours, moody'.

(spoken by Jacques, the whimsical character).

The verb humour does retain some of the former meaning however, for to humour someone is literally 'to gratify and soothe someone by falling in with his mood'. There are several instances of this kind in Shakespeare. Other traces of the sense 'mood' are bad humour, good humour, and good-humoured (adj.) describes a person's temperament.

MEDICAL

COMPLEXION

Complexion (sb.) = 'combination, physical constitution'.

< O.F. complexion (sb.) < L. complexiō = 'combination, association' and later 'physical constitution'.

Ben Jonson used complexion in its original Latin sense of 'combination':-

e.g. Diphthongs are the complexions, or couplings of vowels.

(Eng. Gram. I.V.678 (1692)).

This sense was last used in the C19 and is not found in Shakespeare.

Like humour this substantive owes its earliest senses to ancient and mediaeval beliefs concerning the human body. The combination of the four humours in a human being were thought to determine his physical make-up and his temperament:-

e.g. Of his complexioun he was sangwyn.
To liven in delyt was ever his wone,
Forche was Epicurus owne sone, (The ref.=Frankelyn).

(Chaucer: Prol. 331ff.)

This sense is common in Shakespeare's plays:-

e.g. But yet methinks it is very sultry and hot for my complexion.

(Hm. V.II.98).

i.e. 'constitution, temperament'.

COMPLEXION (CONTD.)

In the following passage it is virtually synonymous with humour:-

By the o'ergrowth of some complexion,

Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason.

(Hm. I.IV.27-28).

i.e. 'quality of temperament'.

A few years before Shakespeare¹ complexion was used in the sense 'colour or texture of the skin', (originally showing the bodily constitution). This sense is common in Shakespeare's works. Originally the colour of any part of the body and not just the face was meant. Shakespeare uses it to describe facial colour and this sense is so well-established in his usage that he can use complexion as a synonym for face, countenance:-

e.g. Turne ~~they~~ complexion there.

(Oth. IV.II.63).

He was the first person to use it in a transferred sense 'colour, appearance of the sky etc.':-

e.g. Men judge by the complexion of the sky

The state and inclination of the day.

(Rich.II. III.II.194).

Today complexion has been restricted to describing the colour of the face. Like humour it has lost all connection with earlier medical beliefs.

9/

1. NED. 1568 and 1580.

SUPERNATURAL POWERS

GENIUS

Genius (sb.) = 'attendant spirit, a distinctive quality, an inborn quality'. ← L. genius < * gen-, the root of L. gignere (v) = 'to beget'. In Latin the word has mainly the sense 'attendant spirit'. It has also a sense approaching that of 'characteristic disposition, inclination'. The sense of 'a demon or spiritual being in general' is post-classical. Genius is found in the Romance languages with approximately the same senses as in English.

In classical pagan belief a genius was a tutelary god or attendant spirit that was allotted to every man at birth and governed his fortunes, determined his character and finally conducted him out of the world. There are references to this belief in Shakespeare's plays:-

e.g. Under him
My Genius is rebuk'd; as, it is said,
Mark Antony's was by Caesar,
(Mcb. III.I.55).

cf. Thy daemon, that thy spirit which keeps thee, is
Noble, courageous, high, unmatcheable,
Where Caesar's is not; but near him thy angel
Becomes a fear, as being o'erpow'r'd.
(Ant. II.III.18ff).

Genius was also applied to a bodily representation of something

GENIUS (CONTD.)

incorporeal e.g. genius of famine (H.IV. III.II.337). In classical times it was thought that an attendant spirit could be propitiated by festivities. This idea is contained in the following passage from Ben Jonson, where the genius in question is Volpone's appetite or lust:-

What should I do,

But cocker up my Genius, and live free

To all delights, my fortune calls me to ?

(1605 Volpone I.I.2). Cocker up = 'spoil, coddle'.

Genius was also applied to the two mutually opposed spirits, (i.e. 'good and bad angels' in Christian terminology), by whom every person was supposed to be attended throughout life. Reference is made to this belief in Shakespeare's Tempest which contains several strange and supernatural characters.

The strongest suggestion,

Our worser Genius can.

(Tp. IV.I.27). Can = 'knows'.

From the C16 until the C19 a person's genius was his 'inclination' or 'bent', some intangible quality which was inbred:-

I cannot frame me to your vulgar phrase, 'tis against my genius.

(B. Jonson: Ev. Man Out II.I.4).

i.e. 'disposition' (originally governed by a tutelary spirit).

GENIUS (CONTD.)

At first genius and talent meant much the same and both described an inborn ability. In the C17, however, the sense of genius was expanded. It was distinguished from and even opposed to talent. German poets, critics and philosophers took it up in the second half of the C18 and it was applied very frequently to the kind of intellectual power shown by poets and artists. Intellectual power of this kind is a matter of inborn ability as contrasted with aptitude, which can be acquired by study - (the latter being the force which was assigned to talent). The final stage in the sense-development of genius was probably a result of the association which the term had with spirits, for it came to mean 'inborn intellectual power of an exalted type which seems to come from supernatural inspiration, an extraordinary native capacity for imaginative creation, original thought, invention etc.' This use originated in England but came into great prominence in Germany and it gave the designation of Genieperiode to the epoque in German literature otherwise known as the Sturm and Drang period. It was by German writers of the C18 that the distinction between genius and talent was sharpened into a strong antithesis, the former being spontaneous, whereas the latter involves practice. Certain Englishmen felt an affinity between their own impulses and the Sturm and Drang movement, the most influential being S.T. Coleridge.¹ As a result the final stage just referred to determined the current meaning of genius in English. This is a

GENIUS (CONTD.)

good example of the way in which sense-development can be influenced by a related language. In this case the influence was two-sided, as the English sense was adopted in C18 Germany, subsequently developed and then lent back to give additional force to its English counterpart.

Although former beliefs concerning supernatural powers play an important part in the various sense-developments of genius, the decline and obsolescence of these beliefs has led to the dissociation of genius and them. The general sense of 'any kind of demon or spiritual being' survives, but genie has replaced genius in this sense, so that the two words are not automatically connected in the minds of speakers.

1. See Barfield p.191 - 3 and p.195 - 6, where he discusses some phenomena of history preserved in the English Language.

SUPERNATURAL POWERS

WEIRD

Weird (adj.) = 'strange, uncanny, out-of-the-ordinary'.

O.E. wyrd (fem.sb.) = O.S. wurd, O.H.G wurt, O.N. wurt = 'fate'.

◁ wk. grade of * werþ-, warþ-, wurþ- = 'become'.

O.E. wyrd > @.W. Saxon wurd > wūrd (lengthening in M.E.).

b. Kentish werd > wērd (N.B. Chaucer's Boëthius)

c. S. Eastern & Northern wīrd, which developed an inorganic vowel i > wīrid¹ > wērid

The form wūrd was lost because it became homophonic with M.E. wurde > mod.E. word (sb.)

The long vowel ē is preserved in the Scottish spelling weird, where the i denotes length. Current English weird is from the Northumbrian and Scottish wērd, wērid, weird.

There are two forms of weird in the first folio edition of Macbeth;-

a. weyard III.I.2 : IV.IV.132 : IV.I.136.

b. weyward I.III.32 : II.I.20.

In Shakespeare ²we-ird is disyllabic (this is indicated in the Arden edition by Theobald's emendation weird). In suffixal -ward, w tends to disappear in dialectal and vulgar English.

The loss of w in words like towards, (frequently monosyllabic) caused its erroneous insertion in the apparently disyllabic weyard, which was associated with wayward = 'perverted' (as though weyard were a pronunciation without w for wayward). It is possible to

WEIRD (CONTD.)

understand why such a connection arose when one considers the tricky dealings of the three witches with Macbeth i.e. their wayward or perverted behaviour.

Both in Classical and Germanic mythology, Fate was thought to be controlled by three goddesses who determined the course of human life (the Fates). In O.E. wyrd (sb.) meant 'fate, destiny'. The adjective weird was originally an attributive use of the substantive weird in the C15 weird sisters, meaning 'the Fates'. Its subsequent currency was a result of the occurrence of the term in Macbeth, where weird meant 'having supernatural power to control the destiny of man'.

Gradually the word lost its link with Fate as the belief in Destiny lost force, until in the C19 it could be applied to anything of a mysterious, strange or an uncanny nature, such as sounds and voices. In recent years it has become weakened as a result of becoming a vogue term and being applied to dress, strange behaviour etc. It is now practically synonymous with strange, odd etc., in many situations, although it is still rather more descriptive than these.

1. For the northern short vowel, and the lengthening of i in open syllables, see Luick sect. 396; Jordan p.64., sect. 41, note; and Dobson sect. 79.
2. See Kokeritz p.209 and p.329.

SUPERNATURAL POWERS

NIGHTMARE

Nightmare (sb.) = 'female demon'.

Night (sb.) + mare (sb.)

mare < M.E. mare < O.E. maere (wk.fem.) = M.L.G. mar,

M.Du. mare, mæer, O.N. mara.

< Germ. *maron-, -ôn.

cf. synonymous Polish mora, Czech můra.

The Germanic word is the source of O.F. mare, which appears in

mod. Fr. in the compound cauchemar Cl6. = 'nightmare' < caucher (v)

= 'to trample' + mare. Caucher (v) is a hybrid form, a fusion of

O.F. chaucher (v) and Picard cauguer (v) < L. calcāre (v) = 'to

trample, press'. Mare is related to O.Fr. Mor/rîgain = 'Queen of

elves'. With nightmare cf. M. Du. nachtmare, -maere and L.G.

nahtmare.

Originally nightmare (sb.) was the name of a female demon that was supposed to lie astride sleepers, thus producing a feeling of suffocation. As beliefs in demons waned, nightmare was transferred in the Cl6 from the demon herself to the feelings of suffocation and distress associated with her, and subsequently to a bad dream producing these sensations. When the speaker of current English speaks of a nightmare, he has no notion of a struggle with a demon, and is merely describing a distressing dream, which he knows to be the result of mental unrest. Since mare no longer has the sense 'demon', he probably makes a false connection with mare (sb.)

meaning a 'female horse'.

The old belief in a specific demon is referred to once in Shakespeare's King Lear, where it appears in a kind of charm which is recited by Edgar disguised as a Bedlam beggar:-

He met the night-mare, and her mine-fold....

(Lr. III.IV.124).

SUPERNATURAL POWERS

SHREWD

1. Shrew (sb.) = 'a mammal of the mouse family, formerly held to be venomous and to exercise a malignant influence'.

< O.E. scraewa, scraewa (sb.), related to O.H.G. scravaz = 'dwarf', M.H.G. schrawaz, shrat, shröuwel = 'devil', & Icel. skroggr = 'oldman'.

Some scholars refer the word to Germ. *skreu- = 'to cut'.

2. Shrew (sb.) = 'a wicked, evil-disposed man, a rascal' C13-C17, and 'someone given to scolding or perverse behaviour, especially a woman', (now only a woman) C14-. This substantive is generally held to be a transferred use of shrew (sb.1.), as a result of this animal's supposed evil power.

Shrew is common in Shakespeare's plays in the sense 'a scolding woman'.

3. Shrew (v) = 'to curse' C14-C17.

e.g. Shrew my heart, you never spoke what did become you less.

(W.T. I.II.281). i.e. 'beshrew'.

4. Shrewd (adj.) = 'cursed, ill-disposed, evil, sharp, penetrating'.

< M.E. shrewed-e, probably from shrew (sb.2.) + -ed.

(cf. ed in crabbed, dogged, wicked, which are all early M.E. formations). This formation coincided with the past participle of shrew (v), hence in some cases it has the sense 'cursed'.

SHREWD (CONTD.)

Superstition produced the notion of evil in the earliest senses of this word. From the C14 until the C17 the adjective could be applied to material and immaterial things, as well as to people, and it had the senses 'evil, ill-disposed, sharp', senses which are common in Shakespeare's plays:-

e.g. shrewd steel.

(R.II. III.II.59). i.e. 'sharp'.

e.g. This last day was

A shrewd one to's.

(Ant. IV.IX.4). i.e. 'bad, evil'.

It could also mean 'shrewish, given to railing' when applied to persons.

Similarly, shrewdly (adv.) could mean 'sharply':-

e.g. The air bites shrewdly; is it very cold ?

(Hm. I.IV.1).

It was expressive of a painful or adverse condition, but was often a mere intensive, meaning 'grievously, intensely':-

e.g. He's shrewdly vexed at something.

(All's Well III.V.86).

In the C16 shrewd was applied to mental acuteness and developed the senses 'astute, keen in perception, cunning, artful'. There are several instances of these senses in Shakespeare's plays:-

e.g. ... that shrewd and knavish sprite.

(M.N.D. II.I.33).

Shrewdly (adv.) and Shrewdness (sb.) show a similar development:-

e.g. Cousin you apprehend passing shrewdly.

(Much Ado II.I. 68-69). i.e. 'astutely'.

e.g. her garboils ...

Made out of her impatience, which not wanted

Shrewdness of policy to ...

(Ant. II.II.69ff.) i.e. 'cunning, penetration'.

Shrewd and the associated words had a much wider range of sense in Shakespeare's plays than they have in current English, where all sense of evil influence has been lost. Now these words are only applied to people who manifest a sharpness of insight, but there is no connotation of 'cunning'.

All the words with which I have dealt in this chapter have become more general in sense when they have passed into the general vocabulary. Sometimes their loss of connection with earlier specific senses is due to the decline in popularity of certain pastimes, such as falconry, sometimes to the progress made with regard to beliefs about the nature of the universe, the human body and the powers governing them.

When a word ~~like pioneer~~ or like hectic passes into the general vocabulary one aspect of its sense is foremost. So long as its connection with the special vocabulary and its specific technical sense are retained, the aspect which is foremost may differ from generation to generation. As a result the word may have a different general sense during different periods.

A word may belong to several special vocabularies as well as to the general vocabulary, so that it may have several senses. In the case of rummage it is hard to say whether the general sense or the special nautical sense was earlier, but the fact remains that the modern sense has probably resulted from a mingling of the two.

CHAPTER TWO

HOMOPHONES

Many words change their sense as a result of association with homophonic words. Homophones are words which have different etymologies but are identical in spelling and pronunciation, or at least in pronunciation, as their name implies. A large number of homophones arise by converging sound-development - two or more words which were phonetically distinct at an earlier date may undergo such sound - changes that eventually they coincide e.g. O.E. sealt and O.F. saut > Eng. salt.

The cross-fertilization between homophones is a very complex matter, Sometimes they merge until they are regarded as different senses of one word and not as two distinct words e.g. pregnant. Indeed, it is sometimes difficult to tell where polysemy ends and homonymy begins.

S. Ullmann¹ regards polysemy as a useful and very necessary fact of language. The alternative of having an unwieldy store of separate words for each subject which we care to discuss is frightening. Furthermore, if one word were not capable of having various senses, metaphorical usage would be non-existent, and as a result language would be robbed of much of its expressiveness and flexibility. On the other hand, Ullmann regards homonymy as unnecessary to the structure of language and^{as} a source of ambiguity. He states that an idiom without it would be more efficient. Homophones can

CHAPTER TWO (CONTD.)

certainly produce ambiguity which is not always cleared by context, but in the following chapter I shall endeavour to show how homonymy can be a source of flexibility and expressiveness just as polysemy can.

1. See Ullmann B.

FOIL

1. Foul (v) < O.F. fouler (v) = 'to trample, outrage'.

< V.L. * fullāre = 'to full cloth, trample'.

2. Foul (v) < M.E. fullen (v) < O.E. fūlian (v) < c. Germ. *fūlaz

< *fū < I.E. ~~fū~~ (as in L. ~~fūs~~ < ~~fūtēre~~ (v) = 'to stink').

P /

Foul (v) = 'to stain, pollute'.

3. ¹File (v) < O.E. fylan (v) < Germ. *fūljan (v) < fūlaz (adj.) = 'foul'

File (v) = 'to pollute, stain'.

4. Foil (v) = 'to trample' and slightly later 'to stain, blemish'.

< A.N. *fuler (v) (vowel = y), a variant for O.F. fouler (v) > foul (v)

.. There are 2 forms foil and foul (1) = 'to trample'.

5. Defoul, defoil (v) = 'to trample down, outrage, violate, deflower'.

O.F. defouler, defuler (v).

N.B. Although C.T. Onions in his Dictionary of English Etymology says that defoil is an inexplicable variant of defoul, both defoil and

foil (v) can be explained as formations on the analogy of ¹foil, fuil,

file (sb.) = 'a thin sheet of metal', as O.F. * fuler,⁽⁴⁾ defuler⁽⁵⁾

> file, defile and fuil, defuil (v),

i.e. the same variants as the substantive = 'a thin sheet of metal',

which had another spelling foil.

6. Defile (v) Cl4 -. A result of the association of defoul, defoil (v)

with befile (v) = 'to stain, blemish' < O.E. befylan (which could

have possible variants befuil, befoil - see file¹ (sb.)).

From the C14 until C17 in English, foil (v) had the sense 'to tread underfoot', which it had in French, and which gave rise to the sense 'to overthrow, defeat'. A special sense 'to cross the scent with the effect of baffling the hounds' had arisen with the use of this term in the vocabulary of hunting, so the figurative sense 'to frustrate' may be a result of the mingling of the sense 'to overthrow, defeat' with the hunting sense. There are several instances of the figurative sense in Shakespeare's plays and it is the only sense of foil (v) in current English.

Foil (v) also had the sense 'to defile, pollute' until C17 (in the dialect of Cumberland until the C19). Admittedly the notions of 'trampling' and 'outraging' seem close, (the senses of O.F. defouler (v)), and could quite easily produce a more general sense 'stain, blemish', but it is highly likely that the sense 'defile, pollute' is a result of the influence of foul (v) also meaning 'to trample'.

This possibility is all the more convincing in view of the fact that foul (v1) had a homophone foul (v2) = 'to pollute, blemish', and that the native verb file (v3) = 'to pollute, stain' had fuil, foil as possible variants. In this way foil (v) would show the influence of the homophonic partner of foul (v) = 'to trample' (both foil (v) and foul (v) being from the same ultimate root) an influence which would no doubt be strengthened by the coincidence of pronunciation and spelling with the variants of the

FOIL (CONTD.)

native verb file which had a synonymous sense. Furthermore, defoil (v) and defoul (v) were used with both the sense 'to trample down' and 'to pollute' from C14 until C16, and they were associated with befile (v) = 'to pollute' in C14, thus producing defile, which is the current verb for 'pollute'. Thus we have evidence for a complicated interplay and mingling of senses in the case of defoul, defoil and defile.

Just as foil (v) had the sense 'pollute', so foil (sb.) could mean 'disgrace, stigma, blemish' as well as 'repulse, defeat' in Shakespeare's plays:-

1. e.g. - yet must Antony

No way excuse his foils, when we do bear

So great weight in his lightness.

(Ant. I.IV.23f).

i.e. 'faults, blemishes'.

2. e.g. some defect in her

Did quarrel with the nobles^t grace she ow'd,

And put it to the foil

(Tr. III.I.44f).

In quotation 2 it would be adequate to interpret foil (sb.) as having the sense 'defeat, drawback' and thus translate the last line 'and defeat its value,' but the sense 'stain, blemish' would also fit in very well with the tone of the passage. The sense 'fault,

FOIL (CONTD.)

blemish' is more obviously called for in quotation 1, where there is no need for Malone's emendation of the text to soils (sb.)², if foil (sb.) is interpreted in this way.

In this case a term has taken on the sense of the homophonic partner of its variant, and this acquired sense has been strengthened by the existence of a synonymous native verb which coincided in one of its spellings with the term in question. Thus the intricacy of sense-development and the need to consider a term within its associative field can be appreciated.³

1. File (sb.) = 'a thin sheet of metal' < A.N. fȳl (sb.)

< O.F. fūil < O.F. fueil < L. folia (pl. of L. folium).

In M.E., O.E. - ȳ had become ī. ∴ French words with ȳ produced ī in M.E., or ȳ was re-analysed as ui.

Thus A.F. fȳl > M.E. file and fuil.

The variant foil comes from O.F. foil (a N.E. dialectal form from L. folia). ∴ there were 3 variants in M.E.: - foil, fuil and file.

Words with M.E. ī (O.E. ȳ), which were of native origin and not adopted from O.F., had analogical oi and ui, e.g. M.E.

bīle < O.E. bȳle had variants boil and buil. ∴ possible variants of file^(v3) would be fiul and foil.

For a full treatment of this see Dobson sections 256-259.

2. See Muir's note to the Arden edn.

3. For a discussion of 'associative fields' see Ullman B.

PACK

1. Pack (v) = 'to gather into a bundle' etc.

⟨ pack (sb.) ⟨ M.E. packe, pakke (early C13).

cf. M.Du., M.L.G. pak; Icel. pakki; Sw. packa; Da. & Norw. pakke

This verb is apparently immediately from Flemish, Dutch or Low German. The earliest instance was recorded at Ghent in 1199. The adoption of this term is probably a result of the wool-trading contact with the Low Countries, as the verb was connected with the wool trade at an early date. The C16 French pacque is probably from Flemish. The ulterior history and origin of the word are unknown.

2. Pack (v) = 'to enter into a private, underhand agreement, to plot'. C16 & C17.

The origin of this term is obscure. In both verb and substantive, the sense suggests some connection with pact (sb.) = 'a private arrangement', but in pack the implication is always bad.

3. Pact (v) = 'to covenant, to make an agreement'.

⟨ pact (sb.) ⟨ O.F. pact ⟨ L. pactum (sb.) = 'agreement, covenant' ⟨ pactus p.pple. of paciscere (v) = 'to agree, covenant' ⟨ stem * pāk (cf. pāx (sb.) = 'peace').

According to N.E.D.¹, in Scandinavian and Modern English dialects, ck is a variant of ct (e.g. compack, fack, correck). A confusion between pact (v) and pack't, pack'd (pret. of pack(v)) is conceivable, the final t of pact being apprehended as an inflexion.

PACK (CONTD.)

In N.E.D., pack (v)2 is treated as having been confused with pact (v)², and as a homophone of pack (v1), but in no way connected with it: - Pack (v2). "No connexion is apparent between sense 1 and any sense treated under pack (v1)." - (N.E.D.).

It is possible, however, to accept the opposite approach and to view pack (v) = 'to make an underhand agreement' as a development of one of the senses of pack (v) = 'to gather together'. This is the approach of Muir in his Arden edition of King Lear, where he connects pack = 'plot' with pack (sb.1) = 'a gang, a band of persons often of low character and gathered together for an evil purpose'. This interpretation is particularly interesting in the light of the following quotation:-

... there's a knot, a ging, a pack, a conspiracy
against me.

(M.W. IV.2.104).

Here it is not at all clear whether we are dealing with pack (sb.) = 'gang' < pack (v1), or pack (sb.) = 'plot' < pack (v2). Either interpretation would fit in quite well, for pack = 'gang' could be a continuation of the knot, ging sequence (i.e. 'a collection of people'), or it could go with the following abstract noun conspiracy. To whichever source we refer pack in this case, it would be attractive to see the influence of pact (sb.).

PACK (CONTD.)

There are two uses of the verbal substantive packing = 'plotting' in Shakespeare's plays:-

1. ... in snuffs and packings of the Dukes.

(Lr. III.I.26).

2. Here's packing, with a witness, to deceive us all !

(Shr. V.I. 105).

Whether or not there is any connection between pack (v1) and pack (v2) at an earlier stage, the later developments of pack (v2), (i.e. to pack cards with, C16 -C19, and to pack a jury, C16 -C19, = 'to select a jury in such a way as to secure a partial decision'), certainly seem to arise from a blending of pack (v2) with pack (v1) = 'to gather together', with which they are associated in feeling. To pack cards was originally 'to shuffle them in a fraudulent manner', so figuratively to pack cards with meant 'to make a cheating agreement with' :-

e.g. Eros, she, has

Pack'd cards with Caesar, and false-play'd my glory

Unto an enemy's triumph.

(Ant. IV.14.18-20).

Whether pack (v2) is treated as a development of pack (v1), or as a homophonic verb which is separate from it in origin, the term has probably been influenced by pact (v), to which it is very

PACK (CONTD.)

similar, and has certainly mingled in sense with pack (v1) in some of its figurative uses. The interplay of senses is so complex that in some cases it is impossible to distinguish one sense from another, (as in the quotation from M.W. IV.II.104), where the transition of sense from 'gathering together' to 'a conspiracy' is quite smooth. #/

1. cf. Dobson sect. 398.
2. It is worthy of note that pact (sb.) does not appear in Shakespeare's plays, but pack (sb.) does.

ALLAY

Allay (v) = 'to lay aside, put down'.

Prefix a - + lay (v) < O.E. leggan (v), causal of licgan (v) = 'to lie'. > M.E. aleggen (v) -- I alegge, ~~you~~ aleyest, ~~he~~ aleyef, we aleggeþ. (By a process of levelling throughout the paradigm in M.E. the form with -y- was substituted for the forms with -gg-). Then aleyen (infin.) > alaye > alay, subsequently spelt allay after words from Latin in all -.

In its two forms alegge and aleyē this verb was formally identical with four other verbs of Romance origin.

1. Alegge (v) = 'to lighten, alleviate'.

< O.F. aleger, alegier < L. alleviare < ad- + levis = 'light'.

2. Alayē (v) = 'to combine'.

< O. Fr. aleyē, alayer (Mod. Fr. aloyer), variants of allier = 'to ally' < L. alligāre < ad+ ligāre = 'to bind'.

3. Aleye (v) = 'to send to or for, to produce in evidence'.

< O.F. aleier, alaier, alleier < L. allēgāre

< ad + lēgāre = 'to depute, send'.

4. Alegge (v) = 'to cite or produce in evidence'.

< O.F. esligier (Norm. aligier, alegier) < Late Latin *exlitigāre = 'to clear at law'.

This is the learned equivalent of aleyē (v3).

Aligier, alegier was in regular use in the laws of the Norman kings

ALLAY (CONTD.)

and was treated as equivalent to aleier (v3) < L. allēgāre;
hence in A.F. and in the English adoption, allege was treated as
though < L. allēgāre, (> aley (v3). In English allege (v4) took
the place of allay (v3).

An overlapping of senses arose and a network of uses of the
verbs allay and allege developed which combined the senses of two
or more of them. Allay (v) < O.E. alecgan literally meant 'to lay
aside, put down, quell' (a person etc.). Later it was applied to
any violence of the elements, passions etc., in the sense 'to
calm, appease', and in this sense it was perhaps influenced by
allege (v1) = 'to lighten'. Allay (v) commonly means 'to abate,
appease, mitigate' in Shakespeare's plays.

In C14 allay (v) < O.E. alecgan and allege (v1) = 'to lighten'
were both spelt allegge and were both used of pain. Thus to allegge
péine meant both 'to quell pain' (O.E. alecgan) and 'to alleviate
pain' (L. alleviare). As both senses could be translated 'to
abate', they came to be regarded as one and the same. When the
~~-gg-~~ forms of M.E. alleggen (v) were levelled away c1400 aley >
allay was left with the combined meaning. Modern English allay =
'to alleviate, lessen' arises, therefore, from a mingling of sense
between these two verbs.

In Shakespeare's time the native verb allay was still capable
of being confused with allay (v2) = 'to combine, alloy', as they

ALLAY (CONTD.)

were identical in pronunciation and spelling and appeared as merely different uses of the same word. Allay (v2) properly meant 'to mix metals, especially with a baser metal so as to lower the quality'. When the two verbs mingled, the sense 'to temper or qualify by mixing something undesirable' was produced. Either verb could be used of tempering steel or pleasure, of diluting wine etc. There are several examples of the sense 'qualify by mixing' in Shakespeare's plays:-

1. ... a cup of hot wine with not a drop of allaying
Tiber in't
(Cor. II.I.44).
2. ... allay with some cold drops of modesty
Thy skipping spirit
^{M.V.}
(~~Hereb.~~ Hereb. II.2.171).
3. I do not like 'But yet', it does allay
The good precedence
(Ant. II.V.50).

In current English, alloy (v) (an adoption of aloyer, the later French form of O.N.F. aleyer, alayer) is used for the sense 'temper, debase, mix'.

There was an intricate pattern of semantic mingling in former times as a result of the identity in pronunciation and spelling between the various verbs which were very close in sense.

ALLAY (CONTD.)

In current English the situation is quite straightforward, however, as there are three distinct verbs, which are distinct in spelling and pronunciation as well as in meaning, namely :

(a) allege = 'to claim, plead, put forward'.

(b) allay = 'to alleviate, lessen'.

(c) alloy = 'to temper, mix, debase'.

The 'economy of the language' has sorted out the confusion.

BOLT

1. Bolt (v) = 'to sieve, sift'.

⟨ O.F. buleter (v) ; Flem. bulter ⟨ M.H.G. biuteln (s.v.).

With metathesis O.F. beluter 1220 ⟶ Fr. bluter. Deriv. = bluteau (sb) ⟶

O.F. buretel = 'meal-sieve'. cf. Germ. beutel (sb.).

N.B. The French forms with r instead of l owe their development to association with O.F. bure, bura ⟨ V.L. bura = 'coarse woollen stuff', although von Wartburg believes that they are probably not derived from bure, as suggested in Littré, but that they can be traced back to a M.H.G. verb biuteln = 'to sift'.

O.F. buleter ⟶ O.F. bulter ⟶ M.E. bulte ⟶ bōlt ⟶ boult.

¹M.E. ū was lowered to ō before l (cf. shoulder ⟨ M.E. schuldre).

Before final l or l + cons., M.E. ō was diphthongized to ou, ow in late M.E. e.g. bowl, gold, bolster, bolt ⟨ O.E. bolt. The ow, ou spelling was not always used, the vowel often just being written o.

As M.E. ū was lowered to ō and then underwent the same development as M.E. ō, bolt ⟨ O.F. bulter became a homophone of bolt (v) = 'fetter'

⟶ O.E. bolt.

2. Bolt (v) = 'to fasten, fetter'. M.E. bolt, boult

⟶ bolt (sb.) ⟶ O.E. bolt = 'a cross-bow', cognate with O.H.G. bolz, M.L.G. bolte, bolten = 'bolt, fetter, piece of linen rolled up'. The remoter etymology of this term is unknown.

Bolt (v) = 'to fasten' has a variety of senses which are connected

BOLT (CONTD.)

merely by the common notions of hasty or sudden movement and application of force, which have arisen from the two primary senses of the substantive bolt = 'a missile' and 'a fastening', e.g. one bolts or fastens the door, and a horse is said to bolt when it runs away.

Shakespeare uses bolt (v2) in the sense 'fetter':-

e.g. Which shackles accidents, and bolts up change.

(Ant. V.2.6).

Similarly he uses unbolted² once in the figurative sense 'revealed' (i.e. literally 'unfastened'):-

Painter How shall I understand you ?

Poet I will unbolt to you

(Tim. I.I.53-4).

i.e. 'explain, unfold'.

Bolt (v) = 'to sift' was common from C12 until C19 in England. There are several instances of this sense in Shakespeare's plays. Figurative senses of bolt (v1) are recorded from C14 in England. Shakespeare applies bolt (v1) to the snow, a figurative sense which had already appeared in France:-

The fann'd snow that's bolted

By th' northern blasts

(W.T. IV.IV.356-7).

BOLT (CONTD.)

Similarly he uses the past participial adjective bolted in metaphorical language:-

He ... is ill-school'd

In bolted language; meal and bran together

He throws without distinction.

(Cor. III.I.321f).

The following quotation is open to several interpretations because there is a pair of homophones bolt:-

I will tread this unbolted villain into mortar,

And daub the wall of a jakes with him.

(Lr. II.II.66).

If unbolted is taken to be from bolt (v2), it could mean 'apparent, revealed' (cf. the quotation from Tim.I.I.53-4), or 'unrestrained, boundless'. N.E.D. assumes it is from bolt (v1) and means 'unsifted', which would produce Kittredge's³ sense 'out-and-out', if expanded.

⁴Muir feels that unbolted = 'unsifted, coarse' is a curious epithet to apply to Oswald, the 'glass-gazing, finical, barber-monger', but surely in the use of terms of contempt, often little attention is paid to the actual qualities of the object of scorn - the antagonist is often carried away in his anger and attributes all manner of unsavoury traits to his opponent.

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Oswald is not, after all, literally the 'son and heir of a mongrel bitch' etc. (Lr. II.II.13f). This is rather vivid, metaphorical description. Furthermore, Kent is giving rein to his feelings in a vivid metaphor where the idea of treading Oswald into mortar collocates quite naturally with unbolted = 'unsifted' if, as Muir says, it is normal to make mortar from unsifted lime, the lumps of which have to be broken up.

In view of the ease with which unbolted = 'unsifted' fits in with Kent's metaphor, I should be inclined to favour the interpretation of N.E.D. Nevertheless, it is clear that homophones are a source of possible doubt and confusion, and although the context may make one interpretation seem more favourable than another, it does not produce conclusive evidence that a certain sense was the one in the mind of the playwright, who may even have been influenced by both senses as he wrote. (N.B. Kittredge's sense 'out-and-out' could just as well be an extension of 'unrestrained' i.e. < bolt (v2)).

1. See Dobson Sects. 88,95,97,174.

Also Wright Sects. 103 and 104.

2. It is interesting to note that this is the sole record in N.E.D. of a figurative usage of unbolt.

3. G.L. Kittredge in The Complete Works of Shakespeare (Boston, U.S.A., 1936) has glossed this passage 'unsifted, out- and- out'.

4. See his note to the Arden edition of King Lear p.72.

SEAMY

Seamy (adj.) < seam (sb.) + -y

1. Seam (sb.) = 'seam, join'.

< O.E. seam (m) = O. Fris. sām, O.H.G. soum, O.N. saum.

O.E. ēa > ~~N.E.~~ ē, raised in ~~N.E.~~ > ē > N.E. [i:]

M/

In Shakespeare's time there were three possible pronunciations for N.E. ē words:-

a. conservative with [ɛ:]

b. advanced with [e:]

c. vulgar with [i:] representing a variant pronunciation with ~~N.E.~~ ē instead of the more normal ~~N.E.~~ ē.

M/

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~~N.E.~~ ā was pronounced [ɛ:] in advanced C16 speech, and [e:] in the C17. The fact that the same value could be given ~~N.E.~~ ē and

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~~N.E.~~ ā, (though probably not by the same set of speakers), in Shakespeare's time explains his steal - stale pun.¹ Even in the early C16 ~~N.E.~~

M/

M/

ai was monophthongized by some speakers, as it was in Hart's pronunciation, where it coalesced with ~~N.E.~~ ē, both being pronounced [ɛ:] by him. In the C17 the monophthongal pronunciation of ~~N.E.~~

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ai would be [e:] . Thus ~~N.E.~~ ai and ~~N.E.~~ ē could have the same pronunciation by Shakespeare's time; hence the possible association of seam (1) = 'join' and seam (2) = 'grease'. We cannot, of course,

M/

be sure exactly which pronunciation of ~~N.E.~~ ē Shakespeare himself used, but he played upon different types of pronunciation with which he was familiar.

M/

SEAM (CONTD.)

2. Seam (sb.) = 'grease, fat, filth'. Until the end of C17.

◀ O.F. salm < V.L. sagimen (related to Classical Lat. sagina).

This word is retained in Mod. Fr. saindoux = 'lard' and enseimer (v)

◀ O.F. ensaimer (v) = 'to grease a cloth'.

Some such squire he was,

That turn'd your wit, the seamy side without,

And made you to suspect me with the Moor.

(Oth. IV.II.147f).

This quotation is the only place where the adjective seamy occurs in Shakespeare, who was the first person to use it according to the evidence in N.E.D. The adjective next appears in a figurative sense in C19 and collocates with the noun side, as it does in Shakespeare. His imitators in C19 have obviously interpreted Shakespeare's usage as meaning 'sordid, degraded', a sense which is suggested by the context, as Emilia is suggesting that it is Iago's 'filthy' mind which makes him suspect her of having committed adultery. In Carlyle, for example, there is a contrast between splendour and squalor, smoothness and roughness, and seamy belongs to the 'sordid' side of the contrast:-

The splendid and the sordid, the seamy side and
the smooth of life at Cirey.

(Fredk. Gt. X.II.III.223; 1865).

SEAM (CONTD.)

If Shakespeare is indeed the originator of seamy (adj.), he takes quite a step in both inventing the phrase and using it in a figurative way, for he does not use it in the literal sense² of 'the wrong or under-side of a garment on which the rough edges of the seams are visible'.

In the quotation from Othello, the words turn'd, side and without support the N.E.D. derivation from seam (sb.1) = 'join'. Thus seamy (adj.) literally means 'the wrong or rough side of a garment', hence the 'less-pleasing side', which could produce the sense 'sordid'. Since the forming of an adjective and the endowing of it with a moral value all in one go is a remarkable step, I would tentatively suggest that seamy might show the influence of seam (sb.2) = 'grease, filth', especially as the variant pronunciations of ~~N.E.~~ ē made the two substantives possible homophones for Shakespeare. m/

There is one straightforward use of seam = 'fat' in Shakespeare's plays:-

... the proud lord that bastes his arrogance
with his own seam.

(Troil. II.III.180).

Connected with the substantive is the verb enseam (O.F. ensaimer = 'to load with grease', which had a technical sense 'to cleanse a hawk from inner defilement' in falconry. In Hamlet, enseamed

SEAMY (CONTD.)

has the connotation 'defiled, filthy':-

In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed,
Stew'd in corruption, honeying and making love
Over the nasty sty.

(Hm. III.4.92-93).

Here, then is the connotation of 'filth', of something 'sordid'.
A formation seamy³ < seam (sb.2) + -y. = 'greasy' was used by
Skelton in 1529:-

Thou gresly gargone glaymy,
Thou swety sloven seymy.

(Agst. Garnesche III.169).

This is the only example of seamy = 'greasy' in N.E.D.

In this way the sense of a new formation could have been
influenced by that of a homophonic word. The fact remains that
seamy is an example of the influence which Shakespeare's works
had on later writers, and is one of his contributions to the everyday
language of current English, for the seamy side is a household
phrase today.⁴

1. See Kökeritz Pp. 194-204 - The once fashionable pronunciation [e:] for N.E. e survives as [eɪ] in the current pronunciation of break, great, steak, yea.

m/

See Dobson sects. 106-238 and Ekwall sect. 33.

2. The first record of the literal sense in N.E.D. is at the end of C18.
3. cf. filthy, greasy, dirty, fatty, all with the suffix y.
4. cf. such household phrases as 'the primrose path' and 'to have at the finger ends', which come to us from Shakespeare via his C19 imitators.

INCONTINENT

1. Incontinent (adj.) = 'wanting in self-restraint'. C14

↳ O.F. incontinent, (adj.) ↳ O.F. incontinece (sb.)

↳ L. incontinens < in - + continent, -ens, pres.pple. of continēre (v) = 'restrain, contain'.

2. Incontinent (adv.) = 'without delay, at once'. C15 - C19.

↳ O.F. incontenant C13 < late Lat. in continenti (sc. tempore) = 'in continuous time, without an interval'.

Incontinent (adj.) meaning 'wanting in self-restraint' is chiefly applied to the sexual appetite. There are several instances of its use in Shakespeare's plays. He also uses the adverb incontinent several times:-

e.g. He says he will return incontinent.

(Oth. IV.III.12). i.e. 'immediately'.

As the adverb is now obsolete, a passage like the following is open to misinterpretation by the modern reader, especially as incontinently, meaning 'without restraint, without the restraining power of cool, sane consideration', would make perfect sense in this particular context, and is very close in sense to incontinently (adv.) = 'at once, without pausing to consider'.

I will incontinently drown myself.

(Oth. I.III.305). i.e. 'at once'.

Although the context can often be helpful in determining the

INCONTINENT (CONTD.)

sense of a term, it is by no means an infallible guide, and when ambiguity keeps on recurring, the tendency is for one homophone to pass from general usage. Homophones are a source of ambiguity, as S. Ullmann¹ has pointed out, and language would no doubt be more precise without them, but they do provide the writer with a rich store of material for quibbles. The currency of the two homophones incontinent in his time makes possible Shakespeare's play on words:-

Ros. For your brother and my sister no sooner met but they look'd; no sooner look'd but they lov'd; no sooner lov'd but they sigh'd; no sooner sigh'd but they ask'd one another the reason; no sooner knew the reason but they sought the remedy - and in these degrees have they made a pair of stairs to marriage, which they will climb incontinent, or else be incontinent before marriage. They are in the very wrath of love, and they will together.

(A.Y.L. V.II.30ff).

Like incontinent (adj.), continent (adj.) was chiefly applied to sexual matters and had the sense 'chaste'. In the following quotation Shakespeare plays on this and the literal sense 'restraining, which contain!:-

INCONTINENT (CONTD.)

.... but there's no bottom, none,
In my voluptuousness: your wives, your daughters,
Your matrons, and your maids, could not fill up
The cistern of my lust; and my desire
All continent impediments would o'erbear,
That did oppose my will.

(Mcb. IV.III.60-65).

Besides being a necessary means of preventing a language from becoming impossibly unwieldy with regard to its number of words, the attaching of more than one sense to a term provides flexibility, richness and yet another source of word-play.

1. See Ullmann A. p.180f.

SALT

1. Salt (sb.) = 'sodium chloride substance'.

⟨O.E. sealt (sb.)⟩ M.E. salt¹.

2. Salt (sb.) = 'lust, lechery'. ⟨ M.E. saut,¹ sault (cf. M.E. faute, faulte, — with faulte copied from a C15 French variant).

⟨O.F. saut (sb.) = 'sexual heat' ⟨ L. saltus = 'leap'.

These two words fell together in pronunciation and spelling from M.E. times onwards.

Shakespeare commonly used salt (sb.) with the sense 'a substance used for seasoning', in both literal and figurative contexts. From the C16 until Restoration times the homophone salt (sb.) = 'sexual heat' was also in use, and the adjectival uses of these two substantives were often confused. This confusion was probably facilitated by the fact that salt (sb.) = 'seasoning' could have a sense approaching 'spice, heat, vigour' in a figurative context:-

Playwright me reades, and still my verses damnes,

He sayes, I want the tongue of Epigrammes;

I have no salt: no bawdrie he doth meane.

For wittie, in his language, is obscene.

Playwright, I loath to have thy manners knowne

In my chast booke: professe them in thine owne.

(Ben Jonson - Epigrammes 49 (Muses Library;
Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1954).)

SALT (CONTD.)

Here the play on words is explicit, whereas in the following quotation only an Elizabethan audience with their awareness of the two uses would seize upon a possible undertone of salt²:-

Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous teares
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,
She married. O most wicked speed, to post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets !

(Hm. I.II.154-157).

Salt (adj.) meaning 'lecherous' appears in Shakespeare and is common in other Elizabethan dramatists:-

e.g. It is impossible you should see this,
Were they as prime as goats, as hot as monkeys,
As salt as wolves, in pride

(Oth. III.III.408-10).

In this quotation there is a powerful conglomeration of terms meaning 'lecherous' (prime, hot, salt, in pride).

As salt meaning 'lecherous' is obsolete, the modern reader would probably interpret it as meaning 'spicy, stinging, having vigour' and as being a figurative use derived from salt (sb.1)

e.g. Cassio a knave very voluble, no farther conscionable than in putting on the mere form of civil and humane seeming, for the better compassing of his salt and hidden affections. (Oth. II.I.236-9).

SALT (CONTD).

Thus the existence of such homophones provided a rich source of puns for the Elizabethan dramatist. Even when the modern reader is aware of a double implication, he may assign the unfamiliar sense to a false source, when its true source has become obsolete and when its homophonic partner could be very close in sense in some figurative contexts, and is still current.

1. In late M.E. $\check{a} > \underline{au}$ before ll or l + consonant and subsequently shared the development of M.E. au. See Dobson sect. 60.
The monophthongal pronunciation of au had appeared before C17 and is recorded by English ortho^{ce}epists from the early C17.
M.E. au > [ɔ:] > [ɒ:] i.e. shortening from C15 before ll or l + cons.
cf. malt, fall. See Dobson sect. 29 and sects. 235-237.
Kökeritz says Shakespeare used the pronunciation [ɔ:] i.e. [ɒ:]
< M.E. au. (Kökeritz p. 181.) M.E. \check{a} < O.E. ea is quite regular.
See Brunner sects. 6.A. & 10.

2. It is possible that an Elizabethan audience might be aware of the other implication of salt in this context, especially as the word collocates with unrighteous, wicked speed, incestuous sheets, which are all connected with lechery.

PREGNANT

1. Pregnant (adj.) = 'pressing, urgent, compelling, forcible', hence 'clear, obvious, highly probable' Cl4.

∟ O.F. preignant¹ pres. pple. of preindre (v) (earlier priembre, prembre) ∟ L. premere (v) = 'to press'.

2. Pregnant (adj.) = 'with child, with young'. Cl5.

∟ L. praegnant, -ans ∟ prae = 'before' + the root gna- of gnāscor, gnātus (v) = 'to be born'. The spelling preignant is recorded for Cl6 in N.E.D. The two words ran together in spelling and pronunciation in English.

In the Cl5 pregnant (2) had the figurative senses 'fruitful, teeming with ideas, imaginative', and in the Cl6 and Cl7 it often collocated with wit. Shakespeare uses the term in two figurative ways:-

1. Pol. Will you walk out of the air, my lord?

Hm. Into my grave ?

Pol. Indeed, that's out of the air. (aside)

How pregnant sometimes his replies are !

(Hm. II.II.203).

i.e. 'expert, clever, artful'.

2. And crooke the pregnant hinges of the knee.

Where thrift may follow fawning.

(Hm. III.II.69-70).

i.e. 'ready'.²

PREGNANT (CONTD.)

Pregnant (1) was used of an argument, evidence etc. with the sense 'pressing, compelling' (hence 'obvious, very probable, clear') from the Cl4. There are several instances of this type in Shakespeare's plays:-

e.g. ... very nature will instruct her to it, and compel her to some second choice. Now, sir, this granted (as it is a most pregnant and unforc'd position) who stands so eminently in the degree of this fortune as Cassio does ?

(Oth. II.I.234-36).

The sense of pregnant argument meaning 'compelling, convincing, clear argument' (adj.1), for instance, is very close to that of pregnant argument = 'clever argument, argument full of wit' (adj.2) and, in fact, the two words did run together in later times, being viewed probably as different senses of the same word. The modern speaker will conclude that pregnant = 'full of meaning, compelling' is merely a figurative use of pregnant (2), if he is unaware of the fact that there were originally two distinct adjectives.

1. In the second half of the C13 early M.E. ei and ai were identified and had the same subsequent development. In the early C16 ai was monophthongized and had the pronunciation [ɛ:] which was Hart's pronunciation. See Dobson sects. 225 & 227. ei, ai, ā were pronounced [e:] in Shakespeare. See Kökeritz pp. 173-6. See p.177 for the shortening of ai and doubling with ě < M.E. ē.

2. Anyone who is 'fruitful' is likely 'to be influenced', is 'receptive' or 'ready'. There are several uses of the senses 'ready, receptive, apt to receive, or ^{to} be influenced' in Shakespeare's plays.

BOUND

1. Bound (adj.) = 'ready, prepared' Cl3.

< O.N. buinn (Norw. buenn), p.pple. of búa (v) = 'to get ready'; appearing first in the North of England as būn, afterwards in M.E. as boun; the d, which was added to the modified form in the Cl6, may be partly an inflexional ending, added as a result of boun's being regarded as the past participle of the derived verb boun = 'to prepare', and partly due to confusion with bound (p.ppl. adj.2) = 'obliged'. 9/

2. Bound (p.ppl. adj.) = 'obliged'. 9/

O.E. bindan (v), band, bundon, bunden cf. O.S. bindan,

O.N. binda, Skr. bandh < I.E. *bhendh = 'to bind'.

>¹M.E. bounden > bound (p.pple. of bind (v)).

Bound (1) meant 'ready, prepared' until the Cl9. In the Cl5 the sense 'prepared or purposing to go, destined for' developed. There are several instances of both senses in Shakespeare's plays:-

1. And, like a man to double business bound,
I stand in pause where I shall first begin.

(Hm. III.III.41-2).

i.e. 'prepared for'.

2. Advise the Duke ... to a most festinate preparation:
we are bound to the like.

(Lr. III.VII.9-11).

i.e. 'ready to do the same'.

BOUND (CONTD.)

3. the Ambassador that was bound for England.

(Hm. IV.VI.10).

i.e. 'destined for'.

In current English, bound (1) has the sense 'on the way towards, directed for', and shows direction in the compounds home-bound and outward-bound, and in the question 'where is he bound?'. The notion of readiness or being prepared is hardly perceptible. Bound (1) no longer stands alone with the sense 'ready, prepared', but is usually used in conjunction with for plus a substantive and has the sense 'destined for'. It cannot be used with to plus infinitive = 'about to', as this construction in current English can only contain bound (2) = 'obliged' and means 'obliged to'.

In Elizabethan times, however, the situation was not so simple. Thus in the following quotation, bound to could mean either 'obliged by duty', or 'about to':-

... the revenges we are bound to take upon your
traitorous father are not fit for your beholding.

(Lr. III.VII.7-9).

The figurative sense of bound (2) = 'tied by duty, obliged' has been common since the C14 and is well attested in Shakespeare's plays:-

e.g. To plainness honour's bound
When majesty falls to folly.

(Lr.I.I.148).

1. The M.E. diagraph ou is a usual M.E. spelling for O.E. ū <O.E. ǔ by lengthening before certain consonant groups in later O.E. See Brunner sects. 6.B. & 8.

MYSTERY

1. Mystery (sb.) = 'a secret or hidden phenomenon, an enigma'.

⟨ A.F. * misterie < O.F. mistere < L. mysterium (sb.)

⟨ Gr. mysteriōn (sb.) = 'secret thing or ceremony' (originally certain Greek religious ceremonies allowed to be witnessed only by the initiated). < Gr. mystēs (sb.) = 'initiated one'.

N.B. O.F. mistere > Mod. Fr. mystère.

2. Mystery (sb.) = 'trade, occupation, profession'.

⟨ med. Lat.* misterium (sb.) (an alteration of ministerium = 'service, office' by association with mysterium = 'a secret thing or ceremony').

N.B. O.F. mestier > Mod. Fr. métier.

In old French and in English, mystery (1) appears first in connection with religious matters, a fact which is not surprising in view of its etymology. In England in the C14, mystery (1) meant 'a religious truth known only from divine revelation', and in the C16 it was used to denote certain religious rites, especially the Eucharist. It was, however, used outside the ecclesiastical field in C14 English and denoted any secret or enigma. This general sense had already been used in Latin. Mystery (1) no longer calls to mind any religious ceremonies in current English. Shakespeare frequently used mystery (1) in the general sense 'secret'. In his time the word had a homophone which has since died out in English.

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In mediaeval Latin there was confusion between the two words and mysterium = 'a secret ceremony' took on the sense 'service, office, ceremony' which was proper to ministerium > misterium. This confusion is reflected in mediaeval French in the ecclesiastical field, where le mistere Dieu and le mestier Dieu were both used in the sense 'the service of God'. (Mystery (1) denoted a particular kind of office i.e. 'a religious office'). The closeness in sense and form made it possible for the two words to be interchangeable in this context. The two words had a different phonetic development in French, so that in modern French mystère and métier are quite distinct, both in pronunciation and spelling, as well as in sense, and there is no danger of confusion. In English, however, the two terms were homophonic. This fact may have led to ambiguity in certain contexts e.g. in the ecclesiastical field, and the subsequent death of mystery (2) meaning 'trade'; or other words with the same meaning may have had greater vogue and caused the disuse of mystery (2). Both possibilities would need to be very carefully pursued and an abundance of supporting evidence would have to be produced before any tentative conclusion could be drawn in this matter. Such is not my task, as the two terms seem to co-exist quite happily e/ in Shakespeare's plays without any ambiguity. Mystery (2) is still very much alive in his plays:-

MYSTERY (CONTD.)

e.g. ... shut the door,

Cough, a cry hem, if anybody come;

Your mystery, your mystery: nay dispatch.

(Oth. IV.II.30).

i.e. 'apply yourself to your job'.

It is interesting to note that, according to N.E.D., the term mystery play, which was first used in the Cl8 as a name for the miracle play, derives from mystery (1) (i.e. mystery play is a performance with a religious significance), and not from mystery (2) = 'trade' as it is commonly assumed. The latter assumption arises as a result of the coincidence that the members of trade guilds acted these plays.

SHARK

1. Shark (sb.) = 'a large predatory fish'. C17—.

cf. Germ. schirk (sb.) = 'sturgeon'.

This term is of obscure origin. It seems to have been introduced by the sailors of Captain Hawkins' expedition in the C16.

2. Shark (sb.) = 'a parasite, sharper'. C17—.

This term is of uncertain etymology.

3. Shirk (sb.) = 'a parasite, sharper'. 1639 — C18.

cf. G. schurke (sb.) = 'a parasite' (earlier schork, schurk).

Shirk meaning 'a parasite' could be from the synonymous German term schurke, as it is noted in N.E.D./ that words with this kind of meaning were often adopted from German c.1600. Shark (sb.2) may be a variation of shirk (sb.). Its assimilation to shark (1) may have resulted from the similarity between 'a man-eating fish' and 'a sponging person', the latter being felt to be a figurative use of the former. The closeness between the two gained force when shark (1) was in fact figuratively applied to people in the C18. Just as the two substantives merged into one another, so the verbs shark = 'to prey upon like a shark', which derived from them, mingled in sense until they were no longer felt to be distinct words by speakers.

Shakespeare does not use shark (sb.2) meaning a 'parasite', but he uses a verb shark up once:—

SHARK (CONTD.)

... Young Fortinbras Hath in the skirts of Norway,
here and there

Shark'd up a list of lawless resolutees.

(Hm. I.I.95-98).

Here there seems to be a mingling of senses; the sense of the predatory natures of both the person and the fish being felt, as well as the underhand dealing of the one, and the swift voracity of the other. In fact it is impossible to assign Shakespeare's use to one source. The resulting general notion is that of collecting in an underhand and hasty way, without selection. In the C17 there was also a verb shirk up, (derived from shirk (sb.)) which meant 'to obtain by cunning or sponging'. Thus Shakespeare, who is the first person to use the construction shark up (v)¹, probably formed it by analogy with shirk up.

The verb shirk, which originally meant 'to prey on others', has developed along quite different lines, and is still current under a different sense. In the C17 it developed the sense 'to go evasively or slyly (i.e. like a parasite), to slink away', which developed into 'evade a person', and from there was transferred from underhand behaviour towards a person to underhand dealing in connection with work i.e. 'evade one's work', in the C18.

Shirk (v) has lost its figurative force, as there is no longer any notion of voracity, the evasive nature of the parasite having become

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uppermost. Furthermore, shirk (sb.) meaning 'a parasite' has died out and the substantive shirker i.e. 'one who shuns a task' has been formed from the later sense of the verb shirk. All connection with shark (sb.) has been lost.

In this way two homophones have mingled in sense until they have ceased to be distinctive, and the form shirk, which may be a variation of one of them, has developed so differently that it has lost every link with them.

1. The other quotations recorded in N.E.D. for Cl9, are echoes of Shakespeare's usage.

SHARD

1. Shard (sb.) = 'a fragment, gap'.

↳ O.E. sceard (neut.), cognate with O. Fris. skerd = 'cut, notch',

M. Du. scharde = 'flaw, fragment' and O.N. skarp¹ = 'notch, gap'.

O.E. sceard (adj.) ↳ O.N. skarp¹ = 'cut, notched',

(past participial formation from *skar-, *sker- i.e. the root producing E shear (v)),

cf. O.H.G. scartifedar = 'shellfish or tortoise'.

2. Shard (sb.) = 'cow - dung'. C16 - C19. Obsolete except in dialect. Apparently cognate with sharn (sb.) = 'dung' < O.E. scearn.

3. Shard (sb.) = 'wing - case of an insect'. C19.

Shakespeare uses shard (sb.1) once in the sense 'fragments of pottery':-

... Shards, flints, and pebbles should be thrown on her.

(Hm. V.I.253).

The fact that there was a homophone meaning 'dung' in his time has led to disagreement over the sense of the phrase 'The shard-born (e) beetle' in Macbeth¹ (III.II.42). Many scholars have interpreted shard as 'wing-case', i.e. they have derived it from shard (sb.1). This is the derivation assumed by both Samuel Johnson and Alexander Schmidt.

Yet other critics would derive the phrase from shard (sb.2). and interpret it as 'dung-bred'. Presumably those in favour of the

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former interpretation felt that shard meaning 'fragment' referred to the scaly wings of the insect. It is worth noting that there is one record in N.E.D., of shard (sb.) in the sense 'scale':-

Sche sih, hir thoghte, a dragoun tho,

Whos scherdes schynen as the Sonne.

(Gower: Conf. III.68: 1390).

The other examples of shard in Shakespeare's plays seem to favour a derivation from shard (sb.1) = 'fragment' :-

a. And often to our comfort shall we find

The sharded beetle in a safer hold

Than is the full-wing'd eagle.

(Cymb. III.III.19-21).

b. ... they are his shards, and he their beetle.

(Ant. III.II.20).

Certainly sharded = 'having scaly wings' is very appropriate in the passage from Cymbeline, especially when the wings of the eagle are also referred to. Muir, in the Arden edition of Macbeth, feels that either interpretation would fit the passage from Antony and Cleopatra. Shards = 'wing-cases', however, seems more suitable, in view of the fact that shards is in the plural.

It is impossible to rule out either interpretation of Macbeth, but whichever interpretation one adopts, perhaps the most striking

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fact is that the sense 'wing-case', which was assigned to shard² in the C19, results from this interpretation of Shakespeare's use of shard in Macbeth. This shows the influence which the usage of one great writer can have upon later generations and consequently upon the language of their time. Such is the remarkable influence of Shakespeare's writings that the sense given to his usage, was the sense in vogue after a lapse of two centuries.

1. The spelling without e in F3 i.e. shard-born would fit the interpretation 'dung-bred' i.e. 'born in shard'.
F1 and F2 have shard-borne.
2. Those critics who favour the interpretation 'dung - bred' will of course view shard (sb.3) = 'wing-case of an insect' as resulting from popular etymology.

BEEBLE

1. Beetle (sb.) = 'a beating instrument'.

Anglian *bētel (sb.) (late West Saxon bītel, bȳtel)

<O.E. biētel (sb.) = 'beating implement' < stem of O.E. bēatan (v)
= 'to beat' + -il, -el, -le, suffixes denoting an instrument < Germ.
*bautan (v) = 'beat'.

The modern beetle (sb.) descends from the Anglian version.

Anglian bētel (sb.) is cognate with L.G. betel, bötel = 'a mallet'.

¹ [ē] > [i:] . . . bētel > beetle.

2. Beetle (sb.) = 'insect'

O.E. bitula, bitela (sb.) (apparently a sb. formed on an adj.)

* bitul, *bitol = 'biting' > early M.E. bitel

< short base *bit- < O.E. bītan (v) = 'to bite'.)

The word is glossed as mordiculus = 'little biter' in Wülcker

(De Nominibus Insectorum Voc.122).

¹M.E. [y] > [ē] > [i:] . . . bitel > beetle

The homophones, beetle (sb.), were felt by speakers to be distinct words in their literal senses, but they became indistinguishable in many of their figurative uses. Shakespeare uses beetle (1) in the literal sense 'rammer':-

If I do, fillip me with a three-man beetle

(2H4. I.II.215).

He also uses the term in a metaphorical way:-

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A whoreson, beetle-headed, flap-ear'd knave !

(Sh. IV.I.141).

It is pointless to attempt to decide whether this is a transferred sense of (1) or (2), as both were used as stock terms for anyone or anything blind, mentally as well as physically. Thus as a term of contempt, beetle-headed = 'stupid', could connote either 'having a head like a beetle (insect)', or 'having a head like a rammer', (the interpretation of Alexander Schmidt).

Beetle (sb.) appears in the combination bytell browet for the first time in 1362 (Destr. of Troy. See O.E.D.). It appears to have referred to the shaggy prominence of eyebrows, ^{according to} the suggestion made by a Dr. F. Chance² { namely that the comparison is with the short, tufted, prominent antennae of some species of beetle }

In its early use beetle-browed was nearly always contemptuous, but in the C17 it sometimes meant simply 'lowering, scowling, sullen' (cf. the descriptive value of supercilious (adj.) < L. supercilium (sb.) = 'eyebrow'). Perhaps this sense arose as a result of the ill-tempered, fierce appearance of someone having bushy, overhanging eyebrows. Shakespeare uses beetle-brows once to describe a mask:-

Here are the beetle brows shall blush for me.

(Rom. I.IV.32).

The sense 'overhanging, projecting' became firmly attached

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to beetle in the combination beetle-brows, which is metaphorically applied to hills and mountains in the following quotations:-

- a. A pleasant valley of either side of which high hills lifted up their beetle-browis, as if they would overlooke the pleasantnesse of their under prospect.

(Sidney: Arcadia (35): 1580).

- b. Tree-garnisht Cambriaes loftie mountaines Did over-shade me with their beetle browes.

(Weever; Myrr. Mart. EVIJ : 1601)

The transparency³ of beetle was lost in Shakespeare's formation beetle (v) = 'to project, overhang', as the vital link brows is missing.

Shakespeare uses the verb beetle only once:-

..... the dreadful summit of the cliff

That beetles o'er his base into the sea ...

(Hm. I.IV.70-71).

i.e. 'projects over',

but it is taken over by writers in the C18, such is the influence of his works.

In C17 a verb beetle formed from beetle (sb.1) also came into existence and had the sense 'to beat with a beetle in order to flatten, to thresh'.

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Although confusion between the homophones could arise in their figurative uses, they remained quite distinct in their concrete, literal uses and were felt to be two distinct words.

1. In later M.E. there was an irregular lengthening of \bar{i} to \bar{e} in open syllables. By 1500 \bar{e} had been raised to \bar{i} :
See Dobson sects. 10 and 132.
2. No reference to the place where Dr. Chance suggested this is given in N.E.D.
3. For a discussion of transparent and opaque terms see S. Ullmann Ch.4. A transparent term is one in which the connection with the original referent can still be seen.

FLAW

1. Flaw (sb.) = 'flake, fragment'.

Perhaps an adoption of O.N. flaga (wk.fem.) = 'slab of stone'.

cf. Sw. flaga & Da. flage = 'flake'.

The O.N. word is probably < Germ. root *flah-, flag-, which is parallel and synonymous with the root *flak- > Eng. flake (sb.).

N.B. The close resemblance in sense between flaw (sb.) and flake (sb.).

2. Flaw (sb.) = 'a sudden burst or squall of wind'.

This word is not found until the Cl6. It is possibly from

O.E. *flagu (sb.). cf. M. Du. vlaghe, M.L.G. vlage and Sw. flaga.

The primary sense may have been 'stroke' < I.E. *plak-.

The earliest sense of flaw (sb.1) was a 'detached piece, a fragment'. This developed into 'a crack, fissure, faulty place' and then the current sense 'a blemish, fault'. The link between these various senses is the common notion of roughness or a broken surface. Examples of the sense 'break, crack' in Shakespeare are:-

a. My love to thee is sound, sans crack or flaw.

(L.L.L. V.II.415).

b. Observe how Antony becomes his flaw.

(Ant. III.XII.34).

i.e. 'break in his fortunes'.

Shakespeare uses flaw (sb.1) in its original sense 'fragment':-

... but this heart

FLAW (CONTD.)

Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws

Or ere I'll weep.

(Lr. II.IV.286-88).

This sense of flaw is obsolete in current English, where the sense 'detached piece' belongs to flake (sb.). Why should this sense be left entirely to flake? The answer could be that flake was used more frequently with this sense than flaw, until the latter ceased to be used in this way, or the various senses of flaw could have produced ambiguities necessitating the use of another word in this particular area of sense. There is no evidence in Shakespeare's plays for any ambiguity between the various senses of flaw (1).

There is ambiguity, however, between flaw (1) and flaw (2) meaning 'gust of wind, squall'.

Flaw (2) remained in use until the C19. There are several instances of this term in Shakespeare's plays, where it also appears in the figurative sense 'a sudden rush or burst of passion', which was current in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries:-

O ! these flaws and starts would well become

A woman's story

(Mcb. III.IV.62-4).

In the following quotation it is not certain whether the word flaws is a use of (1) or (2) :-

FLAW. (CONTD.)

As humorous as winter, and as sudden

As flaws congealed in the Spring of day.

(2 H.IV. IV.III.34-5).

Schmidt interprets flaws as 'gusts carrying ice' (i.e. sb.2),
whereas O.E.D. has 'flakes of snow' (i.e. sb.1).

It must be admitted that the sense is not clear, even though
one might favour the latter interpretation on the grounds that it
sounds more natural to speak of 'congealed flakes' than of 'congealed
squalls'.

SNUFF

1. Snuff (sb.) = 'portion of the wick of a candle'. Cl4.

Of obscure origin.

2. Snuff (sb.) = 'sniffle, particularly to show contempt or disdain'.

Snuff (v) is probably an adoption of M.Du. snoffen, snuffen (v) =

'to snuffle'. cf. L.G. M.H.G. snufen; either of imitative origin or related to M.Du. snuven = 'to sniff or snuff'.

N.B. E. Sniff (v) Cl4 is imitative.

Shakespeare uses snuff (sb.1) both in literal and in figurative contexts. The snuff of a candle is the partially burnt-out part of the wick which needs to be removed at intervals, hence the sense 'a weak, partially burnt-out core' in figurative usage:-

a. ... my snuff and loathed part of nature should
Burn itself out.

(Lr. IV.6.39).

b. 'Let me not live after my flame lacks oil, to be
the snuff

Of younger spirits, whose apprehensive senses

All but new things disdain'.

(All's Well I.II.58-61).

In example b. there may be a play on words, as snuff could also be snuff (2) = 'contempt, disdain'.

The construction to take something in the snuff (or to snuff²)

SNUFF (CONTD.)

meaning 'to take something amiss' was current from the C16 until the C18, and it was particularly common between 1580 and 1660.

This usage led to snuff's being used in the sense 'a fit of rage, passion' during that period. The compilers of the O.E.D. treat

these uses as a development of snuff (1) meaning 'wick', and say that 'the reference was doubtless to the unpleasant smell' of the snuff.¹ At the same time they admit that there might have been

some association with snuff (2) meaning 'a sniff of contempt'.

Schmidt derives snuff meaning 'rage, resentment, quarrel' from snuff (2) and defines the sense as 'a huff expressed by a snuffing of the nose, resentment' in the following quotation:-

... in snuffs and packings of the Dukes.

(Lr. III.I.26).

If Schmidt's interpretation is right, there is a slight chronological difference between the first record in O.E.D. of the construction to take ... in the snuff in 1560, and the first record of snuff (2) as a substantive in 1590. It might have been used as a substantive before that date, however, as the verb snuff is recorded for 1527.

The time-lapse is so slight, anyhow, that Schmidt's suggestion is attractive. As we have seen, snuff could be a use of snuff (2) in Shakespeare's All's Well that Ends Well, and he did use the verb snuff in the sense 'to inhale, sniff'.

Whether Shakespeare is using different senses of snuff (1)

SNUFF (CONTD.)

or he is using the homophone snuff (2), the term snuff provides him with rich material for quibbles which would no longer be available to the modern writer, since snuff (sb.) has become obsolete in the sense 'resentment, quarrel':-

e.g. THES. ... the man should be put into the lantern.

How is it else the man i' th' moon ?

DEM. He dares not come there for~~e~~ the candle; for, ^{a/}
you see, it is already in snuff.

(M.N.D. V.241-44).

e.g. ROS. We need more light to find your meaning out.

KATH. You'll mar the light by taking it in snuff.

(L.L.L. V.II.21-22).

1. Perhaps a further link might be the fact that the snuff is the 'burnt or frayed' core and might therefore be felt to be a suitable image for a 'frayed temper' or 'rage'.

2. cf. The current English phrase 'to take something to heart' i.e. 'to take something very seriously and to brood upon it'. (The heart is a vital inward part, just as the wick is the core of a candle).

IMPRESS

1. Impress (v) } = 'to imprint, bear heavily upon'.
Press (v) }

< O.F. impresser, presser (v) < L. impress- (p.ppl. stem of

L. imprimere (v) < im- + primere (v) = 'to press'.)

2. Impress (v) C17-early C19. = 'to lend money' - ~~Erroneously~~ for

imprest (v) = 'to lend money'. This verb had a special sense

'to hire the services of by part-payment in advance', which was

also a special sense of O.F. prester(v) = 'to lend money' < L. praestare

(v) = 'to furnish' < prae = 'before' + stare (v) = 'to stand'.

In V.L. praestare (v) = 'to lend money'.

Impress (v) < im- + press (v) < prest¹ (v) < M.E. prest (sb.)

Prest (sb.) is a late M.E. adoption of O.F. prêt = 'a loan', which

is a verbal substantive from O.F. prester (v).

N.B. Once confusion had arisen over the spelling of prest (v), it

spread to the derivative imprest (v).

Shakespeare's usage of impress (1) = 'to imprint' is quite straightforward:-

e.g. As easy may'st thou the intrenchant air with thy keen
sword impress, as make me bleed.

(Mcb. V.VIII.9-10)

In the history of impress (2), however, a shift in emphasis occurs as a result of confusion with impress(1). Originally

IMPRESS (CONTD).

press (<prest (v) meant 'to enlist a force for military or naval service by part-payment in advance', but once it became identical in spelling and pronunciation with press (v1), it developed a connotation of force or pressure, so that it was thought to mean 'to enlist by force or pressure'. Impress (v2) was similarly used as if it meant 'to press in'. This interpretation would seem all the more probable in view of the underhand, forceful methods of recruitment which have often been used.²

Shakespeare was the first person to use impress (2) (according to the evidence in O.E.D.) in the sense 'to enlist by force', a sense which he uses several times and which subsequently became the only sense:-

e.g. Who can impress the forest; bid the tree
 Unfix his earth-bound root ?

(Mcb. IV.I.95).

In the Cl8 the sense of force was continued in impress (2), meaning 'to seize by authority for public or royal service'. Shakespeare does not use impress (v2) in the sense 'to lend money'. He uses impress (sb.) in both the senses 'a mark made', and 'enforced public service'.

Impress (v) is a good example of the influence which one

IMPRESS (CONTD).

homophone can exert on another, (the two verbs having become
homophonic as the result of a coincidence of forms in the past
tense and past participle).

9/

1. M.E. prest (v) was altered to press in the infinitive by association with press (v1), the preterite and past participle of both verbs being prest.

2. e.g. Forced acceptance of the King's or Queen's shilling.

HOUSEWIFE

Housewife (sb.) = 'the female head of a household; loose woman'.

< M.E. hūs (e) wīf < O.E. hūs = 'house' + wīf = 'woman'.

cf. O.E. hūs with O.N. hūs.

In early M.E. the word was usually spelt with a connective e.

When this was absent, the u in hūs-wīf tended to be shortened to give huswīf, which was in literary usage until the C18.

Elision of w and final f produced huzzif > hussive > huzzy.

The forms hūs-wīf and hūsewīf with long vowel continued in use, and they became frequent in the sense 'female head of a household' in the C16, especially when the shortened form began to lose caste through its depreciatory use in the sense 'a light or pert woman'.

Housewife and its shortened form huzzy involve the opposite tendency from homophonic partners, where two words originally distinct in sense are thought to be not two different words, but different senses of one and the same word. In the case of housewife and huzzy, however, we start with one word which develops a shortened form, which in its turn becomes so firmly connected with one of the per/jorative senses of its source that this sense becomes its sole sense and is lost to the source. Finally the two are regarded as separate words, distinct both in sense and spelling. 9/

Housewife has meant 'a woman who manages the affairs of her household' from the C13. In the C16 it also had the sense 'a light woman', but in the same period huzzif, huzzy had this as its

HOUSEWIFE (CONTD.)

primary sense, so that housewife lost this tainted sense. If there had been no alternative form to take over the pejorative sense of housewife, one of the senses would probably have died completely. Fortunately the form hussif was present to adopt this sense for its sole one, and as a result any embarrassing ambiguity was avoided.

The way in which the pejorative sense developed provides an interesting example of the influence of social structure upon language.¹ In some rural districts housewife, huzzy was merely the equivalent of 'lass'. Hence ^{came} the meaning 'a strong countrywoman, a female of the lower orders', which developed into 'a woman of low or improper behaviour' and 'an ill-bred or mischievous girl' - such behaviour being attributed to the lower strata of society. At first the depreciatory sense was mainly used with the qualification 'light'. The earlier sense of 'a woman of lower orders' can be illustrated from Richardson's novel Pamela:-

I like a proud hussy, looked in the glass and
thought myself a gentlewoman.

(Pamela II.117 (O.E.D.)).

Shakespeare uses housewife in its modern sense several times:-

e.g. Let housewives make a skillet of my helm.

(Oth. I.III.272).

HOUSEWIFE (CONTD.)

He also uses the sense 'a light woman' on several occasions and often applies it to Fortune:-

A housewife that by selling her desires

Buys herself bread and clothes.

(Oth. IV.I.94-95). (sc. Bianca).

Today the pejorative sense is firmly attached to hussy, which has no other sense. Once an unpleasant sense has become attached to a word, the tendency is for it to lose all other senses cf. Undertaker, shroud.

In passing, it is interesting to note that in the C18 housewife developed the sense of 'a pocket-case for needles, pins etc'. Presumably this transference was a result of the process of metonymy - most housewives possessing such an object!

1. cf. My discussion of Villain, costermonger, knave.

As I said at the start of this chapter, the interplay of senses between homophones is a very complex matter. Sometimes it is hard to know whether we are dealing with separate words or with different senses of the same word e.g. pack. Two phonetically distinct words may converge in sound e.g. salt. Again, two distinct words may coincide in certain of their inflexions and so become associated and eventually homophonic e.g. impress. Such a complex example as foil shows the need to study words within their associative fields and not in isolation.

It has been seen that the existence of homophones often produces ambiguity which is not always clarified by context. If this ambiguity proves to be a nuisance, one of the homophones may become obsolete. It is not always necessary for a whole word to die, but it may be sufficient for some of its senses to die. This leads on to the question of why certain senses die. Sometimes this may be the result of an effort to avoid ambiguity. At other times another word having the same sense may have become so popular that it takes over from the first word. Another means of clearing the ambiguity arising from homonymy is by a change of construction e.g. bound to.

The opposite process from two distinct words being regarded as one and the same word is manifested by housewife, hussy. When a word acquires a pejorative sense, this often becomes its sole sense and results in the loss of more general senses. In the case

of housewife however, the form hussy was able to adopt the pejorative sense. In this case we think we have two distinct words, whereas in fact we are dealing with different forms of one and the same word.

The ambiguity arising from the existence of homophones provided Shakespeare with material for punning e.g. salt, incontinent, pregnant. So, some of the variety and flexibility which Ullmann attributes to polysemy can be claimed for homophones.

CHAPTER THREE

Figurative Usage.

As well as being an economical measure, the use of a word in a variety of senses makes possible the use of figurative language. In this way it enriches the vocabulary. When two things are closely related, the name of one may be transferred to the other. This process is referred to as metonymy. Whereas metonymy arises where associations already exist, metaphor discovers new relationships. A similarity between two things may occur to speakers and the name of one is transferred to the other. This similarity may be quite superficial and such a personal matter that it is difficult to see the link.

In this chapter I shall discuss a collection of words whose change in sense initially arose from a figurative usage.

SMALL BEER

Originally small beer denoted a weak brew, as it does in the following examples:-

1. the three-hoop'd pot shall have ten hoops; and
I will make it felony to drink small beer.
(2Hen.VI. IV.II.65).

2. PRINCE Doth it not show vilely in me to desire
small beer ?

POINS Why, a prince should not be so loosely
studied as to remember so weak a composition.
(2 Hen.IV. II.II.6).

This sense was extended by Shakespeare to the figurative sense
'small things, things of no consequence, trifling matters':-

To suckle fools, and chronicle small beer.
(Oth. II.I.160).

Shakespeare's influence on writers of the C19 gave the term popularity in that century, and led to the C19 colloquial phrase to think no small beer of oneself, meaning 'to have a good opinion of oneself'. Although this particular term is no longer current, it is one of several metaphorical senses used by Shakespeare which later became household phrases.

BOMBAST

Bombast (sb.) = 'inflated language'.

O.F. bombace (sb.) < L. bombācem, -bax = 'cotton' (an alteration of bombyx = 'silk' < Gr. bombux = 'silk, silkworm').

Bombast is the past participial adjective from the verb bombase,
= 'to stuff', which is derived from bombace (sb.).

Bombast (ppl.adj.) = the current bombastic (adj.) until the first half of the C19.

Bombast (sb.) or 'raw cotton, cotton-wool' was used for padding clothes and this material fact led to the development of the figurative usage of bombast (sb.) = 'padding, stuffing' at the end of the C16 and in the C17.

e.g. We have ... rated them (sc. letters full of love and favours)
At courtship, pleasant jest, and courtesy,
As bombast and as lining to the time.
(L.L.L.V.II.767ff.).

Nashe gave bombast (sb.) the metaphorical sense of 'inflated or padded language' in 1589. Similarly the adjective bombast is applied to inflated language by Shakespeare:-

Evades them, with a bombast circumstance,
Horribly stuff'd with epithets of war.
(Oth. I.I.13-14).

i.e. 'wordy circumlocution'.

BOMBAST (CONTD.)

The current adjective bombastic took over this special sense of 'using stuffed or high-sounding language' in the latter half of the C19, and this sense is the one which has survived.

FUSTIAN

Fustian (sb.) = 'high - sounding language'.

< O.F. fustaigne (mod. futcine) < med. Lat. fustāneum = 'coarse cotton cloth', conjecturally derived from Fouchtân, the suburb of Cairo from which the cloth was exported.

It is conjectured that the coarse cloth made of cotton and flax received its name by the process of metonymy, that is from its link with the town of Fouchtân. As the name of a coarse material, fustian was used in England from the C12. In 1590 the figurative sense 'inflated language' appeared in Marlowe, although there is no evidence of fustian's being used for padding.

The sudden appearance of this sense can be explained by analogy. Both fustian and bombast were kinds of coarse cloth made of cotton and would thus be connected. Such a connection¹ can be seen in Littré's definition of bombast as futaine sans envers. Already in 1589 Nashe had applied bombast to 'high-sounding language', so by analogy fustian developed the same metaphorical sense. In C16 usage fustian also had the connotation of 'nonsense', as it has in the following quotation:-

Drunk ? and speak parrot ? and squabble ?
swagger ? swear ? and discourse fustian
with one's own shadow ?

(Oth. II.III.271ff).

Shakespeare uses fustian as an adjective also:-

FUSTIAN (CONTD.)

e.g. FAL. Pistol, I would be quiet....

DOLL T.I cannot endure such a fustian rascal.

(2 H.IV. II.IV.175-179).

As well as having the sense 'high-sounding, bombastic', fustian could have the further connotation of 'coarse, worthless' in this example. Such a sense could derive from the fact that fustian is a coarse cloth, hence a fustian fellow is one who wears fustian, and by transference of the quality of the material to its wearer, 'a coarse fellow'.² The term is used as a form of abuse meaning 'worthless creature' in the comic formation fustilarian:-

Away you scullion ! you rampallion ! you
fustilarian !

(2H.IV. II.I.57).

In this example, analogy is seen as the factor in the development of the current, figurative sense 'using high-sounding language' of fustian.

1. For another linking of the two cf. "Fustaine ou bombasin
et toutes autres choses faites de coton."
(RoL. Est. Dict. - see Littré).

2. Coarse material would be worn by the common people. For
contemptuous senses deriving from a low social position cf.
villain, churl. For another example of senses arising from
consociations see my discussion of Patch.

MAZZARD

Mazzard (sb.) = 'head'.

Mazzard is apparently an alteration of M.E. mazer (sb.)

by association of its ending with the suffix -ard.

O.F. maser, madre (sb.) = 'a cup' > Mod. Fr. madré (adj.) = 'veined like variegated maple'.

cf. S.H.G. masar = 'excrecence on a tree'.

Mod. G. maser = 'markings in wood'.

M.Du. maeser = 'maple'.

Mazer was originally the name of a kind of hard wood, possibly maple. The fact that such wood was used for making drinking-cups led to the adoption of this sense by mazer. Then the term was extended to denote any kind of cup. Its further extension to 'head' is not so easy to account for.

There are several examples of an extension of this type¹ and mazer may have developed from 'pot' to 'head' by analogy with them. At the end of the C16 mazer developed this sense and shortly afterwards, in 1602, Shakespeare used mazzard as a jocular synonym for the head, a use which continued until the C19:-

1.knocked about the mazzard with a sexton's spade.

(Hm. V.I.97).

2. I'll knock you o'er the mazzard.

(Oth. II.III.145).

Mazzard might be considered to be a suitable jocular synonym

MAZZARD (CONTD.)

for the head because of the similarity in shape (cf. costard), and because the head is a 'container' of brains. Ben Jonson coined a verb mazard, but his usage is the only one recorded in O.E.D:-

The rogues let a huge trap-dore fall o'my
head. If I had not been a spirit, I had been
mazarded.

(1616 Love Restored).

It is interesting to note that mazzard was so well-used in the sense 'head' that in C19 Anglo-Irish slang, it could be used to denote the 'head' on a coin.

1. cf. Fr. tête < L. testam, testum = 'pot'.

cf. Germ. kopf, originally = 'pot'.

The important point of interest is to discover the context which made such shifts of meaning possible. Sperber showed the battlefield, where heads were shattered like 'pots', to be the context in the case of German kopf - see Bloomfield p.440.

SCONCE

Sconce (sb.) = 'head'. Cl6 to Cl9.

1. Sconce (sb.) = 'lantern'.

An aphetic adoption of O.F. esconce = 'dark lantern, hiding-place'.

< monastic L. sconsa, shortened from absconsa (fem.) = 'dark lantern'

< absconsus, p.pplē. of abscondēre (v) = 'to hide'.

Cl4 to Cl8 sconce = 'candlestick' in English.

2. Sconce (sb.) = 'earthwork, fortification'.

< Du. schans Cl6 = 'brushwood, bundle of sticks, screen of brushwood for soldiers, earthwork'.

It is hard to decide whether sconce as a jocular synonym for 'head' is a figurative use of (1) or (2). Sconce (2) might be favoured, for there often seems to be a notion of battering or force in connection with the jocular terms for 'head'¹:-

e.g. ... to knock him about the sconce with a dirty shovel.

(Hm. V.I.110).

Although a decision is difficult in the following quotation, because both homophones denoted a 'hiding-place or screen', sconce is probably a use of (2) rather than (1), especially as O.F. esconce is not recorded in a military sense, where blows are ~~in~~ being dealt. ~~question.~~ At any rate, the existence of both literal and figurative senses of sconce provides Shakespeare with material for a play on words:-

SCONCE (CONTD.)

ANT. ... I will beat this method in your sconce.

DROM.S. Sconce, call you it ?

So you would leave battering, I had rather
have it a head.

An you use these blows long, I must get a
sconce for my head, and insconce² it too

(Com. Err. II.II.34-38).

If sconce is a figurative use of (2), the connection with its
literal sense is the fact that ^a'head' is being battered just as
'an earthwork' is battered. Shakespeare does not use sconce (1)
in a literal sense, but he does use sconce (2) in its literal sense
of 'earthwork, fortification':-

... at such and such a sconce, at such
a breach, at such a convoy.

(H.V. III.VI.72).

1. cf. mazzard (Hm. V.I.97), (Oth. II.III.145).

cf. costard (Lr. IV.VI.242).

See my discussion of these words.

2. N.B. insconce (v) commonly means 'hide' in Shakespeare.

cf. the Latin source abscondere (v) of sconce (i).

COSTARD

Costard (sb.) = 'head'.

Not found in O.F.

< A.N. costard (sb.) < O.F. coste = 'rib' (Mod. Fr. côte) < L. costa
+ suffix -ard, a formative suffix often used in the adoption of
French substantives, cf. mazzard.

The etymology of costard is interesting in that the word is
'transparent'¹ and motivated by its morphological structure. It
presents us with a visual image, as the costard or 'apple' was so
called because it was prominently ribbed. The name was often
mentioned from the C14 until the C17, after which it passed out of
common use, but is still used by fruitgrowers to name certain apples
derived from the original costard.

From the C16 until the C19 costard was applied humorously or
scornfully to the human head. Presumably the figurative use arose
from the similarity in shape² between the skull and an apple.
According to S. Ullmann, the anthropomorphic type of metaphor, where
a name is transferred from an object to the human body or vice versa,
is very common in the most diverse languages.³ Shakespeare does
not use costard in its literal sense, but there are several instances
of the figurative sense 'head' in his plays:-

e.g. ise try whither your costard or my ~~ballow~~ be the
harder.

(Lr. IV.VI.242).

COSTARD (CONTD.)

In Love's Labour's Lost, Costard is the name of a clown.

In current English costard is present in a slightly altered form in the compound costermonger (< costard + monger = 'dealer, trader'. Originally a costermonger was an apple-seller, especially one who sold his wares in the open-air. Gradually the term has become more generalised, until it now denotes a man who sells fruit, fish and vegetables, and not just apples, from a barrow in the street. This compound is not clearly 'motivated' today, as a result of the alteration of its first element to coster and the general disuse of costard.

Shakespeare uses costermonger once as a term of contempt,⁴ and is the first person on record to use it in a scornful way:-

FALSTAFF Virtue is of so little regard in these costermongers' times.

(2 Hen. IV. I.II.160). Mod. Edd. = costermonger.

The pejorative sense appeared again in the C18 with reference to Falstaff's words, and in the C19 in the phrase costard-monger knave. Thus we can see Shakespeare's influence on later writers.

For the development of pejorative senses in the case of the names of persons of low status, compare villain and rogue.

(LR. IV.VII.39 and V.III.13 = 'wretched creature', originally 'vagabond, idle person').

1. For the use of the description transparent see Ullmann A.
Ch.4. A transparent word is one in which the speaker can still perceive its origin.

2. cf. C19 coconut and see mazzard.

3. See Ullmann A. & B.

4. Presumably the contemptuous sense results from the low status of a street-vendor, and possibly from the rascally nature of some vendors ? For the 'moralisation of status words' i.e. words denoting rank which become words of praise or of scorn, e.g. villain, see Lewis p.21.

PATCH

Patch (sb.) = 'fool'.

Patch (sb.) = 'piece of cloth' < M.E. pacche, patche (of unascertained origin).

In the Cl6 patch meant 'a domestic fool, a clown'. Then it became a more general term of contempt for any kind of foolish person or dolt, a sense which is common in Shakespeare's plays:-

e.g. Thou lily-liver'd boy, What soldiers, patch ?

(Mcb. V.III.15).

If the theories about the development of this word are correct, it shows a double metonymy. In O.E.D. it is suggested that patch in the sense 'domestic fool' became a generic name for jesters as the result of the fame of a particular fool of that nickname, that is by the process of metonymy. The notable fool Patch was Cardinal Wolsey's fool. Sexten was his real surname, as we know from Heywood and Wilson (see O.E.D):-

1. As to call one Patche or Coulson, whom we see to doe a thing foolishly; because these twoo in their tyme were notable fooles.

(1553: T. Wilson: Rhet. (1580)176).

2. A sayng of Patche my lord cardinal's foole. Master Sexten, a parson of knowne wit

(1562: J. Heywood: Epigr. xliv (1867)106).

PATCH (CONTD.)

Sexton may have received this nickname by metonymy, by the picking out of the most noticeable feature in his appearance, that is his patched clothes or motley dress proper to a jester. Although it is possible that patch is the anglicized form of Italian pazzo meaning 'fool', Shakespeare certainly seems to have associated patch with motley raiment, for he talks of a patch'd fool (M.N.D. IV.I.209), and he connects the two in the line:-

What a pied ninny's this ! Thou scurvy patch.

(Tr. III.II.60).

As well as being a general term of contempt with the sense 'fool', patch could have yet another abusive connotation for an Elizabethan audience, for ~~Miss~~^{Ms.} Hulme¹ has shown how it had a 'double entendre', a sexual implication.

At the beginning of the C20 patch had the colloquial meaning of 'an ill-tempered person', a sense which probably arises from a shortening of the still current cross-patch (1700 onwards), patch having by this time integrated the idea of crossness and no longer meaning generally 'fool'.

1. Mrs. Hulme quotes Heywood:- 'Sluggyng in bed with hir is worse then watchyng, I promyse you, an old sack asketh muche patchyng.¹ (J. Heywood: Dialogue: 1546). From Shakespeare she quotes the clown's speech, where she interprets the second and third patch'd as having sexual undertones:- 'Anything that's mended is but patch'd: virtue that transgresses is but patch'd with sin, and sin that amends is but patch'd with virtue.¹ (T.N. IV.41f).

See Hulme pp. 120-121).

HOBBY-HORSE

Hobby-Horse (sb.)

The first element of this word is apparently a by-name Hobin, Hoby, which is a variation of Robin, Robbie. M.E. hobyn, hoby was adopted in France and was used to name a middle-sized horse. Dobbin, another by-form of the Christian name Robin, has become a generic name for a cart-horse in English.

Hob, as a familiar or rustic variation of Rob, was used as a generic name for a rustic or clown¹ from the C14 until the C18. At first sight the link between a Christian name and a horse seems rather remote, but the explanation can be found in the context of the traditional morris-dance. In this dance, as well as in burlesques or pantomime, the clown, or 'hobby', was dressed in a light wickerwork frame with a horse's head, and he performed various antics in imitation of the spirited movements of a horse. Thus hobby was connected with a horse and was subsequently extended to denote any horse. By Shakespeare's time the popularity of this character had died, hence the proverbial Elizabethan saying "the hobby-horse is forgot". This saying is apparently from some old ballad and it appears in other Elizabethan dramatists, for example Jonson and Fletcher, as well as in Shakespeare:-

... or else shall he (i.e. 'a great man') suffer not thinking on, with the hobby-horse, whose epitaph is "For, O! for, O! the hobby-horse is forgot".

(Hm. III.II.143f). cf. (L.L.L. III.26).

HOBBY-HORSE (CONTD.)

Hobby-horse was also extended from a particular character in the morris-dance to a buffoon, jester or foolish fellow in general. There are several instances of this sense in Shakespeare,² who is the first person on record to use it. Like patch, as well as being a general contemptuous term, it had a sexual connotation. The sense 'a frivolous or loose person' could have been suggested by the spirited movements of the hobby-horse performer, or by the toy with a wooden head which one 'bestrode' (C16). It could even be a specialized sense of the already general abusive sense of the term, cf. patch. There are several examples of this special sense in Shakespeare and the other Elizabethan dramatists:-

1. My wife is slippery ? ... My wife's a hobby-horse, deserves a name, as rank as any flax-wench that puts to
Before her troth-plight.

(W.T. I.II.273-78).

2. This is some minx's token, and I must take out the work; there, give it the hobby-horse, wheresoever you had it.

(Oth. IV.I.151-152).

The connection with horse persisted and hobby-horse was subsequently applied to a stick with a horse's head, which children bestrode, in the C16, to a wooden horse on a merry-go-round and to a rocking-horse, in the C18. As a result of its being applied to

HOBBY-HORSE (CONTD.)

playthings, hobby-horse developed the metaphorical sense of 'a favourite pursuit or source of amusement' in the C17. In current English hobby, meaning 'a pastime', has become separated from its second element³ and the connection with a toy-horse has been lost. This is a striking development and is far-removed from the Shakespearean uses of the word.

1. e.g. Shakespeare: Coriolanus II.III.113.
2. e.g. Much ado III.II.66. = 'fools'.
3. The modern form hobby first appeared in Scott in 1816.

GULL

1. Gull (sb.) = 'a credulous person, dupe, fool'.

It is uncertain whether gull (sb.) is derived from gull (v) or whether it is its source. Gull (sb.) is perhaps of mixed origin. It could be a transferred sense of gull (sb.) = 'an unfledged bird', which is probably gull (adj.) = 'yellow'

(< O.N. gulr) used as a substantive.

2. Gull (v) = 'to delude'.

This may be a transferred use of gull (v) = 'to swallow, guzzle, gorge', cf. Fr. engouler (v)

3. Gull (v) = 'swallow' may in its turn be from gull (sb.)

= 'throat' < O.F. gole, goule < L. gula = 'throat, neck'.

cf. gullet < Fr. diminutive golet, goulet (sb.).

If this complicated interrelation of senses were correct, gull (v) = 'to delude' would have developed as a figurative usage of gull (v) = 'swallow' because someone who is deceived 'swallows' all that he is told.

Shakespeare uses gull (sb.) in the sense 'an unfledged bird':-

e.g. ... that ungentle gull, the cuckoo's bird.

(2 H.IV. V.I.60).

He also uses gull (sb.) = 'a credulous person',¹ several times:-

e.g. O gull, O dolt,

As ignorant as dirt. (Othello has been deceived into

thinking that Desdemona is unfaithful).

(Oth. V.II.164-5).

GULL(CONTD.)

There are several examples of gull (v) meaning 'to delude' in Shakespeare's plays. He derives a substantive gull, meaning 'a trick, deception', from this verb:-

I should think this a gull, but that the white-bearded fellow speaks it. Knavery cannot, sure, hide himself in such reverence.

(Much Ado II.III.109-111).

This sense only appears once in Shakespeare and is not found after the C17, the substantive being usually applied to people. In the C18 it had the active force of 'one who deceives', as well as the passive sense of 'one who is deceived'. The sense of credulity attached to gull survives in the current adjective gullible.²

It is often impossible to tell where a sense had its origin, as the intermingling of several different words or different senses of the same word, may be involved. In this case gull (sb.) could be derived from a figurative sense of the verb gull meaning 'swallow', or it could be a metaphorical use of gull (sb.) meaning 'an unfledged bird', the connection being the lack of art in each case. Yet again it could be a result of a mixture of both figurative senses.

1. This sense is first recorded in Nashe in 1594 (O.E.D.).
2. gullible = 'easily deceived' < gull (v) + -able is first recorded in Scott in 1818(O.E.D.).

GULF

Gulf (sb.) = 'gullet'.

<O.F. golfe = 'a portion of the sea enclosed by a sweep of coast, an abyss' < Ital. golfo. This word was not usual until the C17. The C12 gouffre, which now has only the sense 'a yawning chasm, an abyss' in French, had sometimes the same sense as golfe until the C17. Golfe is now used only with the sense 'bay', in French. In C16 France, goulphe, goulfe, (i.e. a crossing of golfe with gouffre) had both senses. Ital. golfo < Rom. *colpus, *colphus < Late Gk. κόπος=literally 'bosom', hence figuratively 'bay, gulf, hollow of the waves'.

cf. M.Du. golf, Du. gulp, M.H.G. golf.

Shakespeare commonly uses gulf in its literal sense of 'absorbing eddy, whirlpool':-

e.g. ... like a gulf doth draw

What's near it with it.

(Hm. III.3.16-17).

In current English gulf has still the literal sense of 'deep hollow, portion of the sea', as it had in Shakespeare's time, but it has lost its figurative force, which was common in his time and until the C19. Gulf (sb.), meaning 'whirlpool', was used metaphorically for the gullet (i.e. 'that which absorbs or engulfs like a whirlpool').

This sense is common in Shakespeare's plays and is particularly striking when applied to the voracious shark in the following

GULF (CONTD.)

quotation:-

Witches' mummy; maw, and gulf,
Of the ravin'd salt-sea shark.

(Mcb. IV.I.22-23).

BROWSE

Browse (v) = 'to crop grass or twigs, nibble'.

It is not known whether the verb is directly from Cl6 Fr. brouster (v), (now brouter (v)), or from the substantive browse = 'bud, young shoot' < Cl6 Fr. broust (sb.) < brost (sb.). Loss of final t presents difficulties. If the verb were ever broust in English, the final t might have been lost as a result of its being thought to be the inflexional ending of the past tense and past participle. It is also suggested in O.E.D. that the occasional spelling brouce, brouss (sb.) indicates an early form *brus, which could be a corruption of Fr. brousts (collective plural). The French verb may be descended from a Germanic verb *brustjan = 'to bud, blossom'. The pronunciation with -z may have begun in the verb, cf. grass (sb.), graze (v) and advice (sb.), advise (v).

Browse (sb.) was used as the name for young shoots and twigs in England in the Cl6, as in France. Slightly later it was also used as the name for fodder for cattle, which consisted of young shoots and twigs. So browse (v) meant 'to feed on the leaves and shoots of trees and bushes, to crop shoots and plants', and was applied to the grazing of animals.

According to the evidence in O.E.D., Shakespeare was the first person to apply the verb to a human being, but still in the literal sense of 'to feed or nibble':-

BROWSE (CONTD.)

1. There is cold meat i' th' cave; we'll browse on that.
Whilst what we have kill'd be cook'd.

(Cymb. III.VI.37-38).

2. Yea, like the stag, when snow the pasture sheets,
The barks of trees thou browsed.

(brows'd F : browsed'st F2)

(Ant. I.IV.65-66).

After Shakespeare had taken this first step, the way was open for the verb to be used in an abstract and metaphorical way in the C19:-

And browsed at will upon that fair and
wholesome pasturage (a good library).

(1823 Lamb: Elia Ser. I.XV.(1865) 119 O.E.D.).

It can be seen from the words at will that the idea is one of a leisurely random activity, just as the grazing of animals is no hurried affair. The idea of 'nibble' is found again in the next record in O.E.D., where the reference is once again to a library, but where there is no reference to 'feeding' and browsing is equated with random reading:-

We thus get a glimpse of him browsing ... for ... he
was always a random reader - in his father's library.

(1870: Lowell: Among my Books Ser.1 (1873) 9).

BROWSE (CONTD.)

Thus browse (v) was transferred first to the feeding of human beings and was then used metaphorically to describe the action of sampling literature. In current English browse (v) has the sense 'to read in a desultory, unhurried manner', or 'to look through something in the same way e.g. an antique shop. All notion of 'feeding' has been lost, and the sense which was figurative in the first instance has prevailed over the literal meaning.

AFFECTIVE USAGE

There is a special group of words which develop a figurative sense which I have termed 'affective'. Certain animals or birds arouse feelings of affection or contempt in a person, who then attributes the relevant qualities, which he feels these creatures to have, to some human being who arouses feelings of love or hate in him. This results in his applying the name of the animal or bird to that person. It can be seen from the case of calf, which has aroused opposite feelings of affection and contempt, that this is very much a matter of the emotions, and depends on the feelings and mood of the speaker, as well as on the qualities which certain creatures are generally felt to have.

1. Calf (sb.) = 'a dolt, a stupid fellow' and 'a meek, inoffensive person'. < O.E. caelf (sb.), Angl. calf.

N.B. If gull is a metaphorical use of gull (sb.) = 'an unfledged bird', it could be included among those names of creatures arousing feelings of contempt.

When transferred to human beings, calf has sometimes been used as a term of contempt meaning 'dolt, stupid fellow', as it does in Shakespeare:-

e.g. POLONIUS I did enact Julius Caesar; I was kill'd
i' th' capitol; Brutus kill'd me.

HAMLET It was a brute part of him to kill so
capital a calf there.

(Hm. III.II.114-115).

AFFECTIVE USAGE (CONTD.)

Here the fact that calf need not be contemptuous, makes Hamlet's words all the more poignant, as his meaning could be construed to suit the hearer.

At other times the docility of a calf has been the striking quality, hence ^{developed} the other usage of the word as a term of endearment, meaning 'a meek, inoffensive person'.

2. Mouse (sb.)

O.E. mūs.

Small creatures commonly arouse feelings of love, hence ^{grows} the use of their names as terms of endearment cf. chuck.

e.g. Let the bloat king tempt you again to bed;

Pinch wanton on your cheek; call you his mouse

(Hm. III.IV.182-183).

3. Chuck (sb.)

An alteration of chick (sb.) Cl4 under the influence of chuck (sb). = 'a clucking noise', (imitative in origin).

In O.E.D., Shakespeare's usage of this term as one of endearment is the first recorded. In his time it was a familiar term of endearment which was used to address wives, husbands, children and close companions e.g. Macbeth calls Lady Macbeth dearest chuck (Mcb. III.III.45). When it is used now in vulgar speech, it is a

AFFECTIVE USAGE (CONTD.)

familiar term of address and is not applied specifically to close friends or relatives. cf. hen (Scottish border), cock (London), ducks etc.

STOMACH

1. Stomach (sb.) = 'courage, pride, anger'.

↳ M.E. stomak ↳ O.F. stomaque ↳ L. stomachus (sb.)

↳ Gk. stómakhos = 'throat, gullet' (later 'stomach').

2. Stomach (v) = 'to be resentful, to digest, to endure'. Until C18.

↳ O.F. s'estomaquer (v) ↳ L. stomachārī (v) = 'to be resentful, annoyed with'.

Already in Latin stomach (sb.) had the transferred senses of 'taste, liking, courage, indignation, good humour', such was the power of the stomach in the human anatomy to produce pleasurable experiences or otherwise, according to whether the digestion were good or bad. The modern seat of the passions or emotions is supposed to be the heart, but formerly the stomach and the kidneys were also supposed to be inward seats of feeling. Thus the senses 'spirit, courage, temper, disposition, anger' were current until the C17, and the sense 'pride' remained in use until the C18.

Shakespeare uses this substantive in its literal sense of 'part of the body in which the food is digested', and in the transferred sense 'appetite, relish for food and for immaterial things', which is still current:-

e.g. Had all his hairs been lives,

My great revenge had stomach for 'em all.

(Oth. V.II.75-76).

i.e. 'the power of digestion, appetite'.

STOMACH (CONTD.)

The figurative sense 'anger' is common usage in Shakespeare's plays and there are several examples of the senses 'spirit, courage, mettle':-

1. Hector ... Will with a trumpet ... call some knight
to arms
That hath a stomach; and such a one that dare
Maintain I know not what.

(Troil. II.I.118-122).

2. ... young Fortinbras
Hath in the skirts of Norway here and there
Shark'd up a list of lawless resolute,
For food and diet, to some enterprise
That hath a stomach in't

(Ham. I.I.95-100).

In quotation (2), the use of stomach is ambiguous. The sense could be 'spirited, forceful undertaking', the idea being that Fortinbras has collected a band of mercenaries for some undertaking by providing them with their food, that is he has impressed¹ them. On the other hand, stomach could be a continuation of an image started, with the words food and diet, that is the men are to be the food and diet for an 'enterprise' with a stomach or the power to 'swallow' them all. The latter interpretation would fit in well with an interpretation of the force of shark'd up as being 'collected by

STOMACH (CONTD.)

preying like a shark'. The decision largely rests upon the interpretation of shark'd up¹.

A modern counterpart of an organ of the body being used to denote 'spirit, verve, courage' is guts (Cl9). Connected with the sense 'spirit' is the use of stomach in the senses 'obstinacy, pride, haughtiness?':-

e.g. He was a man

Of an unbounded stomach, ever ranking himself
with Princes.

(H.VIII. IV.II.34-35).

As a seat of emotion, kidney has the figurative sense of 'temperament, nature' in Shakespeare:-

e.g. A man of my kidney.

(M.W. III.V.100).

This may be compared with the modern 'a man after my own heart'.

The verb stomach was adopted in Cl6 English with the senses 'to be offended at, to incite, to inspire with fury, courage' etc:-

1. Believe not all, or if you must believe,
Stomach not all.

(Ant. III.IV.11-12).

i.e. 'resent not ...' (Octavia^{is} talking of the wrongs her brother is reported to have done Antony).

cf. the modern 'don't take it to heart'.

STOMACH (CONTD.)

It is interesting to note that if stomach were given its modern force in this passage, the opposite sense would be produced, i.e. 'Do not put up with all', which would mean that Octavia would be inciting Antony to action and not trying to calm his resentment, as she actually is trying to do.

2. LEPIDUS ... to entreat your captain
To soft and gentle speech.

ENOBARBUS I shall entreat him
To answer like himself: if Caesar move him,
Let Antony look over Caesar's head
And speak as loud as Mars

LEPIDUS 'Tis not a time
For private stomaching.
(Ant. II.II.2-9).
i.e. 'arguing, resentment'.

The modern sense of 'brook, endure', a figurative sense of 'digest', came into use in the C17.

The stomach is no longer regarded as a centre of emotion, but merely as the organ of digestion. Accordingly, the only figurative senses of both the substantive and verb stomach which remain² are connected with this function.

1. For shark (v) = 'to prey like a shark' see my discussion of shark (v). Is the uppermost idea one of veracity or of underhand dealing? For the forceful methods of enlistment see my discussion of impress (v).

2. i.e. (a) Stomach (sb.) = 'appetite, inclination'.

(b) stomach (vb.) = 'digest, brook, endure'.

SLIP-SHOD

Slip-shod (adj.) = 'wearing slack shoes'.

< slip (v) + shod (p.ppl. adj.).

slip (v) is probably < M.L.G. slippen (v) = 'to slip, glide'.

Slip-shod (adj.) has undergone a considerable sense-change since it ceased to be a straightforward description of fact and to mean 'wearing very loose shoes', as it does in Shakespeare's King Lear:-

FOOL If a man's brains were in 's heels, were't not in
 danger of kibes ? Then, I prithee, be merry; thy
 wit shall not go slip-shod.

(Lr. I.V.8-11).

Late in the C17, slip-shod particularly described shoes which were 'down-at-the-heel'. A person who wore such shoes would naturally have a slovenly, careless appearance, as would anyone not wearing proper shoes. Consequently, in the C19 the term was used figuratively with the sense 'careless, untidy in appearance', and it was generalised so that it could describe other things apart from dress e.g. careless work. This figurative usage has become so firmly established that it is the only one today. When using the term slip-shod, the modern speaker does not form a mental picture of someone wearing slippers. The fact that he would not talk of someone being shod in such and such footwear in the course of his everyday conversation, but would

SLIP-SHOD (CONTD.)

normally use dressed in, probably accounts for his not attaching
a literal sense to slip-shod.

BOARD

Board (sb. & v).

< O.E. bord (sb.), which combines two originally distinct common Germanic words bord:-

a. a strong neuter noun = 'plank, table, shelf'.

b. a strong masculine noun = 'border, edge, ship's side, margin, shore'.

In each case compare O.N. borð¹.

The O.E. word was re-inforced in M.E. by the use of Fr. bord (sb.) = 'edge, rim, side of ship' and the O.N. words.

Originally the verb board was used in a nautical context and meant 'to come close up to or alongside a ship'. Later it meant 'to enter a ship, usually in a hostile manner'. These senses owe their derivation to bord (sb.) meaning 'a ship's side'. Shakespeare uses the verb in a nautical context several times:-

e.g. Finding ourselves too slow of sail, we put on a
compelled valour, and in the grapple I boarded them.

(Hm. IV.VI.17-19).

e.g. Faith, he to-night hath boarded a land carrack:
If it prove lawful prize, he's made for ever.

(Oth. I.II.50-51).

Board (v) was extended beyond the nautical field and was used figuratively with the sense 'to approach, to accost, to address

BOARD (CONTD.)

someone', a sense which was in use from the C16 until the C18:-

e.g. I'll board him presently.

(Hm. II.II.169).

Today board (v) has a wider literal application and is used to describe the action of entering all manner of vehicles. Although board (sb.) no longer means 'a ship's side', it survives in certain isolated constructions, such as on board, aboard, to board, overboard.

Another sense 'to furnish with food' developed in the C16 from board (sb.), meaning 'table':-

... we cannot lodge and board a dozen or fourteen gentlewomen.

(H.V. II.I.31).

By metonymy the name board (sb.) was transferred in the C14 from the table to the food provided at the table. Then board (sb.) came to mean 'regular meals' of the type which one gets at a boarding-house. This sense survives in boarding-house, to board, board and lodging.

There are such isolated examples of board meaning 'table' as side-board and the archaistic expression festive board. In Shakespeare's plays the sense 'table' is still common:-

e.g. His bed shall seem a school, his board a shrift.

(Oth. III.III.24).

As a result of the fact that authorized assemblies usually

BOARD (CONTD.)

met around a table to discuss affairs, the name board underwent yet another transference from 'a table' to 'a company of persons':-

e.g. the honourable board of council.

(H.VIII. I.I.78).

There are several examples of this sense today e.g. the Board of Trade, the School Board, The Examining Board etc.

In the case of this term, both figurative usage¹ and metonymy² are at work.

1. Board (v) = 'to come alongside a ship', which developed the figurative sense 'to accost someone'.

2. Board (sb.) = 'table' > (a) 'food' (b) 'committee'.

COPE

Cope (v) = 'to manage'.

<O.F. coper (v), a variation of Cl2 colper (modern Fr. couper) = 'to strike', (now = 'to cut').

<O.F. cop, colp (sb.)(mod. Fr. coup) = 'blow' < V.L. * colpus < L. colaphus < Gk. kólaphos = 'a blow with the fist, a box on the ear'.

In French the earliest sense 'strike' disappeared early. Coper already had the sense 'cut' in O.F. This development is explained by the fact that to cut is to 'divide with a blow'. There was a need for a verb signifying 'cut' in O.F., as the L. secāre (v) had become specialized in the French scier (v) = 'to cut corn'.

In its semantic development, cope exhibits the tendency of verbs to move from a concrete and physical emphasis to a more abstract one.¹ From the time of its first adoption in Cl4 English until the Cl8, cope had its original physical sense 'to strike, come to blows with':-

e.g. Yet am I noble as the adversary

I come to cope.

(Lr. V.III.124-5).

i.e. 'to encounter'.

COPE (CONTD.)

Until the middle of the C19, cope was also used in the more general sense 'to meet with, to come into contact with' and was not necessarily applied to a hostile encounter:-

e.g. as just a man

As e'er my conversation coped withal.

(Hm. III.II.62-63).

This general sense, which is common in Shakespeare, is recorded for the first time in the English language in his plays.

A figurative sense developed in the C17, when cope was used to describe abstract struggles with events. In these encounters success was often implied, hence the modern sense 'to manage' grew (literally 'to encounter successfully').

1. '... refined and abstract meanings largely grow out of more concrete meanings'. See Bloomfield p. 429.

QUOTE

Quote (v) = 'to cite references', originally 'to note'.

< Med.L. quotare (v) = 'to mark the number of, distinguish by numbers' < L. quotus = 'How many?' or < quota (sb.) = 'portion'.
cf. Fr. coter (v).

There was an earlier form cote in English in the C14 < O.F.
cote (v).

Until the end of the C16, quote (v) described the specific action of, marking a book in the margin with references to other passages or works. It soon ceased to denote this specific action and came to mean, first 'to cite a reference to a passage in a book by specifying the page, chapter etc., where it was to be found', then 'to repeat a passage from' in the C16. This reference could be oral in transmission. A figurative reference to the original sense is:-

His face's own margent did quote such amazes.

That all eyes saw ...

(L.L.L. II.245).

In the C16 and C17, quote was also used more generally of any record and not just of references made in the margin of a book:-

e.g. A fellow by the hand of nature mark'd,

Quoted and sign'd to do a deed of shame.

(John IV.II.221-222).

QUOTE (CONTD.)

Throughout the same period, quote (v) was used figuratively in the sense 'to make a mental note, observe'. There are several instances of this sense in Shakespeare and it is also found in Ben Jonson:-

e.g. I am sorry that with better heed and judgement
I had not quoted him.

(Hm. II.I.111-112).

e.g. to observe,
To quote, to learne the language and so forth.

(1605. Ben Jonson: Volpone II.I.12-13).

In current English the general literal sense 'to record' and the figurative sense 'to make a mental note' are contained in the verb note. Quote (v) has been restricted since Shakespeare's day and is now specifically applied to the citing of passages from other authors etc., although the original, specific sense 'to make notes in the margin' has been lost.

HARP

Harp (v) = 'to guess at', 'to dwell on'.

⟨O.E. hearpian (v) ⟨O.E. hearpe (sb.) = 'a stringed instrument'.

cf. O.L.G. * harpa, M.Du. harpe, O.N. and Sw. harpa.

The verb harp has been used in various figurative ways.

From its literal sense 'to play on a harp' grew the Cl6 use to harp upon a string i.e. 'to dwell wearisomely upon one note'.

Shortly after, by ellipsis, the phrasal verb to harp on developed.

The sense of this verb was 'to dwell tediously on', as it is in modern English. There are a few examples of it in Shakespeare's plays:-

e.g. Still harping on my daughter.

(Hm. II.II.188-189).

Shakespeare's usage of another figurative sense of harp (v) is the first recorded in O.E.D. The sense in question is 'to give voice to, to guess at':-

Thou hast harp'd my fear aright.

(Mcb. IV.I.74).

Presumably this sense arose because 'to guess at something' is 'to touch upon' it, just as music is produced by touching the strings of a harp. Perhaps this sense¹ has not had the same currency as the other figurative sense because the image behind its use is by no means so clearly defined or vivid.

1. It is last recorded in the C19 in Scott and Byron, where it may be archaistic.

QUESTION

Question (sb.) = 'quarrel', 'fighting'.

< A.F. questium (sb.) < O.F. question (sb.) < L. questio (sb.)
= 'enquiry' < L. quarere (v).

.... The importancy of Cyprus to the Turk...
.... as it more concerns the Turk than Rhodes,
So may he with more facile question bear it,
For that it stands not in such warlike brace,
But altogether lacks the abilities
That Rhodes is dress'd in.

(Oth. I.III.20f).

Question (sb.) had the sense 'dispute, quarrel' from the
C14 until the C19, as well as its current sense 'enquiry'. It
is commonly used to describe 'something disputed' and 'a judicial
trial' in Shakespeare's works. The latter sense leads Schmidt to
the theory that in the quotation above, question means 'a trial and
decision by the force of arms', that is that question is a
figurative use of 'trial'.

Another and perhaps simpler interpretation would be to say
that question (sb.) is a concrete use of the sense 'dispute', and
means 'fighting'. It must be admitted at once that this sense
does not appear elsewhere in Shakespeare's work, and that according
to Ullmann¹, a movement from concrete senses to abstract senses is
more common than the reverse process.

QUESTION (CONTD.)

Question commonly means 'dispute with words' in Shakespeare,
however:-

e.g. Since the first sword was drawn about this question.
(Troil. II.II.18).

e.g. Disarm them, and let them question; let them
keep their limbs whole and hack our English.
(M.W. III.I.70-71).

Furthermore, Shakespeare frequently uses debate in its original
concrete sense 'fight, combat', and debate (v) can be synonymous
with question (v) = 'dispute with words':-

e.g. debate with angry swords.
(Lucr. 1421).

i.e. concrete sense 'dispute, fight'.

Thus, by analogy, with debate (v), question (v) could have
acquired a concrete force. It could have been used as though
it were like debate and had progressed from an originally concrete
emphasis to the abstract one of 'dispute with words', although
its concrete sense did not in fact exist first. In this way,
question would superficially seem to follow the usual pattern of
a shift from a concrete force to an abstract one, although in
reality it followed the reverse process.

1. See also Bloomfield p. 429:- 'refined and abstract meanings largely grow out of more concrete meanings'.

HINT

Hint (sb.)

Of obscure origin; presumably a variation of hent (sb.) = 'grasp, intention' < O.E. hentan (v) = 'to seize, grasp'.

According to Kökeritz, hint and hent were Cl6 variants and were not two distinct words and a source of homonymic puns.¹

This word is yet another example of a shift from a concrete sense to an abstract one. The original sense of hent was 'grasp, clutch'. This sense is not recorded after the beginning of the Cl6 in O.E.D. From this concrete sense, hent (sb.) was figuratively applied to abstract or mental grasping and meant 'intention, design'. As a Cl6 variant of hent, hint first meant 'intention, conception, design'. The general sense of the word in Shakespeare seems to be 'something which can be grasped or taken advantage of'. He is the first person on record to use hint (sb.) with the sense 'an occasion or opportunity', which survived until the Cl9:-

Wherein of Antres vast, and deserts idle, ...

It was my hint to speak.

(Oth. I.III.140-42).

The use of hent in Hamlet is ambiguous:-

Up, sword, and know thou a more horrid hent;

When he is drunk asleep or in his rage.

(Hm. III.III. 87-89).

HINT (CONTD.)

In the O.E.D., it is stated that this could be a use of hent = 'grasp, clutch', that is a concrete use, or that it could be a form of hint ^{with} the usual 'Shakespearean sense'. But according to Kökeritz, the two forms would not be considered as distinct words by Shakespeare, but were Cl6 variants of one word,² meaning 'design'.

Even if we discard 'clutch' as a possible sense, the passage is still ambiguous, for hent as a variant of hint could mean 'intention, design', or it could be another use of the sense 'occasion, opportunity' which is first found in Shakespeare. In the film version of Hamlet, starring Sir Laurence Olivier, the word intent is used here. The real point of interest is that here we have a context where a word is pliable, where the emergence of a new sense is possible.

There is another ambiguous passage, this time in Othello, where hint could mean 'occasion, opportunity', or 'suggestion' (intended to be grasped by the intelligent);-

She ... bade me, if I had a friend that lov'd her,
I should but teach him how to tell my story,
And that would woo her. Upon this hint I spake.

(Oth. I.III.164-166).

This passage is recorded as the first one containing hint in the sense 'slight indication, suggestion' in the O.E.D.

HINT (CONTD.)

Thus hint has moved from the active sense 'mental grasping' to a passive sense 'suggestion intended to be grasped'. The ambiguity of these passages shows the greater fluidity of language in Shakespeare's time.

1. Shakespeare quite often lowered ǐ to ě. This is still a characteristic of Cockney and several other dialects, and was formerly of even wider currency. See Kökeritz p.86 and p.212. According to Kökeritz, hent was not a noun in its own right, meaning 'grasp, clutch' in Shakespeare's time.
2. There are plenty of uses of hint in Shakespeare's plays, but hent only appears this once.

JUMP

1. Jump (v) = 'to hop, leap; to plunge into the unknown, to risk; to coincide, agree'. 1500—. Apparently of onomatopaeic origin cf. bump (v). cf. M.H.G. and dial. G. gumpen = 'to jump, hop', Du. gumpe, Sw. dial. gumpa and Icel. goppa.
2. Jump (adv.) = 'with exact coincidence, precisely, just'.

In current English, jump (v) means 'to spring into the air, to leap over', or less energetically, 'to give an involuntary start when surprised'. It is also used figuratively of passing over or evading a lesson, a chapter in a book etc. Shakespeare makes use of these senses, but he also uses jump frequently in two ways which are unfamiliar to the modern speaker:-

Firstly he uses the figurative sense 'to plunge into an action of doubtful issue', a sense which became obsolete after the mid C17. This leads on to the sense 'venture, hazard, risk':-

1. ... that but this blow (i.e. the murder of Duncan)
Might be the be-all and the end-all - here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'ed jump the life to come.
(Mcb. I.VII.4-7).
2. You must ... jump the after - inquiry on your own peril.
(Cymb. V.IV.182).
3. ... our fortune lies

JUMP (CONTD.)

Upon this jump.

(Ant. III.VIII.5).

In the first of these quotations, the sense could be the metaphorical sense 'overleap, miss', which is familiar to us. Quotation two, however, clearly demands the sense 'risk', which is not current usage. Likewise in the third quotation, the substantive could mean simply 'plunge', or it could ^{have} be the Shakespearean sense 'risk, chance'.¹

The other sense, which is unfamiliar now, is 'to coincide, agree'. This seems rather far-removed from the concrete sense 'leap', and the only suggestion I can offer is that the connection lies in the onomatopoeic origin of the word. The sound described by jump is one of sudden impact produced by the 'coming together, or coincidence' of the feet and a hard surface. Shakespeare makes frequent use of this sense:-

e.g. But though they jump not on a just account. (sc.letters).

(Oth. I.III.5).

e.g. Both our inventions meet and jump in one.

(Shr. I.I.185).

We still have an isolated example of this sense in the technical term 'to jump' a rail, bar etc., by welding, (i.e. 'to join it'), which developed in the C19. The notion of exact coincidence or

JUMP (CONTD.)

agreement in time is present in the now obsolete adverb jump, which is common in Shakespeare's plays:-

e.g. But since, so jump upon this bloody question,
You from the Polack wars, and you from England,
Are here arrived.

(Hm. V.II.386-388).

e.g. And bring him jump when he may Cassio find,
Soliciting his wife.

(Oth. II.III.376).

e.g. Thus twice before, and jump at this dead hour.

(Hm. I.I.65). (Ff. just)

This verb exhibits the tendency for more abstract senses to grow out of concrete ones by the process of figurative usage.

1. A similar usage in current English is to take the plunge, which is used of the decisive moment of embarking upon something of doubtful issue.

The imagination and complexity of the human mind is reflected in figurative language. Some words owe their transference of sense to metonymy, to actual relationships e.g. patch and bombast. At other times a similarity such as that of shape may be observed, e.g. the various jocular synonyms for the human skull - mazzard, costard, nut etc. A special group of words is formed by affective terms which involve a highly emotive factor. As with other types of semantic change, those arising from figurative usage can be highly complex and may be the result of a mixture of ^{the} figurative senses of more than one word e.g. gull.

It has been noted that analogy is an important factor in semantic change e.g. fustian and question. Another tendency which has been observed is the growth of abstract senses out of concrete ones e.g. cope.

The great fluidity of language in Shakespeare's time could produce a variety of ambiguous contexts where new senses could emerge e.g. hint. Shakespeare's influence on language can be seen in a word like costermonger, or in a household phrase such as small beer.

CHAPTER FOUR

SPECIALIZATION OR RESTRICTION

Many words which once had a general sense have become specific - in the case of nouns, they have come to describe specific persons, creatures or objects, and in the case of verbs, specific actions. They are applicable to fewer things, but tell us more about them.¹ It has been claimed that in ordinary conversation, language is directed to the specific rather than the general, and consequently that restriction of meaning is more frequent than extension.²

A large number of words still had a general or neutral sense in Shakespeare's plays, as well as having a specific sense in many cases.

1. i.e. Their extension has been reduced, whilst their intension has been increased. See Ullmann A. p.119.

2. See Ullmann B. on restriction and extension of meaning.

RIVAL

Rival (sb.) = 'partner'.

< L. rīvālis (sb.) = orig. 'one living on a river-bank and entitled to share its water with another person'.

< L. rīvus (sb.) = 'stream'.

C15 Fr. rival (sb.)^{which} comes from the same source.

Since its first appearance in English in the C16, rival has embodied the notion of competition, of one person striving to outdo another. This same sense appears in the verb rival, the substantive rivality (now rivalry), and in the French counterparts. It is well - attested in Shakespeare:-

e.g. The Princes, France and Burgundy,
 Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love....
 (Lr. I.I.45-6).
 i.e. 'competitors'.

Besides this sense, rival has a neutral sense 'partner' in Shakespeare's plays, which is unfamiliar to us, but which is present in its Latin root:-

1. Horatio and Marcellus,
 The rivals of my watch....
 (Hm. I.I.19).

2. Caesar, having made use of him in the
 wars 'gainst Pompey, presently denied him rivality,
 would not let him partake in the glory of the action...

RIVAL (CONTD.)

(Ant. III.V.6-8).

i.e. 'equality, the rank and rights of a partner'.

Similarly, co-rival (sb.) can mean both 'competitor' and 'partner, companion' in Shakespeare's plays. The verb co-rival appears once with the sense 'to vie with'.~~now~~

... the King hath drawn

The special head of all the land together:

The Prince of Wales, Lord John of Lancaster,

The noble Westmoreland, and warlike Blunt;

And many moe corrivals and dear men

Of estimation and command in arms. i.e. 'companions, partners'.

(I.H.IV. IV.IV.27-32).

COMPETITOR

Competitor (sb.) = 'associate, partner'.

{ Cl6 Fr. compétiteur (sb.) for its source L. competitor (sb.) = 'one of several who aim at the same object, a fellow-candidate, rival' < L. competere (v), in the post-classical, active sense 'to strive after something in company' < com - = 'together' + petere (v) = 'to aim at, go toward, fall upon'. The early neutral sense of the Latin verb was 'to fall together, coincide; be fitting, due' etc. N.B. Eng. competence (sb.) and competent (adj.), where the notion is that of 'fitness'. Cotgrave has competer (v) = 'to be sufficient for, suitable', as well as 'to demaund, or sue for the same thing that another doth'. There is no trace of the sense 'to be suitable' in the modern French verb.

The verb compete first appeared in the Cl6 in English, but according to Onions it was not frequent before the Cl9, when it was stigmatized as a Scotticism or ^{an}Americanism.

Like rival, competitor (sb.) has only the sense 'one who strives against others to gain something' in current English. Likewise it had a neutral force in Shakespeare's plays, but unlike rival, its neutral sense is recorded outside Shakespeare in other Cl6 and Cl7 writers. The neutral sense 'associate, partner', i.e. 'one who is associated with another in seeking a common object', is present in Latin. Both it and the present-day sense appear

COMPETITOR (CONTD.)

in Shakespeare's plays:-

1. It is not Caesar's natural vice to hate
Our great competitor.

(Ant. I.IV.2-3).

N.B. Antony is the partner in question.

2. These three world-sharers, these competitors...

(Ant. II.VII.69).

i.e. 'partners'.

3. ... thou my brother, my competitor,

In top of all design.

(Ant. V.I.142).

The dividing line between the two senses is very faint, and in example three especially, a sense of 'one striving to outdo another' does perhaps enter. In view of the context, where it is a question of supreme effort and great enterprise (i.e. top of all design), a suitable sense might be 'friendly rival',¹ i.e. a sense midway between 'associate' and 'rival'.¹

Both rival and competitor once had a general sense, but both have become specific in current English.

1. i.e. taking rival in its present-day sense.

DEER

Deer (sb.) = 'animal'.

↳ O.E. dēor (sb.) = 'animal' (Common Germanic).

cf. O.S. dier, O.Fris. diar, L.G. dier, O.N. *djur, Germ. deuzo^m

↳ pre - Germ. *dheuss (m.), generally referred to an I.E. root

*dhus (v) = 'to breathe', (cf. animal < L. anima = 'breath'),

and thought by etymologists to be the neuter form of an adj.

used as a subst.

In old English and until the C15, deer was the general name for a 'beast'. Then it was specifically applied to the species of quadrupeds having antlers. ¹As a generic name, it appeared only contextually in Old English, but became distinct in Middle English and by the close of the latter period was usually used in this way. The specific sense is the only one in current English.

Shakespeare's one use of the original sense is archaistic:-

... mice and rats and such small deer,

Have been Tom's food for seven long year.

(Lr. III.IV.142-3).

It appears in a version of a couplet from the popular C15 romance Bevis of Hampton:²

Ratons and myce and soche smale dere,

That was hys mete that seven yere.

Shakespeare's influence on later writers is illustrated by

DEER (CONTD.)

the re-appearance of the combination small deer in the C19. In one of the C19 examples recorded in O.E.D., the sense is the same as that in Shakespeare, i.e. 'small animals':-

Live mainly upon worms, slugs, and other hardy
small deer.

(1883, G. Allen: Colin Clout's Calendar 14).

In the other example, the sense is humorously mingled with the current one, as we can tell from the use of the verb herded, which is not normally applied to rats and mice, but is more appropriate to the antlered race:-

The small deer that were herded together by Johnson as the most eminent of English poets.

(1857, H. Reed: Lect. Eng. Poets X.II.17).

Small, in the example quoted from Shakespeare, may simply describe size, but in Reed's usage it has the figurative sense 'insignificant'. Reed's mingling of senses has produced a humorous and richly ambivalent image.

1. cf. hound = 'hunting dog' < O.E. hund = 'any kind of dog'.

2. edn. Kölbing, p.74.

TOY

Toy (sb.) = 'dalliance, trifle, plaything'.

Etymology unascertained. (M. Du. toi = 'attire, finery' agrees in form, but not in sense) cf. Du. tuig = 'tools, gear, trash'. There is one use of toy (sb.) in R. Brunne in 1303, then it seems to disappear for two centuries. It has been in common use since 1530.

The sense of toy in R. Brunne is 'amorous play'. By the time toy re-appeared in the Cl6, it had undergone quite a change in meaning, for by then it had become generalised and meant 'a sportive movement, antic, trick, a fantastic or trifling speech or piece of writing, a foolish or idle tale', and 'an object of little value or importance' in its concrete use. Presumably the connection between these senses and the earlier sense is the common notion of something 'light-hearted' or 'not serious'.

The term has a wide range of sense in Shakespeare's plays, where it has its earliest sense of 'amorous dalliance', as well as the common sense of 'trifling matter or object' e.g:-

1. Each toy seems prologue to some great amiss.

(Hm. IV.V.18).

i.e. 'trifling matter'.

2. Hold it a fashion, and a toy in blood.

(Hm. I.III.6). (sc. Hamlet's attentions to Ophelia.).

i.e. 'an idle fancy'.

TOY (CONTD.)

There are several instances in his plays of toy meaning 'bawble'.

He also applies toys to 'beings of no consequence':-

Elves, list your names; silence, you airy toys.

(N.W. IV.V.40).

Since Shakespeare's day, toy has become greatly restricted in application and has the specific sense 'plaything' today. This sense developed at the end of the C16, when toy could mean 'an object for amusement rather than practical use' and was specially applied to children's playthings:-

The rattles and toyes which children use to play with.

(1598, Barckley: Felic. Man (1631) 152).

PARCEL

Parcel (sb.) = 'part, portion, company, bundle wrapped in paper'.

< M.E. parcelle < O.F. parcelle < V.L. *particella

< Classical L. particula (diminutive of pars, partis (sb.)) =
'part, portion, item'.

The senses 'part, portion, item', which were those of the word in Latin, were in use in English from Chaucer until the C19. They are common in Shakespeare's plays:-

e.g. I would all my pilgrimage dilate,
Whereof by parcel she had something heard.
(Oth. I.III.153-4).

There are isolated examples of this sense left in current English, e.g. part and parcel and a parcel of land.

In Shakespeare's plays parcel also means 'a collection of individuals':-

e.g. this parcel of woocers.
(M.V. I.II.119).

Similarly the verb parcel is concerned with things which are 'particular' or 'individual':-

1. their woes are parcell'd, mine is general.
(R.III. II.II.81).

i.e. 'particular'.

2. that mine own servant should

PARCEL (CONTD.)

Parcel the sum of my disgraces, by
Addition of his envy.

(Ant. V.II.161-63).

With regard to the second quotation, I prefer Malone's interpretation 'to add one more item to my disgraces, by adding his envy'.¹

In all these senses, the common notion seems to be that of one item, whether it is a question of discussing by items, of extending a quantity of something by one more item, or of gathering individual items or persons into one.

From the middle of the C16, the term was applied to a quantity of anything or a number of things put together in a single package. This specific sense is the only current one, and it is especially applied to bundles wrapped in paper. From being a general term denoting some kind of individual item, parcel has developed into a specific and concrete term denoting a particular kind of object.

1. For the various interpretations of this passage see M.R. Ridley's note to the Arden edn. of Antony & Cleopatra p.206.

FATHOM

Fathom (sb.) = 'embrace, six-foot measure, measure of depth'.

↳ O.E. faepm (sb.) = 'embrace, bosom'.

cf. O.N. faþmr = 'embrace, bosom, outstretched arms'.

A fathom was the name for a six-foot measure after 800 A.D.

It owed its origin to the fact that the embrace of the outstretched arms is about six feet/ (the original sense of fathom was in fact 'embrace'). Until the C19 it was a general measure and was not just applied to depth, as it is now. It was used as a measure of material, for example. 9/

Another of his fathom they have not

To lead their business.

(Oth. I.I.152-3).

In the O.E.D. this quotation is given under the figurative sense of 'intellectual grasp, breadth of comprehension', and it is viewed as a development of 'embrace, grasp'. M.R. Ridley¹ suggests that the idea here is one of 'depth' of character. Fathom is a measure of depth in Shakespeare's plays, and it sounds quite natural to speak of a person's 'depth of character', just as we would talk of shallow behaviour. Mr. Ridley compares this sense with a different modern figurative usage, i.e. calibre. Whilst admitting that both these interpretations are feasible, I would suggest that the sense might simply be 'measure', that is the general sense common in Elizabethan times. Then the quotation

FATHOM (CONTD.)

would mean 'we have not another person measuring up to ...'.

In the same way the verb fathom < O.E. faepmian (v)² meant 'to encircle with extended arms' until the C19, and 'to sound the depth of', both literally and figuratively from the C17 onwards. If the interpretation in the O.E.D. of the passage quoted overleaf is correct, Shakespeare's usage is the first figurative usage recorded. Today all notion of 'embrace or grasp' has been lost and fathom (sb.) is solely used as a measure of depth, just as fathom (v) is applied to the action of 'penetrating' or 'getting to the bottom of something', in both literal and figurative usage. 8/

1. See the Arden edn. p.12.

2. e.g. ... hī ... lēton wēg niman, flōd
faepmian fraetwa hyrde.

(Beowulf L.3130-33).

(i.e. they let the wave take, the waters enfold the
guardian of the treasure).

HUSBAND

Husband (sb.) = 'the master of a household, a married man, a farmer, an economist'. < Late O.E. hūsbonða, -unda < O.E. hūs = 'house' + O.E. *bonda, *bunda < O.N. bōndi = 'peasant owning his own house and land, yeoman'; earlier būandi, boandi pres. pple. of būa, boa (v) = 'to dwell, have a household'.

The O.E. use was the same as O.N. hūsbonði = 'a yeoman in his capacity as head of a household'.

Husband (sb.) had a wide range of meaning for Shakespeare, as indeed it had in the language of his time. It could mean 'the master of a household, a married man, one who cultivates the soil, and one who manages his affairs'. Often the epithets good or bad were attached to husband, when it was used with the sense of 'economist', which is unfamiliar to us today. The other senses are more familiar to us,¹ although our own usage is restricted to the sense 'a married man'.

e.g. While I play the good husband at home, my son and my servant spend all at the university.

(Shr. V.I.58).

Likewise, husbandry (sb.) had a similar range and commonly meant 'economy, thrift' in Shakespeare's English:--

e.g. And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.

(Hm. I.III.77).

HUSBAND (CONTD.)

e.g. There's husbandry in heaven;

Their candles are all out.

(Mcb. II.I.4-5).

1. e.g. Knowledge of the N.T. makes us aware of husbandman
= 'farmer, head of a household'.

FOP

1. Fop (sb.) = 'fool, dandy'.

The substantive appears in the Cl5, the verb in the Cl6.

With the development of sense in the substantive cf. Fr. fat (sb.)

< Prov. fat = 'fool' < L. fatuus = 'fool'. Fr. fat = 'fool' >

'fop, coxcomb' in the Cl7. cf. Eng. fatuity (sb.) < O.F. fatuité

< L. fatuitātem (sb.) < L. fatuus (adj.) = 'foolish'.

2. Fop (v) = @. 'to play the fool' Cl6, b. 'to make a fool of, cheat' Cl7. Sense b. agrees with G. foppen (v) = 'to hoax'.

cf. Eng. fob (v) = 'to befool, cheat' in Cl6, which is also of obscure origin.

Shakespeare only uses the verb fop once:-

I ... begin to find myself fopp'd in it.

(Oth. IV.II.196).

i.e. 'fooled, made a fool of'.

His usage of the construction to fob off is the first recorded:-

I ... have been fubb'd off, and fubb'd off, and fubb'd off, from this day to that day ...

(2.H.IV. II.I.31).

i.e. 'put off deceitfully'.

This construction still exists in such sentences as 'He fobbed her off with an article of poor value', where the idea is that of 'putting someone off with something less than expected'.

FOP (CONTD).

Originally fop (sb.) was just the general name for 'a foolish person'. There is one example of this in Shakespeare:-

... a whole tribe of fops.

(Lr. I.II.14).

Foppery (sb.) and foppish (adj.) are used in the same way:-

e.g. This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and stars.

(Lr. I.II.124).

i.e. 'foolishness'.

e.g. Fools had ne'er less grace in a year;
For wise men are grown foppish,
And know not how their wits to wear
Their manners are so apish.

(Lr. I.IV.173f).

i.e. 'foolish'.

At the time of the Restoration, when particular attention was paid to dress and manners, fop (sb.) changed its force and became restricted in its application to a particular kind of 'foolish person', i.e. to a 'dandy', or someone foolishly attentive to dress and manners. This became its sole sense.

BELDAME

Beldame (sb.) = 'grandmother, an aged woman, a hag or witch'.

bel < O.F. belle (adj.) = 'fair' < L. bellum, -am (adj.).

Bel is used as a formative prefix in

a. belfader, belsire, = 'grandfather',

b. belmoder, beldame = 'grandmother'.

This use of bel is unknown to French and seems to be entirely

English. It answers to the English use of good in godsire,

good-dame, godson, god-dowter

cf. Fr. bon-papa and bonne-maman.

The use of grand- in grandpère, grandfather, grandsire, grandmother

etc. is more obvious in its designation of age-relationship. The

tendency to let analogy prevail over sense appears in the English

grandson as compared with Fr. petit - fils.

Beldame is not a direct adoption of O.F. belle dame, meaning

'fair lady', but is formed on dam (sb.) (earlier dame) in the

English sense of 'mother', with the prefix bel - used to express

relationship and respect. According to von Wartburg, beau,

belle were used in the Middle Ages as terms of affection and respect,

e.g. beaus dous amis. Until the early C17, beldame meant specifically

'grandmother'. There are several instances of this sense in

Shakespeare's works. Towards the end of the C16, it came to be

used in a more general way to designate an aged woman and was often

used when addressing nurses. Very soon afterwards, it developed a

BELDAME (CONTD).

specific contemptuous force and meant 'a loathsome old woman, a hag, a witch'. There are a few examples of its use as a term of contempt in Shakespeare's plays, e.g. Hecate addresses the three witches as beldames (Mcb. III.V.2). Unlike housewife/hussy, there was no alternative form to take over the pejorative sense. Perhaps this accounts for the death of the earlier senses of beldame, but it does not account for the total loss of the term in current English. In the case of undertaker¹ for instance, a pejorative sense developed, but the term continued to be current with this as its sole sense.

1. See P. 239

UNDERTAKER

Undertaker (sb.) = 'one who takes on an enterprise'.

Under- + take (v) superseded M.E. underfo (v) < O.E. underfōn (v), and M.E. undernime (v) < O.E. undernimān (v).

Literally undertaker (sb.) means 'one who takes it upon himself to perform something', and this was its sense until the C18. It was a general term which could be applied to anyone in any capacity. In the C17 it was euphemistically applied to 'someone who makes a business of carrying out the arrangements for funerals'. Like many euphemisms,¹ it has defeated its purpose of covering an unpleasant matter, because once it developed this unpleasant association, it became restricted to use in this sense. The verb undertake still has the general sense 'to take on, venture on', however, just as undertaking (sb.) retains the sense of 'enterprise', because they are not associated with funerals.

The sense of undertaker is general in Shakespeare, although the following passage has a sinister undertone for the modern audience, especially as the 'disposal' of Cassio is being discussed:-

And for Cassio, let me be his undertaker.

(Oth. IV.I.206).

i.e. 'the one to deal with him'.

1. cf. shroud. cf. imbecile = orig. 'weak, feeble one'.

SHROUD

Shroud (sb.) = 'covering'.

< O.E. scrūd (str. neut.), cognate with O.N. skrúp (neut.) =

'fittings, apparel, ornament; also a kind of textile fabric'

< Germ. *skrūp, long, weak grade of *skreup - = 'to cut'.

cf. Eng. shred (sb. & v.) from the same Germ. root.

Until the C17, shroud (sb.) could denote 'clothing' and 'a shelter', i.e. a 'covering' of some kind. The specific use of shroud (sb.) to mean 'a winding sheet for a corpse' is a C16 development. Once this unpleasant association had developed, it became the main one.¹ As well as using this specific sense, Shakespeare frequently makes use of the earlier general senses of shroud, both substantive and verb:-

e.g. But it would warm his spirits
 To hear from me you had left Antony,
 And put yourself under his shroud.

 (Ant. III.XIII.69-71).

i.e. 'shelter, protection'.

1. cf. undertaker.

For unpleasant association, 'taboo' words etc., see Ullmann A.
p.204f.

GARB

Garb (sb.) = 'dress, manner of doing something'.

⟨ Cl6 Fr. garbe ⟨ It. garbo = 'grace, elegance'.

With the presence in this word of an abstract sense ('manner of doing something') as well as a concrete sense, cf. gear (sb.) = 'affair, matter', as well as 'trappings' in Cl5 and Cl6 English.

(gear ⟨ O.H.G. garawî = 'preparation, adornment').

When garb was first adopted in English in the Cl6, it was used in a way true to the Italian meaning and had the senses 'grace, elegance, stylishness of manners'. These senses continued into the Cl7, as did the more general senses 'a person's outward manner or bearing' and 'style or manner of doing anything', which do not contain the original overtones of 'grace or elegance'. Thus the word had become transferred from describing the gracefulness of conduct to the conduct itself. The general sense of 'manner of doing something' is the only one in Shakespeare's plays:-

Who, having been prais'd for bluntness, doth affect
A saucy roughness, and constrains the garb
Quite from his nature

(Lr. II.II.98).

i.e. 'manner of speaking'.

In the early Cl7, garb was applied specifically to the 'manner of dressing' and subsequently to the concrete object dress itself, which is its sole use today. Thus garb has lost all its abstract

GARB (CONTD.)

sense of grace and has become restricted to a concrete sense. This may be contrasted with the more usual tendency towards a movement from a concrete sense to an abstract one. See my note to question.

TRICK

Trick (sb.) = 'a deceit, an artifice, a prank, an clever device, knack, a distinguishing trait; a trifling object'. < O.F. trique (sb.) (Norman form of triche) = 'deceit, treachery' < trikier (v) (Norman form of trichier, trechier (v)) = 'to deceive, cheat'. The origin of this word is disputed. Most scholars refer it to a late Latin *triccāre (v) (an alteration of trīcāre (v)) = 'to trifle, play tricks' < trīcae (sb.) = 'trifles, toys' and also 'subterfuges, wiles, tricks'.

In Shakespeare's language, trick (sb.) had a wide range of meaning. It was adopted from O.F. with the sense 'deceit, crafty device', which is the main current one. This sense is common usage in Shakespeare's plays:-

e.g. She ... says she hears

There's tricks i' the world.

(Hm. IV.V.4-5).

In his usage the word developed a slightly weaker sense 'mischievous act, foolish act, prank'.¹ Other common senses were 'clever device, knack, art':-

1. Here's fine revolution, an we had the trick to see it.

(Hm. V.I.98-99).

i.e. 'art, ability'.

2. Where be his quiddits now, his quilllets, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks ? (sc. a lawyer).

(Hm. V.I.107-109). i.e. 'skilful devices'.

TRICK (CONTD.)

The sense of 'knack, skill' remains in the phrase the tricks of the trade.

Yet another common sense in Shakespeare's work is 'a characteristic, a distinguishing trait'. Perhaps the link here with the other meanings is the common notion of something 'special' or 'peculiar to someone or something'—an art or skill is a personal accomplishment, just as a characteristic is a special, personal quality. The most noteworthy thing about this sense, however, is that it is far-removed from the original sense 'deceit, wile'.

3. Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia,
And therefore I forbid my tears; but yet
It is our trick; nature her custom holds ...

(Hm. IV.I.187-189).

i.e. 'habit, custom'.

4. The trick of that voice I do well remember: Is't not
the king ?

(Lr. IV.VI.108).

i.e. 'distinctive trait'.

In the sense 'a clever contrivance', trick had been applied to concrete objects from its use in Latin onwards. This concrete sense 'trifling ornament, trinket, bauble' is last recorded in C19 English, although the plural tricks can mean 'personal belongings' i.e. 'small, trifling articles' in C20 American. Shakespeare

TRICK (CONTD.)

uses the sense 'trifle' both in connection with concrete objects and abstract ones:-²

e.g. A knack, a toy, a trick, a baby's cap.

(Shr. IV.III.67).

e.g. That, for a fantasy and trick of fame,

Go to their graves like beds.

(Hm. IV.IV.61-62).

i.e. 'worthless possession such as fame'.

Although there are certain isolated examples of earlier senses, viewed in totality, trick has been greatly restricted in its sense-range. Its main use now seems to be confined to actions and it no longer denotes concrete objects.

1. N.B. In current English, trick is used in connection with trifling, foolish actions as well ^{as} crafty ones, usually with the qualification foolish, e.g. 'That's a foolish trick !'
It can also be used in the sarcastic construction 'That's a clever trick !'

2. cf. toy, but trick has not been restricted to a particular object as toy has.

COMPOSURE

1. Composure (sb.) = 'disposition, temperament, alliance, calmness'.

Together with exposure (sb.) and disposure (sb.), composure appeared c 1600. These words are apparently of English formation from the verbs expose, dispose and compose, by association with enclose (v), enclosure (sb.), or other words in which the formation was etymological, representing L. -sura.

2. Compose (v) < O.F. composer (v) < com- = 'together' + poser (v) = 'to place, put down', based on L. compōnere (v) = 'to put together, arrange, devise'.

In current English, the verb compose is still used in a variety of ways. It can mean 'to put together' (a literary work, music etc.), as well as 'to calm or settle'. The substantive composure, however, is restricted to describing 'an unruffled, settled state of the emotions'. This sense developed in the C17 shortly after composure had been applied to 'a settled state of affairs'. At that time it was used quite generally and could be applied to such a thing as the weather. The connotation of 'settled' developed from the sense 'put together, arrange' of the verb. Like composition (sb.), composure was also applied to the settling of disputes. Originally to compose oneself meant 'to adjust oneself to any attitude, especially that of repose', i.e. 'to arrange one's feelings in order to fit in with a certain state of affairs'. The later sense of 'calm' is a result of an association with repose (v).

COMPOSURE (CONTD).

In the C16 and C19, composure had not been restricted to describing human emotions, so it could be used to denote any kind of composition or putting together; hence the sense 'disposition, temperament'^{1, was used} during that period, and also the sense 'alliance':-

1. ... to sit

And keep the turn of tippling with a slave,
To reel the streets at noon, and stand the buffet
With knaves that smell of sweat: say this becomes him,
- As his composure must be rare indeed
Whom these things cannot blemish.

(Ant. I.IV. 1823).

i.e. 'disposition, temperament'.

2. NEST. What a vice were it in Ajax now -

ULY. If he were proud.

DIO. Or covetous of praise - - -

ULY. Thank the heavens, lord, thou art of sweet composure.

(Troil. II.III.29-34).

i.e. 'disposition'.

3. ... their fraction is more our wish than their faction.

But it was a strong composure a fool could disunite !

(Troil. II.III.94-6).

i.e. 'alliance'.

1. Literally 'the gathering of various qualities in the character of an individual'.

AFFECTION

1. Affection (sb.) = 'temperament, feeling, artificiality'.

< O.F. affection (sb.) < L. affectionem = 'disposition, inclination, fondness' < L. afficere (v) < ad = 'to' + facere (v) = 'do'.

2. Affect (v) = 'to show a liking for, aim at, assume, take upon oneself artificially'.

< Cl5 affacter (v) < L. affect-, p.ppl. stem of afficere (v)
< ad + facere (v) = 'to do, to put to'.

3. Affect (v) = 'to influence, act upon'

< F. affacter (v) < L. affectare < L. afficere (v).

The mingling of the senses of the two verbs affect (which developed from the same Latin source) produced a variety of senses of affection in earlier usage. From the Cl6 until the Cl8, affection was commonly used where we would use affectation:-

e.g. Taffeta phrases, silken terms precise,
Three-pil'd hyperboles, spruce affection,
(L.L.L. V.II. 466-7). F.2, 3 & 4 affectation.

e.g. witty without affection.
(L.L.L. V.I.4).

e.g. ... no sallets in the lines to make the matter savoury,
nor no matter in the phrase that might indict the author
of affection.
(Hm. II.II.471-473).

AFFECTION (CONTD.)

There is no chance of ambiguity in these quotations as the contexts make Shakespeare's meaning quite clear. Any possibility of ambiguity in the uses of affection has been avoided by the use of affectation for the sense 'artificiality' and the restriction of affection to the sense 'liking for' in our usage.

Originally affection was used in a much more general or neutral way. It could be applied to any moving of the mind or emotions, whether good or bad. Thus in Chaucer's usage it merely means 'feeling'. That it does not mean 'fondness' is clear from its coupling with love:-

Withouten any other affeccioun of love --.

(1385, Chaucer; Legend of Good Women L.1522).

In fact in the C15 and C16, it could have the sense 'biased feeling or animosity':-

e.g. And he cometh rennyng agenst me wyth

affectyon mortal.

(1485, Caxton: Chas. the Gt. L.44).

As a neutral term, it could mean 'disposition, mental tendency' (as it did in Latin) until the C18. This sense is common in Shakespeare's plays:-

e.g. With this, there grows

In my most ill-composed affection such

A staunchless avarice

(Mcb. IV. III. 77 - 79).

AFFECTION (CONTD.)

Until the C19 it could even mean 'disease', and be equivalent to our word infection.

Affection was a neutral term which moved in the opposite direction from a word like accident to take on an ameliorative force, for today the emphasis is on 'good feeling', or 'love'. The sense of 'fondness' was present in Latin and common in Shakespeare's plays. This sense was only one of several however, whereas today it is the sole one.

CARRIAGE

Carriage (sb.) = 'conveyance, carrying power, conduct of affairs, deportment'. < O.F. charriage (sb.) (Picard cariage) = 'action of conveying in a vehicle' < O.F. chARRIER (v) = 'to convey in a vehicle' < V.L. carricare (v).

Carriage (sb.) was adopted in C14 English with the sense 'action of conveying'.¹ Shakespeare applies it to a man's power to carry something²:-

Sampson ... was a man of good carriage,
great carriage, for he carried the towngates
on his back like a porter.

(L.L.L. I.II.68f).

The term once had a much wider range of application than it has now. It could mean 'the management of affairs' and 'the meaning carried by words, import':³

e.g. ... a moiety competent
Was gaged by our king; which had return'd
To the inheritance of Fortinbras,
Had he been vanquisher; as, by the same covenant
And carriage of the article design'd,
His fell to Hamlet.

(Hm. I.I.90-95).

Shakespeare was the first person to apply it to the manner of

CARRIAGE (CONTD.)

carrying the body, i.e. 'deportment':-

A goodly, portly man ... of ... a most noble carriage,

(I.H.IV. II.IV.408).

i.e. 'bearing'.

At that time it could also be applied to a figurative 'bearing',

i.e. 'social conduct':-

Teach sin the carriage of a holy saint.

(Com. Err. III.II.14).

Carriage had concrete senses⁴ in the past, as it has today,

but it was used in a much more general way. Today it is chiefly

applied to wheeled vehicles, but in Shakespeare's time it could

be used of language, supports for machinery (cf. modern gun-carriage),

and even a sword-carrier, although the latter sense is only a courtier's

affected usage which is only found in Shakespeare:-

HAM. What call you the carriages?

OSR. The carriages, sir, are the hangers.

HAM. The phrase would be more germane to the matter if
we could carry cannon by our sides.

(Hm. V.II.158-163).

It is interesting, however, to note a similar sense in the

Shropshire dialect of the C19, where the word meant 'a belt which

carries a whetstone behind a mower'.

CARRIAGE (CONTD.)

A coach or the modern train-carriage are very different objects from the chariot originally denoted by the Latin antecedent of carriage. Such is the influence of changes in the material world, for words change more slowly than objects or ideas. When a new object comes into the consciousness of a community, for the sake of economy, it is described by the name of the pre-existing object which most closely resembles it and not by a new word.⁵ In this way, a word can have a very different force for different generations.

1. This sense is still used in connection with the conveyance of goods.
2. There is only one other record of this sense in the Cl8 in O.E.D.
3. Shakespeare is the first person recorded in O.E.D. to have used this sense.
4. See Ullmann A. p.220. For the abstract sense of 'carrying', as well as various concrete uses, cf. Fr. élite which still meant 'choice, choosing' in Cl6, as well as 'the chosen ones'. Metonymy gives abstract words a concrete force, i.e. the fact that a wheeled object was used for 'carrying' led to the application of the word to this object.
5. See Barfield p11-12.

CONVERSATION

1. Conversation (sb.) = 'way of life, intercourse'.

M.E. adoption of O.F. conversation, -acion (sb.)

< L. conversātiō (sb.) = 'frequent abode, intercourse' < conversārī

(v) = 'to pass one's life, dwell, keep company with'.

2. Converse (v) = 'to have dealings with, to talk with'.

< O.F. converser (v) < lat. L. conversāre (v) < L. conversārī (v)

< L. conversāre (v) = 'to turn to-and-fro'.

In both French and English, converse (v) was first used with its etymological sense 'to live among people and have dealings with them'. This sense continued to be current in England until the C18 and it is common in Shakespeare's plays:-

e.g. I do profess to be no less than I seem; to serve him truly that will put me in trust; to love him that is honest; to converse with him that is wise, and says little

(Lr. I.IV.14f).

i.e. 'to consort with'.

From the C16 until the mid-C19, converse (v) was also applied quite generally to dealings with, or engagement in, actions, books etc. In current English, the sense 'to be familiar with by way of having dealings with' is supplied by the construction to be conversant with. The present-day sense of the verb, i.e. 'to engage in talk with', first developed at the beginning of the C17.

CONVERSATION (CONTD.)

There are several instances of its use in Shakespeare's plays.

Similarly, conversation (sb.) frequently means 'manner of conducting oneself in society, way of life', as well as 'talk with' in Shakespeare's plays:-

e.g. Octavia is of a holy, cold, and still conversation.

(Ant. II.VI.120).

i.e. 'way of life'.

His usage is more flexible, as conversation had not been restricted to speech in its application; for example he could apply it to the workings of the mind:-

... the King,

Had from the conversation of my thoughts

Haply been absent then.

(All's Well I.III.224-226).

lit. 'presence in'.

In the C17, conversation had the special sense 'circle of acquaintance, company' and in the C18 it could denote 'a public conference, debate', whereas in current English it is restricted to more intimate speech and private discussion.

1. Originally conversant meant 'dwelling in'.

DISCOURSE

Discourse (sb.)

M.E. discours (sb.) < O.F. discours (sb.) < L. discurs-
p.ppl. stem of L. discurrere (v) = 'to run to-and-fro'; 'to
speak at length' (in late Latin).

Already in late Latin, discourse (v) had developed the sense
'to speak at length'. Presumably the sense 'conversation', which
discourse (sb.) has, came from the notion of 'running to-and-fro',
which is what happens when words pass from speaker to hearer.
Shakespeare often uses discourse (sb.) in connection with conversation,
but he also uses it in ways which are unfamiliar to us. In the C16
it meant 'onward course'. From Chaucer onwards it could be applied
to the faculty of thought and the act of reasoning, i.e. the passing
from premises to conclusions. Shakespeare often uses the word in
conjunction with words like reason and thought, where the sense
is that of 'process, motion' and involves the sense of movement
inherent in the Latin discurrere (v):-

1. If e'er my will did trespass 'gainst his love
Either in discourse of thought or actual deed

(Oth. IV.II.154-155).

2. a beast, that wants discourse of reason,
Would have mourn'd longer.

(Hm. I.II.150-151).

DISCOURSE (CONTD.)

3. Sure he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and godlike reason
To fast in us unus'd.

(Hm. IV.IV.36-39).

i.e. 'power of reasoning'.

The idea of 'movement between, intercourse' is present in
the following example:-

That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should
admit no discourse to your beauty.

(Hm. III.I.107-108).

These more general uses of discourse (sb.) continued until
the C19, but in current English, discourse (sb.) has been restricted
to describing the passage to-and-fro of words.

SUCCESS

1. Success (sb.) = 'outcome, issue, succession'.

⟨ L. successus, p.ppl. stem of succēdere (v) = 'to go under or up, come close after, go near, go on well' ⟨ sub + cēdere = 'to go'. cf. Cl6 Fr. succès (sb.) = also 'fortunate issue' in the Cl7, which by the Cl8 was the predominant sense.

2. Succeed (v) = 'to come next, approach'.

⟨ O.F. succeder (v) ⟨ L. succēdere (v). The O.F. verb had neutral senses until the Cl7, as well as the modern sense 'to accomplish', which developed in the Cl6.

This is a neutral term which has developed a positive force. In Cl6 and Cl7 English, success (sb.) was used to describe any outcome whether good or bad, and it was often used in conjunction with either the adjective good or the adjective bad e.g.:-

1. LEPIDUS Your way is shorter,
 My purposes do draw me much about,
 You'll win two days upon me.

BOTH Sir, good success !

(Ant. II.IV.7-9).

2. EROS Caesar and Lepidus have made wars upon Pompey.

ENO This is old, what is the success ?

(Ant. III.V.4-5).

The substantive could also have a positive force however,

SUCCESS (CONTD.)

as it does today:-

e.g. Upon your sword

Sit laurel victory, and smooth success

Be strew'd before your feet !

(Ant. I.III.99-101).

This sense of 'prosperous achievement' is common in Shakespeare.

He was the first person to use successful (adj.) in the sense 'achieving a desired end'.

The verb succeed is likewise used with both positive and neutral senses. It still means 'to come next to', as it did in Latin. Shakespeare sometimes uses success (sb.) in this way, whereas we would use succession (sb.)¹ :-

e.g. ... Our parents' noble names,

In whose success we are gentle.

(W.T. I.II.393-4).

i.e. 'in succession to whom'.

In current English the verb is restricted in this area of its sense to succession to the throne or to a position. We could no longer use the literal sense 'approach', which was common in the C16 and C17, and say with Spenser:-

Who ever, as he saw him nigh succeed,

Can cry aloud with horrible affright

(1596, Spenser; F.Q. VI.IV.8).

1. N.B. Succession also appears in his plays.

ACCIDENT

Accident (sb.) = 'happening, chance, unfortunate happening'.

< O.F. accident (sb.) < L. accidens, -ent (sb.), pres.pple.
of L. accidere (v) = 'to fall, to happen' < ad + cadere (v) =
'fall'.

This is another neutral term which has taken on a specific emphasis, but unlike success (sb.) it has developed in the opposite direction to acquire an unpleasant force. Shakespeare commonly uses the neutral sense 'happening' in his plays:-

e.g. Grief joys, joy grieves, on slender accident.

(Hm. III.II.211).

Here the sense is obviously neutral, for grief would not joy because of an unfortunate occurrence.

In Latin accident could be used as the equivalent of chance or fortune¹. Shakespeare frequently uses this sense:-

e.g. But even his mother shall uncharge the practice,
And call it accident. (sc. Hamlet's death).

(Hm. IV.VII.68-69).

This sense survives in modern usage e.g. by accident, accidentally (adv.), accidental (adj.). The substantive accident, however, can no longer have the neutral sense 'happening', but is restricted to the specific sense 'an unfortunate event, a mishap',² which it developed towards the end of the C19.

1. L. per accidens > Fr. par accident C14 > Eng. by accident C15.

2. i.e. 'an event which occurs without foresight, and which cannot be avoided'.

CENSURE

Censure (sb.) = 'opinion, judicial sentence, adverse judgement'.

< L. censūra (sb.) = 'opinion, judgement'.

N.B. Latin ensor (sb.) already had the sense of 'one who blames'.

Like accident, censure was once a neutral term and it too has taken on an unpleasant sense. Shakespeare commonly uses the original neutral sense 'opinion', which was current until the early C19:-

e.g. Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgement.

(Hm. I.III.69).

He also uses the sense 'a judicial sentence', which was common until the C18:-

e.g. ... lord governor, to you,

Remains the censure of this hellish villain.

(Oth. V.II.368-69).

Today both noun and verb are reserved for critical judgement, For instance in the censoring of a film or book, the bad is sorted from the good. Shakespeare was the first to use the substantive in this way¹, although the verb had been used with the sense 'to pronounce an adverse judgement on' a few years previously by Drayton. The idea of 'blame' is present even in Latin however, in the substantive ensor.

1. No might nor greatness in mortality

Can censure scape.

(M. for M. III.II.173-74).

SUBSCRIBE

Subscribe (v) = 'to sign one's name, to grant, to submit, to pay a certain sum towards'.

Cl5 < L. subscribere (v) < sub + scribere (v) = 'to write', represented in Gk. by skarīphāsthai (v) = 'scratch'.

N.B. The earliest forms of symbols were scratched on wood or stone with sharp tools; hence, ^{ca. 1000}the original sense 'scratch' of verbs of this type. cf. O.E. writan (v) > N.E. write (v).

With subscribe cf. It. soscrivere, Sp. suscribir & Fr. souscrire. For the many examples of the prefix + scribe (v) formation cf. superscribe, inscribe, ascribe, conscribe, describe, transcribe.

This term had a much wider range of meaning in Shakespeare's time, when it still contained the notion of writing which is proper to its etymology. Shakespeare commonly uses it with the literal sense 'to sign one's name':-

e.g. Eros write to him -

I will subscribe - gentle adieus, and greetings.

(Ant. IV.V.14).

Certain figurative senses arose from this sense in the Cl6, e.g.

'to concur, to countenance' (i.e. literally 'to assent by signing one's name'). These shaded into the further sense 'to acknowledge or grant', which is common in Shakespeare's plays:-

e.g. but when I had subscrib'd

To mine own fortune and informed her fully.

(All's Well. V.III.96-97).

To acknowledge something is to 'yield or give way to' it; hence *developed* the senses 'to submit, yield, give one's allegiance' (i.e. 'to acknowledge someone's sovereign power'). of which there are several instances in Shakespeare's usage:-

e.g. Sir, to your pleasure humbly I subscribe.

(Shr. I.I.81).

Schmidt would interpret subscrib'd in the following passage as a transitive use of the above sense, i.e. 'to cause to yield, to make inferior, to reduce to the state of dependency':-

And the King gone to-night ! subscrib'd his power !

(Lr. I.II.24).

This is the quarto reading, but the folio has prescrib'd, i.e. 'limited, restricted, confined within bounds'. As both verbs originally meant 'to write down', subscrib'd might have the same sense of 'limited, restricted' (literally 'written down'), which one could derive straight from its etymological sense.

I would, however, interpret subscribe as a use of the sense 'yield, give way to' in the following tricky¹ passage:-

SUBSCRIBE (CONTD.)

If wolves had at thy gate howl'd that dearn time,
Thou should'st have said, "Good porter, turn the key".
All cruels else subscribe: but I shall see
The winged vengeance overtake such children.

(Lr. III.VII.62-65).

I interpret cruels² as meaning 'cruel creatures'. The passage would then read, 'All other cruel creatures give way to pity'...

Subscription (sb.) has the same range of senses. It can mean 'signature, approval, assent', as well as 'submission or allegiance', in Shakespeare's plays:-

e.g. You owe me no subscription.

(Lr. III.II.18).

i.e. 'obedience'.

This variety of senses no longer exists in current English, where subscribe is specifically applied to money and has the sense 'to pay a certain sum towards'. This sense developed in the C18 in both England and France. It is an extension of the C17 sense 'to promise to pay over one's signature', but all sense of written agreement has since died out. With regard to the verb, the sense 'to agree with' is still conceivable, e.g. I'll subscribe to that opinion, but in so far as the substantive is concerned, the application is specifically to a sum of money.

1. For the various interpretations of this passage and its punctuation see the note to the Arden edition pp 142-143.

2. As Duthie points out, Shakespeare sometimes forms a substantive from an adjective which then denotes persons having the qualities described by the adjective. See note to Arden edn. p.142.

ACCOMMODATE

Accommodate (v) = 'to supply with what is fitting, to adapt to, to harmonise'. Cl6. Probably formed from the past participial adj. accommodate = 'fitting, suited' < L. accommodātus (adj.) = 'suited, suitable', p.pple. of accommodāre (v) < ac- = ad- = 'to' + commodāre (v) = 'to suit' < commodus (adj.) = 'suitable in measure, fitting' < com- = cum - = 'together' + modus (sb.) = 'measure, manner'.

The earliest senses of this verb are true to its etymological sense 'to fit or suit' - hence ^{come} such senses as 'to bring into harmony or to reconcile' and 'to supply someone with what is fitting', a sense which is fairly common in Shakespeare's plays e.g:-

1. here's three on's are sophisticated;
.... thou art the thing itself; unaccommodated man.
(Lr. III.IV.109).
i.e. 'not fitted out with the trappings of civilization'.
2. The safer sense will ne'er accommodate
His master thus.
(Lr. III.VI.81-82).

In quotation two, accommodate is usually interpreted 'furnish, equip'. As Mrs. Hulme¹ points out, this interpretation arises because the stage-direction 'drest madly with flowers', after Enter Lear, makes us think that Edgar is speaking about Lear.

ACCOMMODATE (CONTD.)

This stage-direction, however, was inserted by Theobald and is thus non-Shakespearean. Mrs. ^{Hulme}~~Shoood~~ prefers to interpret the words as referring to Gloucester. Her interpretation 'adapt itself to', and specifically 'to maintain itself when confronted by', is rather attractive, especially as Edgar has just told Gloucester to 'bear free and patient thoughts' in accordance with his new-found mental-balance, for which Edgar is afraid (here is its first test). The safer sense is Gloucester's new resolution. So Mrs. Hulme's interpretation fits in with the internal evidence, with the linguistic and dramatic context. As external evidence she quotes O.E.D., where accommodate is recorded without the reflexive pronoun for the C16 and C17:-

Accommodate 2. 'To adapt ... (one thing ... to another)', 1588.

'To adapt oneself to', 1597 Bacon:-

for in the minde of man, gradus diminutionis may worke a wavering betweene hope and feare, and so keepe the minde in suspence from settling and accommodating in patience and resolution.²

(Bacon, Essayes p.31, Coulers of Good and Evill).

Thus her interpretation is well-supported and deserves consideration as an alternative to the usual interpretation, even though we have no means of knowing which sense was intended by Shakespeare.

In the same way the substantive accommodation is more general

ACCOMMODATE (CONTD.)

in Shakespeare's usage and can be applied to the supply of any kind of convenience:-

e.g. ... With such accommodation and besort

As levels with her breeding.

(Oth. I.III.238-39).

i.e. 'supply of conveniences'.

It was not until the beginning of the C18 that this term developed a specific connotation and was used particularly with reference to the supply of suitable lodging and entertainment, which is its primary use³ in current English.

1. ^{Hulme}~~Maheed~~ pp. 275-277.

2. cf. patience and resolution with Edgar's exhortation to free
and patient thoughts (IV.VI.80).

3. to accommodate oneself to an idea etc., i.e. 'to adapt oneself
to, to get used to', is still used. See previous page for
the C16 and C17 usage without the reflexive pronoun.
To accommodate someone, i.e. 'to supply someone with what he
requires', is also still used, as well as the specific sense.

PROVE

Prove (v) = 'to make trial of, experience, to test, to give conclusive evidence of'.

⟨ O.E. prōfian (v), succeeded by the adoption of Cl1 O.F. prover (v) ⟨ L. probāre (v) = 'to test, try, make good, demonstrate'.

⟨ L. probus (adj.) = 'good'.

In O.F. there were two inflexional types) in M.E. two concurrent forms prove and preove, preve. In Standard English, prove alone survives. Preve is seldom found in English after 1500, but it is usual in literary Scot/s. 8/

Until the C19 the sense-range of this verb was considerably greater. In Shakespeare's usage it commonly means 'to make trial of, test, experience', as it did in earlier usage and in that of other Elizabethan writers:-

e.g. You have seen and prov'd a fairer former fortune
Than that which is to approach.

(Ant. I.II.33-34).

i.e. 'experienced'.

e.g. Come my Celia, let us prove,
While we can the sports of love.

(B. Jonson: Volpone III.VII.165).

i.e. 'experience'.

Similarly the noun proof can mean 'experience' in Shakespeare:-

PROVE (CONTD.)

e.g. ... for 'tis a vulgar proof
That verie oft we pity enemies.
(P.N. III.I.121-122).

Traces of the former sense 'test' can still be found in such occasional examples as the saying the proof of the pudding is in the eating and the construction to put something to the proof. There are also certain technical uses, e.g. in Maths the proof of a theorem is the test of its verity, and in cookery to put dough to prove, after it has been left to rise and then kneaded, is to give it chance to rise more, and so to test the force of the yeast as a raising agent. Similarly, a trace of the sense 'to experience' remains in the intransitive use of the verb to prove to be i.e. 'to turn out to be, to show itself to be by experience or trial'.

Apart from such stray examples, however, prove (v) is restricted to the sense 'to give conclusive evidence' in current English. From its use in Classical Latin onwards, this term has had the sense 'to establish as true'. Together with the other senses, this sense is common usage in Shakespeare's plays.

PREFER

Prefer (v) = 'to place before, to advance, promote, to like better than'.

< O.F. préférer (v) < L. præferre (v) = 'to put before, advance'

< prae = 'before' + ferre (v) = 'bear'.

Prefer (v) has advanced from a concrete sense to an abstract one. Shakespeare could still use the literal sense 'to place before':-

e.g. Let him go,

And presently prefer his suit to Caesar.

(Cae. III.I.27-28).

This sense was common until the C19, when it was chiefly used as a legal term with the sense 'to submit an indictment' etc. The sense of 'advancing a charge against' is used by Shakespeare:-

e.g. To vouch this is no proof,

Without more certain and more overt test;

These are thin habits, and poor likelihoods

Of modern seemings, you prefer against him.

(Oth. I.III.107-109).

From the C14 in English, prefer could be used figuratively with the sense 'to advance someone', i.e. 'to promote'. The visual image of placing something before is sufficiently prominent in Shakespeare's usage to make the term flexible and capable of a variety of senses which are not possible in current English:-

PREFER (CONTD.)

e.g. When in your motion you are hot and dry -
... And that he calls for drink, I'll have preferr'd him
A chalice for the nonce.

(Hm. IV.VII.158-161). (F. prepared).

i.e. 'presented to, offered, put before'.

e.g. If ... you, know any such,

Prefer them hither.

(Shr. I.I.95f).

i.e. 'direct' (lit. 'put them forward or on the way').

e.g. OCT. All that serv'd Brutus, I will entertain them.

Fellow, wilt thou bestow thy time with me ?

STRA. Ay, if Messala will prefer me to you.

(Cae. V.V.60-62).

i.e. 'put forward, recommend'.

Shakespeare's preferring you before her father (Oth. I.III.187):

is still visual, i.e. literally 'placing you before, choosing you rather than'. This sense has shaded into the abstract sense 'to like better than' in current English, however, where it is restricted to this sense, and where the visual image is hardly perceptible.

PRETEND

Pretend (v) = 'to stretch before, claim, purpose, intend'.

{ L. praetendēre (v) = 'to stretch forth, put forward, allege'. #/

{ prae = 'before' + tendere (v) = 'to stretch, extend'.

cf. Fr. prétendre (v).

Pretend (v) is yet another example of a term which has moved from an original concrete sense to a more abstract one. In the usage of the C16 and C17, it still had the concrete sense 'to stretch or hold something before', as it had in Latin. At the same time there were various figurative senses e.g. 'to put forward an assertion about oneself, to claim'¹ and 'to put forward a plan, to design'. The former has changed its emphasis and is now restricted to 'make a false assertion', a sense which was present in Shakespeare's usage, but which was only one of several senses. The sense 'design' was common from the C15 until the C17:-

e.g. Alas, the day !

What good could they pretend ? (sc. the grooms' supposed

(Mcb. II.IV.23). murder of Duncan).

i.e. 'design, claim'.

In this quotation either of the two earlier senses would be appropriate.

Similarly, pretence (sb.) can mean both 'design, intention' and 'false claim, pretext' in Shakespeare's plays:-

e.g. Against the undivulg'd pretence I fight of treasonous
malice.

(Mcb. II.III.131-2).

i.e. 'design'.

e.g. ... a very pretence and purpose of unkindness.

(Lr. I.IV.73-73).

i.e. 'design, intention', for the wish to be unkind is

no pretext.

Like the verb, pretence is restricted to 'a false assertion' in
current English.

1. The neutral sense 'one who claims' is preserved in history,
e.g. the Pretender to the throne.

CONVINCE

Convince (v) = 'to overpower, to prove to be wrong, to persuade by argument'.

⟨ L. convincere (v) = 'to overcome, conquer, convict, demonstrate'

⟨ con (intensive) = 'altogether' + vincere (v) = 'to conquer'.

In Shakespeare's time, convince (v) had a more general application - it could be applied to the overwhelming powers of drink, sleep, illness etc.:-

e.g. ... their malady convinces

The great assay of art.

(Mcb. IV.III.142).

i.e. 'overpowers'.

e.g. ... his two chamberlains

Will I with wine and wassail so convince.

(Mcb. I.VII.64).

i.e. 'overpower'.

Today, however, it is only applied to supremacy in argument. For two centuries after the beginning of the 16th, convince was used in connection with argument, but in a negative way, for it meant 'to prove to be wrong'. According to the evidence in O.E.D., Shakespeare was the first person to give convince a positive force in this particular area of its sense, i.e. he introduced the sense 'to overcome in argument with the result of causing to admit the

CONVINCE (CONTD).

truth of, to satisfy or persuade by argument'. It is used once in this way by him in connection with the word persuasion:-

Or that persuasion could but thus convince me..

(Troil. III.II.160).

This is the only sense of convince today.

The functions of convince (v) and convict (v)¹ were mingled until the C18. Convict had the senses which I have already mentioned. Shakespeare uses convict once in its strict etymological sense of 'conquered':-

A whole armado of convicted sail.

(John III.IV2).

In addition, both verbs could mean 'to prove guilty', the sense reserved for convict today:-

e.g. Else might the world convince of levity

As well my undertakings as your counsels

(Troil. II.II.130-131).

This state of affairs has been simplified in current English by the reservation of convict for the negative sense 'to prove guilty', and the restriction of convince to the abstract sense 'persuade'. Yet there is a trace of the former sense -
-interrelationship^{of} these words in the meaning of the substantive conviction, which can mean either 'statement of guilt' or 'persuasion, the state of being sure'.

1. < L. convict - (p.ppl. stem of convincere) - thus the two verbs are ultimately from the same root.

DISTRACT

1. Distract (v) = 'to separate, divide, divert the attention, bewilder, drive mad'.

< L. distract -, p.ppl. stem of distrahĕre (v) = 'to draw in different directions, pull asunder' < dis + trahĕre (v) = 'to draw, drag'. As was the case with many other verbs ending in t which were past participles in Latin, the past participle was in use in English before the finite verb. When used as a past participle, -ed (the ending of the past participle in English) was later added, even though the spelling was already that of the past participle in Latin, i.e. L. distractus (p.pple.) > Eng. distract (p.pple) > Cl6 Eng. distract (infin.) and Eng. distracted (p.pple.).

2. Distraction (sb.) = 'division, diversion, confusion, madness'.

< L. distractiōnem (sb. of action < L. distrahĕre (v)).

cf. Cl4 Fr. distractiōn (sb.)

In Elizabethan and Jacobean times, distract (v) still had the concrete sense 'to draw in different directions, divide':-

e.g. ... you therein throw away

The absolute soldiership you have by land,

Distract your army

(Ant. III.VII.41-43). (sc. fighting at sea).

Similarly, distractiōn (sb.) could mean 'division':-

DISTRACT (CONTD.)

e.g. While he was yet in Rome,
His power went out in such distractions as
Beguil'd all spies.
(Ant. III.VII.75-77).

Certain abstract senses developed and when used figuratively distract (v) could mean 'to draw away from a destination or purpose'. This sense was not restricted to living creatures however, but it could be applied to objects, as divert (v) can today. In C17 France, distraction (sb.) could mean 'diversion', as it can in current English, but then the diversion described was 'an amusement', whereas today it is often a matter of a diversion of an adverse nature which prevents the fulfilment of some purpose.

There are several instances of the sense 'confuse, greatly perturb' (i.e. by 'drawing' the mind in different directions so that it is unable to decide on a course of action) in Shakespeare's plays:-

e.g. Give him no breath, but now
Make boot of his distractiōn: never anger
Made good guard for itself.
(Ant. IV.I.8-9).

i.e. 'extreme perturbation of mind'.

There was also a more forceful sense until the C18¹, i.e. 'to drive

DISTRACT (CONTD.)

mad', of which there are a few examples in Shakespeare's plays:-

e.g. This presence knows,
 And you must needs have heard, how I am punish'd
 With sore distraction. What I have done,
 That might your nature, honour and exception
 Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.

(Hm. V.II.240-243).

e.g. My lord, this is a poor mad soul, ...
 poverty hath distracted her.

(2.H.IV. II.I.100f).

i.e. 'driven her mad'.

The sense of French distrait (p.ppl. adj.) was not so strong, being used rather to describe an absent-minded person. To sum up, in current English distract (v) and distraction (sb.) are used primarily in the abstract sense of 'divert the attention' and 'diversion' - they no longer have the concrete force which they had in Shakespeare's usage. They have also become less forceful in sense.

1. In current English the saying to drive to distraction, i.e. to 'madness', is a remnant of this sense. The word distraught is usually used for 'extremely perturbed', (distracted in Shakespeare). Distracted can only mean 'diverted' now.

STARE

Stare (v) = 'to be rigid, to shine, gleam, to gaze fixedly'.

< O.E. starian (v) cf. M.L.G. & Du. staren, O.H.G. starēn
and O.N. stara < Germ. * star, *ster- = 'be rigid'.

From O.E. times onwards, stare (v) has had the sense 'to gaze fixedly', but it once had other senses too, which were connected by the notion of rigidity or firmness. In M.E., staren (v) could mean 'to shine, gleam'¹ and was applied to objects as well as eyes:-

e.g. Ho razt hym a riche rynk of red golde werkez,
Wyth a starande ston stondande alofte
þat bere blusschande bemez as þe bryzt sunne.
(Gawain & the Grene Knyzt LL1817-19)²

From the C16 until the C19, stare (v) could mean 'to stand on end, be rigid' and was applied to hair, a horse's mane etc.:-

e.g. Art thou some god, some angel, or some devil,
That mak'st my blood cold, and my hair to stare ?
(Cae. IV.III.278-79).

e.g. With hair upstaring - then like reeds, not hair.
(Tr. I.II.213).

There are plenty of examples of the sense 'to look with fixed eyes' as well in Shakespeare's plays. Today the verb is usually restricted in the Standard Language to describing 'a fixed gaze', except in a few well-defined contexts, e.g. a cat or dog's coat, where the sense is still 'to stand on end'.

1. The idea is of light issuing directly forth, without being obstructed or diminished in any way.

2. 'She offered him a costly ring of red gold workmanship, with a gleaming stone standing out which cast glittering beams like the bright sun'.

DISGUISE

Disguise (v) = 'to alter the appearance, conceal; to intoxicate'.

< M.E. desguisen, degisen (v) < O.F. desguiser, deguisier (v)

< des- + guise (sb.) < O.H.G. * wisa = 'manner, mode, appearance'.

The primary sense was 'to put out of one's usual guise or manner'.

Until the C16 in English, disguise (v) could mean 'to alter the guise or fashion of dress', and especially 'to dress in an unusual or ostentatious manner'. Another general sense 'to alter in appearance, disfigure' was current until the end of the C17:-

e.g. At last she calls to mind where hangs a piece
Of skilful painting (1366) ... she despairing Hecuba .
beheld (1447) ... In her the painter had anatomiz'd
Time's ruin, beauty's wrack, and grim care's reign;
Her cheeks with chaps and wrinkles were disguis'd;
Of what she was no semblance did remain ...

(Lucr. 1366f).

i.e. 'altered'.

Disguise also meant specifically 'to alter the appearance in order to deceive' from the C14 onwards, and is often used with this sense in Shakespeare's plays. Today it is restricted to that sense, just as the sole sense of disguise (sb.) now is 'an alteration of appearance intended to conceal and to deceive'.

A special sense was current in the C16, namely 'to alter

DISGUISE (CONTD.)

from the usual manner by drink' i.e. 'to intoxicate'.

e.g. Strong Enobarb

Is weaker than the wine, and mine own tongue

Splits what it speaks: the wild disguise hath almost

Antick'd us all.

(Ant. II.VII.120-123).

i.e. 'disorder by drink'.

The only other example in O.E.D., of the substantive used in this way is in Jonson:-

Disguise ! what mean you by that ? do you think

that his majesty sits here to expect drunkards ?

(1622, B. Jonson: Masque of Angurs see O.E.D.)

(Wks. Rtlldg.630/1) u/

According to O.E.D., disguised (p.pple) still had the sense 'intoxicated' in C19 slang.

The restriction of words may be the result of euphemism. Once words have developed unpleasant associations they tend to be restricted to these. Thus euphemistic senses often defeat their purpose, as they become so indissolubly linked to words that the words become taboo terms, e.g. undertaker, shroud. Other words which once had a neutral emphasis may develop specifically good or bad senses, e.g. success, accident, censure. Sometimes the general sense is used in rare examples or in literary usage, but the specific sense is primary e.g. prove, accommodate.

Once again the tendency for more abstract senses to develop from concrete ones has been noted, e.g. prefer, pretend, convince, distract. It has also been observed in passing that as a result of changes in the material world, the object described by a word may be very different for different generations, e.g. carriage.

CHAPTER FIVE

Different Emphases.

The changing structure and ideals of a society are reflected in its language. A word can have quite a different force for different generations. This chapter presents a few such words. In addition to having a main sense, a word may also have one or more special senses. Section A contains words which once had certain special senses which have become obsolete, although their main emphasis has remained unchanged. On the other hand, the main emphasis of a word may change. A few words of this kind are contained in Section B. The majority of the words in this chapter are adjectives, as these embody a high emotive content and depend a lot on the ideas and feelings of the speaker.

Section B. includes a selection of words which acquired a moral content at various times because they were closely connected with the social structure. I have used C.S. Lewis's classification The Moralisation of Status Words for these.

A. SPECIAL EMPHASES.

ABUSE

Abuse (v) = 'to put to a wrong use, to lead astray, deceive, to wrong with words, revile'.

< O.F. abuser (v) < * L. abūsāre (v) < L. abūsus, p.pple. of L. abūtī (v) = (1) 'to use up', (2) 'to misuse'.

The sense 'to put to a wrong use'¹ is common in Shakespeare and can be found with such shades of meaning as 'to ill-treat, to take a bad advantage of, to lead astray':-

e.g. ... charms,

By which the property of youth and maidenhood may
be abus'd.

(Oth. I.I.171-74).

e.g. ... thou ... has practis'd on her with foul charms,
Abus'd her delicate youth, with drugs or minerals.

(Oth. I.II.73-74).

Until the C18, abuse (v) had the special sense 'deceive',
i.e. lit. 'to lead astray':-

e.g. ...the devil ... perhaps ...

Abuses me to damn me.

(Hm. II.II.638-642).

ABUSE (CONTD.)

It was given the special emphasis 'to wrong with words' by Shakespeare:-

I am no strumpet, but of life as honest

As you, that thus abuse me.

(Oth. V.I.120-121).

This is the primary sense of the term today, such has been Shakespeare's influence on the language.

1. This sense is still current in such uses as to abuse one's power, i.e. 'to misuse'.

CHILD

Child (sb.) = 'novice knight, female infant'.

↳ O.E. cild (neut.) ↳ Germ. * kilþo ↳ * kilþ-

As well as meaning 'a youngster of either sex', as it does now, child formerly had certain special senses. Its force in Old English is uncertain—'a youth of gentle birth' is one of the senses given in Clark Hall. By the time of the York Mystery Cycle, the term certainly could denote rank:-

Be he churle or childe.

(1440, Yk. Myst. XXX.143. See O.E.D.).

i.e. 'commoner or noble'.

In the romances of the Middle Ages¹, the term is applied to young nobles awaiting knighthood. Presumably the connection between novices and young children is that both are inexperienced.

Shakespeare's use of this sense is probably a relic from an old ballad:-²

Child Rowland to the dark tower came

(Lr. III.IV.186).

When used by later writers, the archaic spelling childe, chylde is usually employed for the sake of distinction, e.g. the title of Lord Byron's poem Childe Harold.

Child had another special sense in the dialects of Devonshire and Shropshire³ which was still used in the C19. It could mean

CHILD (CONTD.)

specifically a 'female infant', as it does on one occasion in Shakespeare, when it comes in the speech of the old shepherd in the Winter's Tale:-

A very pretty barne. A boy or a child, I wonder ?

(W.T. III.III.91).

1. e.g. Ipomydon, Sir Tryamour.

2. See note to Arden Edn. p.128.

3. West country dialect was the conventional speech of yokels on the Elizabethan stage.
N.B. Lr. IV.VI.235f. for Edgar's use of dialect.
See Kökeritz p.p. 38-9.

ADDITION

Addition (sb.) = 'style of address, title, mark of honour'.

< A.F. addition < L. additiō.

Shakespeare applies addition to the process of collecting things together, and to something which is 'added', as we do today. There are, however, many examples in his work of a specific sense which is unfamiliar to us, namely that of 'title, style of address'.¹ This special sense became obsolete in the C18:-

1. They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase
Soil our addition.

(Hm. I.IV.19-20).

2. Only we shall retain
The name and all th' addition to a king.

(Lr. I.I.135-6).

3. I came to kill thee, cousin, and bear hence
A great addition earned in thy death.

(Troil. IV.V.140-41).

i.e. 'mark of honour'.

1. Literally 'something added to a man's name'.

ENORMOUS

Enormous (adj.) = 'deviating from the norm, wicked, abnormal in size'.

{ L. enormis (< e- = 'out of' + norma (sb.) = 'pattern, rule, carpenter's square'.

Literally enormous means 'deviating from the norm or ordinary rule'. It was applied to abnormal size in the C16, as it is today, but it was not restricted to this application. Until the C19 it was mainly used in a bad sense and described disorderly or perverse behaviour or affairs, which is its only application in Shakespeare's plays, where enormous is only used once, as is enormity (sb.):-

e.g. Cordelia ... shall find time
From this enormous state, seeking to give
Losses their remedies.

(Lr. II.II.168-69).

i.e. 'disordered, wicked'.

e.g. MEN. In what enormity is Marc^{us} poor in that you two have
not in abundance ?

BRU. He's poor in no one fault, but stor'd with all.

(Cor. II.I.15-16).

i.e. 'evil, perversity'.

This special emphasis has been lost to modern English.

CONVEY

Convey (v) = 'to indulge secretly, to steal; to transport, communicate'. < O.F. conveier (v) < V.L. *conviāre (v) = 'to escort'.
< L. con- + via (sb.) = 'way'.

As in modern usage, so in Shakespeare's usage, convey (v) could mean simply 'to transport' and 'to communicate', but it also had a special connotation of secrecy:-

e.g. You may

Convey your pleasures in a spacious plenty,

And yet seem cold.

(Mcb. IV.III.70-72).

i.e. 'indulge in secret'.

In this way convey could mean 'to carry away secretly' and was thus a euphemism for 'steal' from the C15 until the C19. There are several examples of its use in Shakespeare's plays:-

e.g. NYM. The good humour is to steal at a minute's rest.

PIST. 'Convey' the wise it call. 'Steal' foh ! A

fico for the phrase !

(M.W. I.III.26-28).

This previous euphemistic usage is a purely English development. As it is no longer current, the double meaning does not obtrude itself on the modern audience. Nevertheless, when we are aware of its equivocal meaning, and the implication of 'trickery', certain

CONVEY (CONTD.)

passages in Shakespeare assume a richer sense. In quotation (2) there is tragic irony, in view of Iago's double-dealing:-

1. BOLING. Go, some of you

Convey him to the tower. i.e. 'escort, take away to'.

K.RICH. O, good ! Convey ! Conveyers¹ are you all,

That rise thus nimbly by a true king's fall.

(R.II. IV.I.316-318).

i.e. 'thieves, tricksters'.

2. my ancient,

A man he is of honesty and trust,

To his conveyance I assign my wife.

(Oth. I.III.283-4).

1. N.B. This is the only example of the substantive recorded in O.E.D.

POLITICIAN

Politician (sb.) = 'one versed in matters of the state; schemer, trickster'. < politic (adj.) < O.Fr. politique (adj.)
< L. polīticus (adj.) < Gk. polītikós (adj.) = 'civic, civil, pertaining to citizens'. < polītēs (sb.) = 'citizen' < pōlis = o/
'city, state'. N.B. 1865 Fr. politicien (sb.) = 'trickster' (in Beaumarchais) < Angl. Amer. Otherwise in French the term only pertains to civil matters.

In the C16, politician did have the same neutral sense of 'statesman' that it has in current English, but it also had a special pejorative emphasis i.e. 'schemer, trickster' until the C18¹. This may reflect the state of affairs at the time, but it is probably a direct result of the influence which the writings of Machiavelli, (1469-1526), the Italian author of Il Principe, which maintains the absolute power of the ruler, exerted over Europe for two centuries. The Elizabethans identified Machiavelli's name and 'policy' with the blackest villainy.

Shakespeare often uses the term with a pejorative sense:-

e.g. Get thee glass eyes;
 And, like a scurvy politician, seem
 To see the things thou dost not,
 (Lr. IV.VI.172-174).

POLITICIAN (CONTD.)

Unlike such terms as villain and undertaker, where the original neutral emphasis has given way completely to a pejorative sense, this term has lost its special bad sense and returned to its original neutral sense.

1. The adjective politic retained the sense 'scheming' until C19. In C19 American the substantive sill had a bad sense, e.g. in 1897 Sir G. Campbell defined the American use of politician as follows:-

The word politician is used in a bad sense in America, as applied to people who make politics a profession, and are skilled in the art of 'wire-pulling' and such practices. (White and Black 68. See O.E.D.).

PRACTICE

Practice (sb.) = 'scheme, trickery'.

⟨ O.F. pratique (sb.) ⟨ Med.L. practica ⟨ L. practice ⟨ Gk. praktikā.

Practice (sb.) had five main senses in Elizabethan English, which are common in Shakespeare's usage:-

- a. the action of doing something.
- b. habitual action.
- c. exercise in any act or skill.
- d. planning of means to bring about a result, scheme.
- e. action of scheming, trickery.

The senses of the verb practise are similar. It will be seen that senses d and e are totally unfamiliar to the modern speaker of English. In the C16 and C17, however, the special sense of 'trickery' was common. The verb developed an unpleasant sense in French also. Today the term only retains its neutral senses.

There are many examples of the pejorative sense in Shakespeare's language e.g.:-

1. ... thou has practis'd on her with foul charms.

(Oth. I.II.73).

i.e. 'used trickery upon'.

2. ... yet if you there

Did practise on my state ...

(Ant. II.II.39).

i.e. 'plot against'.

PRACTICE (CONTD.)

3. O thou Othello, that wert once so good,
Fall'n in the practice of a damned slave

(Oth. V.II.292-293).

i.e. 'machinations'.

4. And for his death no wind of blame shall breathe;
But even his mother shall uncharge the practice,
And call it accident.

(Hm. IV.VII. 67-69).

i.e. 'scheme'.

In the next quotation, the context fails to clarify the sense of practice, which could either have the special Elizabethan emphasis of 'scheming', or merely mean 'a pass in which Laertes is well-exercised':-

... you may choose

A sword unbated, and in a pass of practice

Requite him for your father.

(Hm. IV.VII.138-139).

SUGGESTION

Suggestion (sb.) = 'incitement to evil'.

⟨ O.F. suggestion (sb.) < L. suggestio, -ōnem (sb.) of action)

⟨ L. suggerere (v) = 'to suggest' < sub- = 'from beneath'

+ gerere (v) = 'to bear, carry, bring'.

Like practice, suggestion is a neutral term now, but from its earliest use in English until the C17 it had a special pejorative emphasis. As in French, so in English, it could mean 'prompting to evil', a sense which Shakespeare often used:-

e.g. I'd turn it all

To thy suggestion, plot, and damned practice.

(Lr. II.I.72-73).

e.g. This supernatural soliciting

Cannot be ill; cannot be good:-

... If good, why do I yield to that suggestion

Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair ... ?

(Mcb. I.III.130-135).

The only sense which is current today, i.e. the neutral sense of 'prompting to a particular course of action, proposal', came soon after the pejorative sense in English in the C14.

FACT

Fact (sb.) = 'thing done, brave action, crime; reality'.

↳ L. factum (sb.) = 'thing done', p.pple. of facere (v) = 'to do'. Fact was first used in English in the C16. The earlier C15 adoption of O.F. fait survives with narrowed sense as feat = 'an exceptional act of skill, dexterity etc'. - originally its sense was similar to that of fact.

Like its Latin source, English fact originally had the neutral sense of 'action'. This action could be a 'brave deed', a sense which was current until the C18, but which has been taken over by feat:-

e.g. ... his facts of war and blood.

(Marlowe: Tamb. Pt.I: III.II45).

The commonest sense in the C16 and C17 was the pejorative 'an evil deed, a crime'. The only trace of this sense is in the phrases to confess the fact and after or before the fact.

In Shakespeare's plays the term is only used in connection with an evil deed:-

e.g. ... how monstrous

It was for Malcolm, and for Donalbain,

To kill their gracious father ? Damned fact !

(McB. III.VI.8-10).

The current sense of 'something that has really occurred

FACT (CONTD.)

or is actually the case; truth, reality' was also present in 16th English. This sense belongs to all the equivalents of fact in the Romance languages e.g. Fr. fait, It. fatto, Sp. hecho, and was developed in scholastic Latin. Classical Latin factum had occasionally the extended sense of 'event'.

In connection with fact, it is worth noting Shakespeare's use of actual, meaning 'exhibited in deeds':-

e.g. ... besides her walking and other actual performances,
what, at anytime, have you heard her say ?

(McB. V.I.11-13).

i.e. 'exhibited by actions'.

Today actual¹ (adj.) has developed in the same way as fact = 'reality', that is it is now applied to things which have really occurred, and it has the sense of 'real'. The substantive act² has retained the original sense of 'action' however, unlike fact.

1. actual (adj.) < O.F. actuel (adj.) < V.L. actuālis = 'pertaining to action' < L. actus (sb.). From ^{the} C14 until C17 in English, actual could mean 'pertaining to action'. The sense 'existing in fact, real' developed in the mid C16.

2. act (sb.) < O.F. acte (sb.) < L. actus (sb.) = 'a doing'
< L. actum (sb.) = 'a thing done'.

B. SHIFT OF EMPHASIS.

GEST, JEST.

Gest, Jest (sb.) = 'deed, exploit, satirical tale, jeering speech, witticism, joke'.

M.E. geste (sb.) < O.F. geste, jeste (sb.) = 'action, exploit, romance' < L. gesta (neut. pl.) = 'actions, exploits' < gestus p.pple. of gerere (v) = 'to carry on war' etc.

There is no certain example in M.E. of the singular form gest (sb.) = 'an action'. In the Middle Ages in France, geste was applied to a poem in decasyllabic verse or in alexandrines that told the legendary history of historical persons, particularly of Charlemagne and his knights. Until the C17 in France, gestes could mean 'memorable deeds' and also 'actions of less note'. There is no trace of the development of a sense 'humorous remark' in French.

This word has undergone a remarkable shift of emphasis. In Middle English it meant 'notable deeds, especially of historical persons', and 'a story about notable deeds, a romance originally in verse':-

e.g. Nu have ye herd ~~þe~~ gest al ~~þoru~~
Of Havelok and of Goldeborw.

(Havelok 2984-5)

i.e. 'romance, tale in verse'.

GEST, JEST (CONTD.)

e.g. þer mouhte men here þe gestes singe,
þe gleumen on þe tabour dinge.

(Havelok 2328-29).

(The festivities when Havelok became King of Denmark).

Spenser was the first person to use gest in the singular form, meaning 'exploit, deed'¹. There is one example of the sense 'brave deeds' in Shakespeare's plays:-

And let the queen know of our gests: to-morrow
Before the sun shall see's we'll spill the blood
That has to-day escap'd.

(Ant. IV.VIII.2-4).

i.e. 'deeds of battle'.

F. gests emend. Theobald. gests.

In the C16 gest could mean 'any kind of story or tale'. At the end of the C14 it also had the sense 'a satirical utterance, lampoon, idle tale', out of which has developed the current sense of 'joke'.² This sense was arrived at by the process of restriction. With the death of the age of chivalry, jest, gest was applied to any tale for amusement and not just to one about great deeds. Then it was restricted to a particular kind of amusing tale, i.e. 'an idle or satirical tale', out of which developed the sense 'a saying intended to excite laughter, a witticism, joke', which is far-removed from the original sense. Our current usage is

GEST, JEST (CONTD.)

common in Shakespeare's plays:-

e.g. ... when mine hours

Were nice and lucky, men did ransom lives

Of me for iests

(Ant. III.XIII.179-181).

Jest could also mean 'a deed exciting laughter, a prank, practical joke' in Shakespeare e.g.:-

Make mouths upon me when I turn my back,

Wink at each other, hold the sweete jest up;

This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled ...

(M.N.D. III.II.238-40).

1. 'honor, no brave gest'. (M. Hubberd 978)

2. In the C15, the spelling jest took the place of gest in this sense. Jest had formerly been an alternative spelling in English, as in French.

SAFE

Safe (adj.) = 'whole, intact, healthy, free from danger!.

< M.E. sauf, sāf (adj.) < O.F. sauf, sauve (adj.) < L. salvus (adj.)

= 'uninjured, entire, healthy'.

The Latin word corresponds in root and suffix to Gk. hōlos

< * solgos = 'whole' and Skr. sārvas, I.E. *solwos.

The root occurs also in Irish slán = 'healthy'.

Shakespeare uses safe in all its Latin senses. He also frequently uses the modern sense 'free from danger', which has been current in English since the C13, e.g.:-

I greatly fear my money is not safe.

(Com. Err. I.II.105).

As an adverb, safe has the sense 'with caution' in his plays:-

What safe and nicely I might well delay

By rule of knighthood.

(Lr. V.III.144).

The notion of being 'whole' or 'well', both physically and mentally, was used until the C16. Shakespeare is the last person recorded in the O.E.D., to have used safe (adj.) in the sense of 'mentally or morally sound', which is common in his plays e.g.:-

1. Are his wits safe ? Is he not light of brain ?

(Oth. IV.I.280).

SAFE (CONTD.)

2. The safer sense will ne'er accommodate
His master thus.

(Lr. IV.VI.81).

3. A trade Sir, that I hope I may use with a
¹safe conscience.

(Cae. I.I.13).

In current English the emphasis has been spotlighted on the notion of freedom from danger, (literally 'intact' or 'preserved from danger'), and safe no longer has the sense 'healthy, whole', except in the isolated example safe and sound, where the idea of being 'whole or intact' is in duplicate.

1. The phrase with a safe conscience was suggested by Latin salvā conscientia.

GAUDY

1. Gaud (sb.) = 'one of the larger and more ornamental beads placed between the decades of aves in a rosary'. C14 onwards. Of uncertain origin, probably from L. gaudia (pl.) = 'joys'. (There were fifteen decades of aves, and the fifteen gauds marked the fifteen mysteries to be thought of when reciting the aves. The first five were 'joyful mysteries').

2. Gaud (sb.) = 'a showy ornament, a piece of finery, a plaything' C15 until C19. The sense 'worthless object, bauble' is common in Shakespeare e.g.:-

Thou hast ... ^{sk}ol'n the impression of her fantasy
With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gawds, conceits,
Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats

(M.N.D. I.I.30-34).

Perhaps <A.F. gaud (sb.) < O.F. gaudir (v) = 'to rejoice, make merry, jest' < L. gaudēre (v) = 'to rejoice'.

3. Gaudy (sb.) = 'bauble, bead: rejoicing, festival'. C16 and C17. < L. gaudium (sb.) = 'joy', or L. gaudē = 'rejoice thou', ^{ks/} (imperative of gaudēre (v)) + O.F. *gaudie (sb. of action < gaudier (v) = 'to rejoice'.)

cf. Sp. use of the imperative L. gaudeāmus = 'let us rejoice' and gaudēte = 'rejoice ye' for 'a feast, merry-making'.

4. Gaudy (adj.) = 'festive, luxurious; brilliant, showy;

GAUDY (CONTD.)

excessively fine; tastelessly gay'.

The C16 and C17 sense 'luxurious' (of food etc.) looks like an attributive use of 3. cf. O.F. gaude-chere and Eng. good cheer = lit. 'festive fare'. The sense 'brilliantly fine, showy' has been apprehended as though < gaud 2 + -y .

Gaudy (adj.) had several emphases in Shakespeare's usage and was not restricted to the sense of 'excessively showy, tastelessly gay', ~~that~~ it is in current English. In his plays it could mean 'festive':-¹

e.g. Let's have one other gaudy night.

(Ant. III.XIII.183).

where the variation of the usual gaudy day = 'festive day' is interesting.

Gaudy (adj.) could mean quite simply 'bright' e.g.:-

gaudy sun

(Ven. 1088).

Whilst the sense 'festive' remained, gaudy could be applied to a wide variety of things, e.g. food, clothes etc. The sense 'bright, showy' shaded into the disparaging sense of 'excessively showy, tastelessly gay', which is the only sense current today. Unlike Shakespeare, a speaker nowadays would not dream of applying gaudy to the sun, or to a night's entertainment, as this adjective usually

GAUDY (CONTD.)

describes colours in present English², e.g. gaudy checks, i.e. 'loud checks'.

Although it is not the only one, this deprec~~atory~~atory sense ~~is~~ does appear in Shakespeare's plays:-

e.g. Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
 But not express'd in fancy; rich, not gaudy.

 (Hm. I.III.70-71).

i.e. 'excessively showy'.

1. An attributive use of (sb.3).
2. Gaudy is preserved in the sense 'festive' in its special application to college feast-days at Oxford.

LIMITED

Limited (p.ppl. adj.) = 'duly appointed; restricted, unimportant'.

⟨ Eng. limit (v) ⟨ O.F. limiter (v) ⟨ L. līmitāre (v) ⟨ līmit-,
līmes (sb.) = 'boundary'.

As well as the sense of 'restrict or set the bounds for something', which was and still is understood in connection with limit (v), in the Cl4 there was also the sense of 'appoint a person to do something'. So when Shakespeare uses the adjective limited, it has not the present-day sense of 'restricted', with its connotation of 'unimportant', but means 'duly appointed' (i.e. the bounds of the duty have been made clear):-

e.g. I'll make so bold to call, (i.e. 'to rouse the King')
For 'tis my limited service.
(Mcb. II.III.53-4).

The sense of 'restriction' is present in Shakespeare's usage:-

e.g. Am I yourself
But, as it were, in sort or limitation,
To keep with you at meals, comfort your bed,
And talk to you sometimes ?
(Cae. II.I.282-85).

Here the legal sense of 'for a specified period' is mingled with that of 'to a restricted degree, only after a fashion'.

LIMITED (CONTD.)

Since Shakespeare's time there has been a subtle narrowing of emphasis, and limited (adj.) has only a restrictive force now, with the implication that more of whatever is in question is desirable.

SMUG

Smug (adj.) = 'smooth, clean, neat, trim, smart; vain with regard to personal appearance, self-satisfied'.

Of doubtful origin. cf. the sense of L.G. smuck (adj.) = 'pretty' in the Cl7, G. schmuck (sb.) = 'ornament', and G. schmücken (v) = 'to adorn', but the English word is hardly likely to be an adoption from German, as the change of k to g would be very irregular.

Since the Cl6 smug (adj.) has undergone a remarkable change of emphasis. When it was applied to persons, it was applied to their appearance, and had the sense 'trim, neat':-

e.g. I will die bravely,

Like a smug¹ bridegroom.

(Lr. IV.VI.199-200).

Shakespeare was the first person to apply the term to objects, with the sense 'smooth, clean', which was common until the Cl9 :-

e.g. And here the smug and silver Trent ...

(I.Hen.IV. III.I.102).

Gradually smug has shifted its application and its sense. It is no longer descriptive of appearance, but describes an attitude. The point at which smug ceased to mean 'smart' and came to mean 'having a self-satisfied air, conceited' is impossible to ascertain, but presumably the transference from appearance to manner took place

SMUG (CONTD.)

by metonymy, because a person who was well-turned-out, or a 'dandy' might often be a vain, conceited person. This change of emphasis is all the more striking as smug has progressed from being a term of commendation to one of criticism.

1. Here there is a play on the two meanings of bravely i.e.
 - a. courageously
 - b. in smart attire.

CURIOUS

1. Curious (adj.) = 'intricate, skilfully made, strange:

assiduous, anxious, inquisitive < O.F. curius < L. cūriōsus (adj.)

< L. cūra (sb.) = 'care'.

L. cūriōsus is used only subjectively = 'full of care or pains, assiduous, inquisitive'. The objective sense is found in Cl4

French, e.g. robes curieuses = 'skilfully made, fine garments'.

2. Curiosity (sb.) = 'care, close observation, fastidiousness, anxiety, inquisitiveness: intricacy, quaint object'.

< O.F. curioseté (A.F. curiouseté) < L. curiositatem < cūriōsus (adj.).

This term has had many shades of meaning, but is restricted to a few in current English. In the earlier uses¹ of curious (adj.) and curiosity (sb.), the emphasis was on the taking of pains to make, observe, or perform something. Shakespeare's plays are rich in examples of the various senses of both words. King Lear is particularly fruitful in this respect.

When applied to persons, curious could denote a particular attention to detail, careful scrutiny:-

e.g. What care I

What curious eye doth quote deformities ?

(Rom. I.IV.30-31).

i.e. 'making accurate observation'.

CURIOUS (CONTD.)

e.g. ... for equalities are so weigh'd that curiosity in neither
can make choice of either's moiety.

(Lr. I.I.4-7).

i.e. 'the most careful scrutiny'.

The sense can be 'full of care over, anxious':-

e.g. And I am something curious ...

To have them in safe stowage.

(Cymb. I.VI.190-91).

Sometimes the sense is one of 'over-particularity, or 'too much
attention to detail':-

e.g. Wherefore should I

Stand in the plague of custom, and permit

The curiosity of nations to deprive me ... ?

(Lr. I.II.2-4).

i.e. 'fastidiousness, nicety' (Edmund refers to the fact
that, according to custom, his illegitimacy debars him
from his rights).

e.g. I have perceived a most faint neglect of late; which I
have rather blamed as mine own jealous curiosity than
as a very pretence and purpose of unkindness

(Lr. I.IV.71-74).

i.e. 'supersensitivity, nicety'.

CURIOUS (CONTD.)

When used objectively, curious originally meant 'made with care, skilfully made, intricate', e.g.:-

And couertorez ful curious with comlych panez.

(Gawain and the Green Knight: L.855)²

This sense appears several times in Shakespeare's work:-

e.g. I can keep honest counsel, ride, run, mar a curious tale in telling it, and deliver a plain message bluntly ...
(Lr. I.IV.34-36).
i.e. 'elaborate, complicated'.

On turning to present usage, it is noticeable that the range of sense becomes markedly restricted. Both in the subjective and objective senses, the emphasis has switched to one of inquiry. Curious could mean 'inquisitive' even in Latin, but this was not its only sense. Presumably this sense developed because a person who paid particular attention to details would be likely to have an enquiring mind. In the first place curious, meaning 'inquisitive', carried with it the connotation of 'too much interest', but this air of disapproval seems to have been lost in the second half of the C17. Owen Barfield³ would suggest that this could be a result of the novel combination natural curiosity which first appeared in Bacon's Advancement of Learning, and ^{he} points out the marked increase of words expressing doubt during this era.

CURIOUS (CONTD.)

Objectively, curious now means 'strange, peculiar'. This sense did not appear until the C17, when its force was rather different. At first a curious object was one which aroused interest because of its skilful or elaborate design. Gradually a curious object came to mean one arousing interest because of its unusual appearance. In the early C18 the emphasis centred on its 'strangeness', and curious developed the modern sense 'arousing interest because of its odd nature', and became synonymous with words like odd, queer, strange and peculiar. The substantive curiosity, when used concretely, could mean 'a curio, an intriguing, quaint object', as it does when used attributively in Dickens' title The Old Curiosity Shop.

1. Most of these were current until the C18.
2. i.e. 'and very elaborately made coverlets with beautiful panels'.
3. Barfield p.135.

CUNNING

Cunning (adj.) = 'learned, skilful; deceitful, crafty'.

Perhaps < O.N. kunnandi (pres.pple.) = 'knowing' < O.N. kunna (v) = 'to know'. The form *cunnende (pres.pple.) = 'knowing'

< O.E. can (v) = 'know' does not appear in O.E. In M.E. the Northern form cunnand, and the Midland and Southern forms cunning, connyng respectively, were in regular use. Likewise, the noun cunning is not recorded in O.E., which had oncunning = 'accusation', however, derived from oncunnan (v) = 'to accuse', and ultimately from cunnan (v). Both substantive and adjective appear first in northerly texts, and in both, the O.N. suffix has been assimilated to the native suffix -ing.

The earliest sense of cunning (adj.) was 'learned, versed in a subject'. In the C15 the sense 'showing skill, skilfully made' developed. From the C14 the word was also used in the compounds cunning -man and cunning woman, meaning 'wizard, witch, fortune-teller'. These senses were used until the C17 and are common in Shakespeare's work:-

e.g. Thou cunning pattern of excelling virtue.

(Oth. V.II.11).

e.g. ... for this slave,

If there be any cunning cruelty,

That can torment him much

(Oth. V.II.333-335).

CUNNING (CONTD.)

e.g. A cunning man did calculate my birth,
And told me that by water I should die.

(2.Hen.VI. IV.I.34-35).

By Spenser's time the word had acquired unpleasant connotations and could denote a particular kind of skill, i.e. skill in compassing one's ends by covert means, by deceit:-

e.g. That conning Architect of cancred guyle.

(Spenser: F.Q.II.II.I).

i.e. 'sly, deceitful'.

There are several instances of this sense in Shakespeare's plays:-

e.g. I took you for that cunning whore of Venice,
That married with Othello.

(Oth. IV.II.91-2).

i.e. 'skilful in dissembling'.

The substantive cunning shows a similar development, being frequently used by Shakespeare in both the sense of 'skill, knowledge' and that of 'craft, dissimulation':- i/

e.g. One ... That errs in ignorance, and not in cunning.

(Oth. III.III.49-50).

i.e. 'with knowledge, wittingly'.

e.g. In cunning I must draw my sword upon you.

(Lr. II.I.30).

i.e. 'dissimulation'.

CUNNING (CONTD.)

e.g. With cunning hast thou filch'd my daughter's heart.

(M.N.D. I.I.36).

i.e. 'with craft'.

Today cunning has been restricted to the unpleasant emphasis. In this way the term has developed from being a term of praise to being one of disapproval.

CONCEIT

Conceit (sb.) = 'idea, the faculty of understanding, imagination, a fanciful notion or device; an overweening opinion of oneself'.

There does not appear to be a corresponding substantive in O.F., so it would seem that conceit (sb.) was formed in English from conceive (v), on the analogy supplied by deceive (v), deceit (sb.). Conceive (v) < O.F. concevoir, -eir (v) < L. concipere (v) < con = 'altogether' + capere (v) = 'to take'.

In Chaucerian English, conceit merely meant 'anything conceived, a notion, an idea' and 'the faculty of understanding', both of which senses are common in Shakespeare's usage. By the 16th conceit had been applied to 'the imagination' and to 'an imaginative device, or something of imaginative design' e.g.:-

1. But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul to his own conceit

(Hm. II.II.5⁷⁸~~7~~-579).

i.e. 'imagination, image in the mind'. (sc. 'a player').

2. GHOST Oh, step between her and her fighting soul;
Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works.

(Hm. III.IV.114).

i.e. 'imagination'.

3. ... Most delicate carriages, and of very liberal conceit.

(Hm. V.II.156-157).

i.e. 'elaborate design'.

CONCEIT (CONTD.)

It could also be used in a concrete way:-

e.g. rings, gawds, conceits,

Knacks, trifles

(M.N.D. II. 33-34).

i.e. 'objects fancifully devised'.

Within this range of sense the only use which survives is conceit meaning 'a fanciful or witty notion', but this is applied to a far-fetched turn of thought or figure of speech. There was an indiscriminating rush after elegance of thought and diction in the Renaissance period, with the result that the piling of fanciful conceit upon conceit later became something to ridicule, and today the word is chiefly a synonym for 'personal vanity.' From Chaucer's time until the C18, conceit also had the senses of 'a personal opinion' and 'a favourable opinion', which developed into the sense 'an overweening opinion of oneself' at the end of the C16. This sense is not found in Shakespeare's plays.

The contrast between Shakespeare's usage and our own is brought out by the epithet admirable in the following quotation, which sounds strange to the modern audience:-

... an admirable conceited fellow.

(W.T. IV.IV.201).

i.e. 'imaginative, witty'.

CONCEIT (CONTD.)

Although the verb conceive still retains its original, general sense of 'imagine', conceit has been restricted to a particular type of 'notion', i.e. 'an overweening idea of oneself', in current English. It has become quite specific since Shakespeare's time, having lost its concrete and general senses and developed a totally unfavourable force. The Latin conceptus has been borrowed for the general sense of 'notion, idea', which is now embodied in the word concept (sb.).

IMPERTINENT

1. Impertinent (adj.) = 'irrelevant, incongruous, absurd, meddling, intrusive'.

2. Impertinency (sb.) = 'irrelevance'.

An assimilation of impertinence (sb.) and the ending -ency.

3. Impertinence (sb.) < Fr. impertinence (sb.) < O.F. impertinent (adj.)

< Late L. impertinens = 'not pertinent, irrelevant' < im-
+ L. pertinens (pres.pple.) < L. pertinere (v) = 'to belong to'
< per- + tenere (v) = 'to hold'.

N.B. Impertinency had the same senses as impertinence; Cotgrave in 1611 glosses Impertinence as 'impertinencie, unfitness, unproperness'. The adjective impertinent first appeared in English in the C14.

Until the C19, impertinent (adj.) had its neutral Latin sense of 'irrelevant', which is used once by Shakespeare:-

Hear a little further,
And then I'll bring thee to the present business
Which now's upon's; without the which this story
Were most impertinent.

(Tp. I.II.135-138).

He also uses impertinency (sb.) once with the sense of 'irrelevance':-

O ! matter and impertinency mix'd;
Reason in madness.

(Lr. IV.VI.176-177).

IMPERTINENT (CONTD.)

In the C16, impertinent developed from the sense 'irrelevant' to 'inappropriate, absurd'. The current sense of 'presumptuously intrusive, insolent', i.e. 'meddling with what is beyond one's province', developed in the C17 in both England and France.

Since Shakespeare's day, impertinent has changed its emphasis considerably, having been restricted to a particular type of inappropriateness, to human behaviour, and having lost its neutral force. Pertinent, the antonym, has not been affected by the restriction of impertinent, and still has the sense of 'relevant, to the point'.

WANTON

Wanton (adj.) = 'undisciplined, spoilt, effeminate; frolicsome; luxuriant; lustful'.

< N.E. wan- + towen < O.E. togen (p.pple.) < teon (v) = 'to train, discipline'.

∴ Wanton lit. = 'undisciplined'.

The emphasis of wanton (adj.) was not restricted to 'lustful' (i.e. 'without restraint in sexual matters') in Elizabethan times, but the adjective could be applied to a wide variety of referents. It could have the sense 'sportive, frolicsome' when applied to children and animals, or it could describe 'an effeminate boy spoiled by over-leniency', or even 'luxuriant or luxurious' seasons and experiences. The substantive wanton had similar senses, all of which are represented in Shakespeare's writings:-

1. ... such wanton, wild and usual slips
As are companions noted and most known
To youth and liberty.

(Hm. II.I.22f).

i.e. 'spirited, sportive'.

2. ... as the cockney did to the eels ... cried
"Down, wantons, down!".

(Lr. II.IV.122-125).

i.e. 'sportive ones'.

WANTON (CONTD.)

3. "I am afeard you make a wanton of me"
(Hm. V.II.310).
i.e. 'effeminate, spoilt person'
(Hamlet's words when he is urging Laertes to attack
him in the sword-fight).
4. Four lagging winters and four wanton springs.
(R.II. I.III.214).
i.e. 'luxuriant'.
5. My plenteous joys,
Wanton in fulness.
(McB. I.IV. 35-36).
i.e. 'luxurious, abundant'.

From earliest times, wanton also had the opprobrious sense 'lascivious, lustful', and in current usage the emphasis has centred solely on this sense. As is often the case, when a word has an unpleasant sense which comes to the foreground, the other harmless senses tend to die.¹ This unpleasant sense is well-represented in Shakespeare's usage, e.g.:-

6. ... he hath not yet made wanton the night with her.
(Oth. II.III.15).
7. ... To lip a wanton in a secure couch.
(Oth. IV.I.71).
i.e. 'lascivious woman'.

WANTON (CONTD.)

8. ... make your wantonness your ignorance.

(Hm. III.I.152).

i.e. 'conceal your lasciviousness under a cover
of simplicity'.

1. cf. undertaker, shroud, fulsome, rank etc.

RANK

Rank (adj.) = 'proud, strong; full-grown; luxuriant; too abundant, too well-fed, highly-offensive esp. to the sense of smell'.

↳ O.E. ranc = M.L.G. rānk = 'long and thin, tall and slender'.
cf. O.N. rakkr = 'slender, bold'.

The ultimate etymology of rank is uncertain.

The root-idea seems to be one of growth, cf. O.E. rinc (sb.) = 'full-grown man'.

Rank (adj.) was a term of commendation in O.E. when it meant 'strong, proud' and 'full-grown, mature'.¹ In M.E. it had the sense 'luxuriant in growth':-

e.g. Blossumez bolne to blowe, bi rawez rych and ronk.²

(Gawain L.513).

This sense developed into 'growing too luxuriously' in later times. To illustrate this development, Dryden's usage in the C17 may be contrasted with the Gawain quotation:-

Corn and grass, but both too rank and too luxuriant in their growth.

(See O.E.D.).

In present-day English, rank can only describe over-abundance of growth, e.g. rank weeds, whereas in Shakespeare's usage both senses are common.

RANK (CONTD.)

Other unpleasant senses also developed in M.E., e.g. 'too well-fed', and 'highly-offensive or loathsome', which is common in Shakespeare's plays:-

e.g. My wife ... deserves a name as rank as any Flax-wench.

(W.T. I.II.277).

In the Cl6, rank in this sense was particularly applied to smells:-

e.g. Oh, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven.

(Hm. III.III.36).

i.e. 'foul, disgusting'.

The emphasis of rank has become absolutely unpleasant, and in current English its main force is centred on unpleasant odours.

1. The senses 'full-grown, mature' were current until the C16.

2. i.e. 'Blossoms swell into bloom, along hedgerows luxuriant and abundant in growth.'

FULSOME

Fulsome (adj.) = 'abundant; over-grown, nauseating, disgusting, offensive to the senses'.

< full (adj.) = 'abundant' + -some.

Possibly influenced by M.E. fūl (adj.) = 'foul, disgusting'.

Like rank, fulsome could have the good sense 'abundant' from M.E. times until the C17. Like rank, it also developed several unpleasant senses in the C16, e.g. 'over-grown, nauseating, offensive to the sense of smell and to the senses in general'.

In Shakespeare's usage the word has only an unpleasant emphasis:-

e.g. Lie with her, zounds, that's fullsome !

(Oth. IV.I.36).

i.e. 'morally offensive, nauseous'.

Both rank and fulsome can mean 'lustful, in heat' in Shakespeare's usage:-

e.g. ... the ewes, being rank,

In end of autumn turned to the rams ...

And, in the doing of the deed of kind,

He stuck them¹ up before the fulsome ewes.

(M.V. I.III.75-81).

Unlike rank, this word became obsolete in the C18.

1. i.e. the peeled wands.

LUXURIOUS

1. Luxurious (adj.) = 'lecherous, over-abundant; extremely rich, very comfortable'.

< O.F. luxurius < L. luxuriōsus (adj.) < luxuria < luxus (sb.)
= 'abundance, sumptuous enjoyment'.

2. Luxury (sb.) = 'lust, over-indulgence; great expense; something conducive to enjoyment but not necessary'.

cf. Fr. luxure (sb.).

In Latin and the Romance languages, the term connotes over-indulgence, the neutral senses of English luxury being expressed by L. luxus and Fr. luxe (which has become quite common in English expressions involving the phrase de luxe, e.g. hotel de luxe).

Since Shakespeare's time the connotations of luxury (sb.) and luxurious (adj.) have changed considerably. In modern society, where great value is placed on comfort and material possessions, luxurious (adj.) is freely applied to furnishings, holidays etc., and one speaks of luxury houses and flats. So today these two words are commedatory.

The situation was very different in Elizabethan times, when luxurious was especially applied to human behaviour and had the sense 'given to self-indulgence, voluptuous'.¹ From the C14 until the end of the C17, it was used particularly with reference to sexual behaviour and meant 'lascivious, lecherous, unchaste', which is its only sense in Shakespeare's plays e.g.:-

LUXURIOUS (CONTD.)

1. ... I grant him bloody,
Luxurious, avaricious, false, deceitful...
(Mcb. IV.III.58-59).

2. ... what hotter hours,
Unregister'd in vulgar fame you have
Luxuriously pick'd out.
(Ant. III.XIII.118-120).
i.e. 'lecherously'.

3. ... A couch for luxury and damned incest.
(Hm. I.V.83).

Luxurious had also the sense 'luxuriant' from the C17 until the C19. There was no related word in English to adopt the neutral senses, as there was in Latin and French, so these became attached to luxurious itself, which gradually lost its unpleasant associations (unlike rank and fulsome), and began to develop the better sense 'extremely rich' at the beginning of the C18. A valuable object can be an extra which produces pleasure or comfort, even though it is not a necessity, and this was the sense which a luxury acquired in the C18. So a luxury now means 'an extra which is desirable but not indispensable, a comfort'. As a result of its frequent use, the force of luxurious has been weakened until it need not necessarily be descriptive of lavish or extremely rich possessions, but may merely connote 'rich and very comfortable'.

1. This sense continued in use until the C19.

FOND

Fond (adj.) = 'foolish, foolishly doting, loving, affectionate'.

↳ fanned (p.pple.) < Cl5 fon (v) = 'to be foolish' + suffix
-ed.

Fon (v) < Cl4 fon (sb.) = 'fool'.

This word is of Scandinavian derivation.

cf. Sw. fån (e) & M.Da. fåne (sb.) = 'fool'.

Shakespeare commonly uses fond (adj.) in its original sense of 'foolish, silly'.¹ He is the first person recorded to have applied the word to objects and ideas with the senses 'trivial, valued only by fools', and not just to persons:-

e.g. Yea, from the table of my memory
 I'll wipe away all trivial fond records.
 (Hm. I.V.98-99).

e.g. ... the most fond and winnowed opinions.
 (Hm. V.II.199).

In the Cl6, Lyly applied the term to lovers who were 'foolishly tender' and it came to be used specifically in this way. Gradually the sense of foolishness died out and fond came to mean 'loving, showing strong affection or liking', and from the mid Cl6 its range was widened so that it was applied to affection for animals, ideas etc, as well as to sexual attraction.

FOND (CONTD.)

In Shakespeare's usage, fond can be descriptive of foolish affection as well as affection in general:-

e.g. O, I am out of breath in this fond chase !

(M.N.D. II.II88).

i.e. 'foolishly doting'.

(Helena's words when she is chasing Demetrius).

e.g. She was too fond of her most filthy bargain.

(Oth. V.II.158).

i.e. 'too tender with regard to'.

In this way fond has undergone a marked shift of emphasis, being first restricted to a particular foolishness, then losing its sense of foolishness, and finally becoming generalised in its application to various kinds of affection.

1. Fond had this general sense until the C18 in the Standard Language and still has it in dialect. In the C19, fond meant 'foolishly credulous or sanguine', in literary usage.

NAUGHTY

Naughty (adj.) = 'worthless, poor, foul; impudent, wicked, disobedient'. Cl4 < M.E. naught (sb.) + -y.

< O.E. nāwuht, -wiht < nā (adv.) + wiht (sb.).

cf. O. Fris. nawet, nauwet, nauet, naut.

Naught is a variation of nought (sb.) < ne = 'not'

+ ōwiht, a variation of āwiht = 'anything'.

At first the sense of naughty was quite literal, i.e. 'poor, of inferior quality, worthless'. This sense was common in the Cl6 and Cl7, when naughty also had a much stronger force than it has today. In its application to people, it could mean 'worthless' to the extent of being 'morally bad or wicked', a sense which is common in Shakespeare's usage. It could be applied to a variety of things, e.g. food, clothing and the weather:-

1. Naughty lady

These hairs, which thou dost ravish from my chin,

Will quicken, and accuse thee ...

(Lr. III.VII.38f).

i.e. 'wicked'.

2. ... 'tis a naughty night to swim in.

(Lr. III.IV.113).

i.e. 'foul'.

Such usage sounds strange to the modern audience, as naughty only describes behaviour in current English and is usually applied

NAUGHTY (CONTD.)

to children with the sense 'disobedient'. It was first used in this way at the beginning of the C18. Once it had been applied to children, its force weakened. In the C19 it could also mean 'improper'.

The following usage is not so strong as 'wicked', but it is still stronger than the modern sense:-

MAR. But what trade art thou ? Answer me directly,
 ... What trade, thou knave ? thou naughty knave,
 what trade ?

(Cae. I.I.12-15).

i.e. 'impudent, saucy'.

SENSIBLE

Sensible (adj.) = 'capable of feeling or perception, sensitive; intelligent, having good sense'.

↳ O.F. sensible (Late L. sensibilis (sens- (p.ppl. stem)

↳ sentire (v) = 'to perceive, feel'.

The force of sensible for Shakespeare was very different from its force today. Sensible was used in connection with the five senses¹ and could mean 'having 'sensory awareness', e.g.:-

1. I might not this believe

Without the sensible and true avouch

Of mine own eyes.

(Hm. I.I.56-58).

2. Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible

To feeling, as to sight ?

(Mcb. II.I.36-37).

i.e. 'capable of being felt by the sense of touch'.

3. The wall, methinks, being sensible, should curse again.

(M.N.D. V.I.181).

i.e. 'able to feel'.

4. ... and yet this hand,

Not sensible of fire, remain'd unscorch'd.

(Cae. I.III.17-18).

i.e. 'capable of feeling fire'.

SENSIBLE (CONTD.)

It could also mean 'acutely felt':-

e.g. My woe too sensible thy passion maketh
more feeling.

(Lucr. 1678).

This function is now performed by sensitive (adj.)².

'Sensory awareness' is what Lewis terms the aesthetic³
force of sense (sb.) in Latin (L. sensus). Even in Latin the
word had another force, which Lewis calls introspective³, i.e.
'an awareness of the psychological state'. Among other things,
sense could mean 'opinion':-

e.g. For in my sense 'tis happiness to die.

(Oth. V.II.291).

Together with such senses as 'frame of mind' and 'depth of
meaning', this helped to produce the sense 'intelligence'.⁴

So in the C16, sensible (adj.) could also mean 'intelligent,
capable of mental perception', as it commonly does in Shakespeare's
plays. Gradually this sense weakened and developed into that of
'having ordinary intelligence, not foolish or silly', which
Johnson stigmatizes as 'merely colloquial' in his Dictionary in
the C18. Just how early this sense existed is hard to ascertain.
Some people see it in Falstaff's words:-

For the box of the ear that the prince gave you, he gave
it like a rude prince, and you took it like a sensible lord.

(2H.IV. I.II.191).

SENSIBLE (CONTD.)

But, as Lewis points out,⁵ this is more likely to mean 'over-sensitive', for the Lord Chief Justice's action in sending Hal to jail was hardly prudent. In current usage, sensible does not imply a particularly keen mental perception, but means rather 'having good sense, reasonable' and is the opposite of 'foolish'.

By the C18, the dual force of sensible could cause ambiguity.⁶ The 'sensitive' person is usually of a very different nature from the 'level-headed, reasonable' person, so there was a real need for two separate words to describe them. As a result, in current English when we speak of a sensitive person, we mean 'one that is easily touched', and when we speak of a sensible person, we mean 'one who is level-headed or no fool'. So, sensible has been restricted to the introspective function and has gradually changed its emphasis since Shakespeare's day. The aesthetic function is fulfilled by sensitive today.

Sensible could still mean 'aware of' in a construction such as I am sensible of your generosity, but sensible of is rather a literary expression. A trace of the aesthetic sense remains in the use of sensible to mean 'conscious, capable of sensation, free from physical insensibility', a sense which developed in the C18. The use of sensible as a popular antonym of foolish has become so predominant, however, that we are no longer intelligible if we speak of a sensible person as the equivalent of a sensitive person, i.e. 'someone having keen feelings, one whose emotions are easily moved'.

1. 'Sensory awareness' was one of the five outward senses. The five inward senses included common sense - see Lewis pp.146 - 150.
2. C15 = 'having sensation': C19 applied to the emotions = 'easily touched'.
3. See Lewis p.133.
4. Even in post-classical Latin, sensus could mean 'intelligence, gumption'.
5. See Lewis pp.161-164.
6. N.B. The antithesis in the title of Jane Austen's novel Sense and Sensibility.

EAGER

Eager (adj.) = 'sharp, sour; fierce, angry; showing impatient longing'.

{ O.F. aigre = 'sharp, keen, sour' < V.F. ācrus < L. acrem (acc.) < L. acer = 'sharp, pungent, swift, strenuous' < *ak- = 'to be sharp or pointed'. cf. Eng. acid (adj.).

In Latin acer could be applied to sensations with the sense 'sharp', as well as to concrete objects. It could describe 'passionate or consuming states of mind' and could be used in the good senses 'active, ardent', or in the bad senses 'violent, hasty'. Until the early C18, eager retained its literal sense 'sharp' and could be applied to a wide range of referents, both concrete and abstract, e.g. speech, physical conditions, material objects:-

e.g. It is a nipping and an eager air.

(Hm. I.IV.2).

i.e. 'piercing, biting'.

e.g. The leperous distilment ... doth posset
And curd, like eager droppings into milk,
The thin and wholesome blood.

(Hm. IV. 64f).

i.e. 'sour, acid'.¹

Shakespeare frequently applies eager to persons, and to birds or animals of prey, with the sense 'fierce, angry, savage', which was one of the senses of acer in Latin.

EAGER (CONTD.)

Acer had the sense 'ardent' in Latin, and this sense has been present in English since the C15. Today eager cannot be applied to anything but a person's actions or attitude, and it means 'showing impatient longing, willing, enthusiastic'. The sense of 'impatient, keen' is present in Shakespeare's usage:-

e.g. With eager feeding food doth choke the feeder.

(2.R. II.I.37).

But as we have seen, eager still had a literal and concrete force² for him, which it has not for the modern speaker. Thus eager illustrates the general tendency of words to take on a more abstract sense, as I have already noted.

1. The sense 'sour' is contained in the word vinegar, cf. Fr. vinaigre = literally 'sour wine'.
2. Contrast this with keen (adj.), which has similar concrete and abstract senses, but which has retained its concrete force, e.g. a keen blade = 'a sharp blade', and can be applied to other things apart from 'impatient desire', e.g. keen sorrow.

VIRTUE

Virtue (sb.) = 'valour, power; an excellent quality, chastity'.

↳ O.F. vertu ↳ L. vertūtem (acc.) ↳ L. virtus (sb.) = 'manliness, valour, worth' ↳ L. vir = 'man', cf. O.E. wer = 'man' > wergild = lit. 'the worth of a man'.

The different ideals of different societies have made their mark upon the word virtue, which had a different emphasis for the Romans from its force today. They placed great value on a man's valour, so for them virtue meant specifically 'bravery'. This sense is present in Shakespeare's Roman play Antony and Cleopatra, and indeed in several other plays:-

e.g. Trust to thy single virtue; for thy soldiers,
All levied in my name, have in my name
Took their discharge.

(Lr. V.III.103-104).

e.g. Lord of lords,
O infinite virtue, com'st thou smiling from
The world's great snare uncaught ? (sc. battle and death).

(Ant. IV.VIII.17-19).

From the C13 in English, virtue had also been applied to power in general, so it commonly means 'efficacy, power' in Shakespeare's plays:-

VIRTUE (CONTD.)

e.g. The healing benediction. With this strange virtue,
He hath a heavenly gift of prophecy.

(Mcb. IV.III.156-157).

A trace of this sense can still be found in the construction
by virtue of, i.e. 'by the power of', which is also found in
Shakespeare's usage:-

e.g. You have some sick offence within your mind,
Which, by the right and virtue of my place,
I ought to know of.

(Cae. II.I.268-270).

In Roman society a brave man would be a praiseworthy one,
so that virtue was extended to include other excellent qualities
apart from bravery. A virtue commonly means quite generally
'an excellent quality' in Shakespeare's usage, as it does in
modern usage.

According to the evidence in O.E.D., Shakespeare was the
first person to apply virtue specifically to the 'chastity' of a
woman, which he frequently did:-

e.g. Hero itself can blot out Hero's virtue.

(Much Ado IV.I.82).

The word did not develop this specific emphasis until the C17 in
France too. This particular application to one kind of 'moral ex

VIRTUE (CONTD.)

excellence' is one of the main uses of virtue today. Together with its derived adjective virtuous, virtue (sb.) is restricted to moral qualities. It no longer has the general sense of 'power', (apart from the occasional example by virtue of, which is mentioned on the previous page). In a society where valour is no longer considered the supreme quality, it no longer means 'bravery'.¹

1. The sense 'bravery' continued until the C18.

MODERN

Modern (adj.) = 'of the time, new-fashioned; commonplace'.

Either < O.F. moderne, or directly from Late L. modernus
< modo = 'just now' (on the analogy of hodiernus = 'of today'
< hodie = 'today').

Changing trends in society have influenced the force of the word modern for different eras. From the C16 it has had the sense of 'now existing, pertaining to the times', but other shades of emotive force have existed together with this neutral sense. In the work of certain C16 and C17 dramatists such as Lodge, Jonson and Shakespeare, the word connoted 'everyday, ordinary, common', and even shaded into the pejorative sense 'trite'. This range of senses is the only one in Shakespeare's plays:-

e.g. ... Immoment toys, things of such dignity

As we greet modern friends withal.

(Ant. V.II.165-166).

i.e. 'everyday'.

e.g. Where sighs, and groans, and shrieks that rent the air

Are made, not mark'd; where violent sorrow seems

A modern ecstasy

(Meib. IV.III.168-170).

i.e. 'commonplace'.

The current sense of 'new-fashioned, not antiquated' was

MODERN (CONTD.)

also present in the C16, but it did not have the same emotive force as it has now. At the end of the C19 the emphasis of 'modern' centred on its connotation of 'new'. The word has developed further in this direction in C20 society with its mass production, its vast network of advertising and its teenage cult, where the demand is for novelty, for new possessions, new ideas, new experiences and where to be up-to-date, to be with it, is all the rage.

C. THE MORALISATION OF STATUS WORDS

FREE

Free (adj.) = 'not in bondage, noble, excellent; innocent; at liberty'.

(O.E. frēo (adj.), cf. O.N. frīr in the compound *frīhals, frīals; O.S., O. Fris. and O.H.G. frī = 'not in bondage or subject to outside control'. cf. O.E. frīgu (sb.) = 'love', and freond = 'dear one, friend' (Skr. ~~frīyās~~ (adj.) = 'dear').

The primary sense 'dear' comes of the word's having been used as the distinctive epithet of those members of a household who were connected by ties of kindred with the head, as opposed to the slaves.

Certain words originally describing rank have taken on a moral value¹ which is either one of praise or scorn, according to whether the words described a high or low status in life. They come to assign character or behaviour. Among the words implying superior status which have become laudatory are chivalrous, courteous, and gentle. Words such as ignoble, vulgar and villain, which denoted inferior status, have become words of disapproval. Words of this kind show the influence of the structure of society in shaping the meaning of words.

In the past, the adjective free had certain emphases which resulted from its moralisation¹. Originally it referred to legal status and was the opposite of slave (O.E. feow and O.N. thræl).

FREE (CONTD.)

It also had the general physical sense of 'able to move, not restricted'. Strangely enough, these senses are the current ones, the others having become obsolete for the most part.

A nobleman was not in bondage, he was free, so free came to denote a person of gentle breeding and birth, and to describe the 'honourable and generous' nature, which were considered proper to such status. The word was often used in this way until the 17th. It was in such common usage that in some contexts it was a term of vague, unspecified praise and a stock epithet of compliment in M.E., where it often appeared in the alliterative phrase fair and fre.

Largesse was an important aspect of freedom, so one of the senses of free was 'munificent'², e.g.:-

...to fre of dede .

(Pearl L.481).

i.e. 'over-liberal in its action'.

In accordance with the courtly code, a knight ought to embody morality and honour to the extent of the supreme self-sacrifice, blended with the finest manners and a generous nature. Freedom has this full charge of meaning in Chaucer's description of his knight, who upheld:-

Trouthe and honour, freedom and courtesye

(C.T. Gen. Prol. L.46).

FREE (CONTD.)

In N.E., free developed another ethical content which resulted from its sense 'unrestrained, not in bondage', which could be figuratively applied to sin. Anyone who was not 'in bondage to sin' was innocent. This sense was still used in the Cl7 and is common in Shakespeare's plays. The following quotation provides an interesting illustration of this sense-development, i.e. free of it = 'not subject to pay for it or restricted by it' > 'innocent of it':-

LAER. Mine and my father's death come not upon thee,
Nor thine on me !

HAM. Heaven make thee free of it !

(Hm. V.II.341-343).

Shakespeare also frequently uses the senses 'noble, generous', as well as the current sense 'unrestricted'. The qualities of 'innocence, honour and bounty', of which a noble nature is composed, are so blended in the following quotation that the exact force of free is uncertain:-

I would not have your free and noble nature
Out of self-bounty be abus'd.

(Oth. III.III.203).

The sense 'innocent' appears simply, however, in the following;-

FREE (CONTD.)

1. In the meantime,
Let me be thought too busy in my fears -
And hold her free.

(Oth. III.III.259).

(sc. Iago's accusation that Desdemona has been
unfaithful to Othello).

2. Make mad the guilty and appal the free.

(Hm. II.II.600).

'With the obsolescence of the courtly ideal and as a result of a change in the structure of society, the socio-ethical content of free lost force and finally became obsolete in the C17. Today the adjective has returned to its original force of 'not restricted, able to move', both in its literal and figurative uses, e.g. a free and easy manner, i.e. one which is 'not restrained or over-formal'.

1. For a discussion of the moralisation of status-words as Lewis calls it, where he deals with free and villain, see Lewis p.216, pp.114-123.

2. As Lewis points out, this sense could be arrived at via the sense 'unrestrained', when applied to dealings with one's property. From the sense 'unrestrained' developed the senses a. 'familiar, informal' and b. 'costing nothing', i.e. 'without any restrictions imposed by money'.

VILLAIN

Villain (sb.) = 'a peasant in bondage to a feudal lord, a low-born servant, a boorish, unrefined peasant; a scoundrel'.

↳ M.E. vilein, vilain ↳ O.F. vilein, vilain, villain ↳ V.L. *villānum (acc. sing.) ↳ *villānus ↳ villa = 'a country-house, a farm'. cf. Eng. variant villein (sb.) = 'a peasant in bondage to a feudal lord'. This is the spelling usually reserved for this sense, for the sake of distinction.

Villain (sb.) is another term which has been moralised, but this time a derogatory sense has developed because the word originally designated the low status of a 'peasant in bondage to a feudal lord'. Unrefined, boorish, rascally behaviour was associated with peasants, so villain (sb.) acquired an ethical content and came to describe 'a scoundrel, a rascal'. Unlike free, villain has retained its ethical content, (which was not connected with any particular ideal or approach to life as free was with the courtly code).

In Shakespeare's usage, villain is not restricted to the sense 'scoundrel', but still has the literal sense 'servant', as it does when Cornwall, in anger and exasperation, addresses his servant, who opposes his action of putting out Gloucester's eyes:-

e.g. My villain .

(Lr. III.VII.78).

VILLAIN (CONTD.)

The most frequent usage of villain by Shakespeare is as a term of reproach, however. Its double force imparts a certain richness to the following quotation, which it could not have in current English:-

I know thee well: a serviceable villain;
As duteous to the vices of thy mistress
As badness would desire.

(Lr. IV.VI.254-56).

i.e. Oswald is both 'a servant' and a 'scoundrel'.

It is easy to attach the sense of 'treacherous person' to villain in Elizabethan drama, but often it is not so strong, and means rather 'rogue, wretch, rascal'. Petruchio, for example, repeatedly calls his man Grunio a villain, e.g. (Shr. I.II.8-19).

On other occasions, Shakespeare employs the word as an affectionate use of an opprobrious term in reverse, e.g.:-

1. It is the prettiest villain.

(Troil. III.II.33).

(Pandarus' description of Cressida).

2. Here comes the little villain.

(Tw.N. II.V.II).

(Sir Toby's words about Maria).

This playful use of otherwise opprobrious terms is familiar to the modern speaker, cf. rascal, rogue, scoundrel etc.

MECHANIC

1. Mechanic (adj. & sb.) = mechanical (2).

Mid. Cl6 < L. mēchanicus (adj.) < Gk. mēkhanikós
< Gk. mēkhanē (sb.) = 'machine'.

2. Mechanical (adj. & sb.) = 'pertaining to low-born mechanics;
pertaining to machines; lacking in spontaneity'.

Early Cl5 < L. mēchanicus + -ical.

N.B. These two adjectives had the same senses. Mechanic(1) is
only used as a substantive in current English, and mechanical(2)
as an adjective.

The original sense of these adjectives was quite neutral,
i.e. 'concerned with machines'. Anyone working with machines
or engaged in manual labour was low down the social scale, so in
the Cl6 both words developed the ethical content of 'mean, vulgar',
which continued to be current until the Cl9. Both words always
have this contemptuous emphasis in Shakespeare's plays, e.g.:-

1. ... Mechanic slaves

With greasy aprons, rules, and hammers ...

(Ant. V.II.209f).

N.B. The collocation with slaves.

The scornful use of mechanic has died out, possibly as a
result of the rising importance of the machine, and hence the
greater prestige of one working with machines. In fact, by the

MECHANIC (CONTD.)

latter half of the C19, mechanic (sb.) could mean 'a skilled workman'. This development of sense would thus be a result of social and technological change.

Similarly mechanical (adj.) has lost all its sense of scorn and developed along neutral lines. Its neutral sense was 'pertaining to machines', which developed into 'machine-like' or 'unspontaneous', when applied to the behaviour of human beings. This sense is not recorded until after Shakespeare at the end of the C17 in O.E.D. Although mechanical (adj.) has a deprecatory sense elsewhere in Shakespeare's writings, Muir's suggestion¹ that it means 'ceremonious, unspontaneous' in the following quotation is attractive:-

This is a soldier's kiss: rebukeable,
And worthy shameful check it were, to stand
On more mechanic compliment.²

(Ant. IV.IV.30-32).

Mechanic here is usually interpreted as 'such as becomes a journeyman', but 'ceremonious' would fit the sense of the passage well, as Antony does not hesitate to kiss Cleopatra farewell in public, and does not pay any regard to pedantic, ceremonious leave-taking. His action is to the point and simple, such as becomes a soldier. As such usage would be almost a century prior to that recorded so far, however, Muir's suggestion needs the support of

MECHANIC (CONTD.)

evidence of the early use of this sense elsewhere, a need which he does indeed admit.

1. See the Arden edn. p.153.
2. Compliment commonly means 'external show, ceremony' in Shakespeare's plays.

Some of the words in this chapter could have been placed in the previous chapter on restriction, as this is the process by which they have changed their emphases, e.g. jest, gaudy, curious etc. Some words lose certain senses because another word takes over those particular senses, e.g. sensible/sensitive. A shift in the emphasis of a word is often very subtle, e.g. limited, and it is extremely difficult to know when the final shift took place.

Some words have changed for the worse, e.g. smug, cunning, conceited. Others have developed a better emphasis or become weakened, e.g. luxurious, naughty. Shakespeare's writings are rich in their variety of senses and often form a kind of transition, where both old and new senses can be found in company, e.g. wanton.

In the case of words like virtue and modern, the general sense has remained the same, but changing ideals have brought about a change of special emphases. A special class of words is those denoting rank which have subsequently developed a moral content, and have become words of scorn or of praise. Mechanic has reverted to its original neutral emphasis as a result of technological and social change.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

As it was pointed out in the introduction, it is impossible to bind words within rigid divisions, for so many factors are at work in semantic change that the same word will often come within various categories. Certain general tendencies can be noted, however. The influences involved are varied and not always purely linguistic, (as the convergence of sounds in the development of homophones is purely linguistic).

Social divisions play their part in sense-development. This has been seen in the case of technical terms used within special groups, and in the moralisation of status-words.¹ The structure of society is subject to change, as are the ideals and knowledge of its members. Progress in medicine and greater knowledge about the universe have resulted in the abandonment of many old ideas and superstitions. This too is reflected in the language (e.g. Ch.I). The changing ideas, ideals and interests of a society result in the fact that words can mean very different things at different times (e.g. Ch.5B). In addition, an interest in, or the importance of a certain activity (e.g. falconry or sea-faring) at a particular time, may mean that many words connected with such^{an} activity come into the general vocabulary during that period, (Ch.I.). Changes in the material world may mean that the objects described by one word are very different, e.g. carriage. Objects change more quickly than words, so the use of an existing name to describe a new and similar

object is an economical measure.

In the same way it is economical for more than one sense to be attached to a word. The alternative would be an unwieldy number of separate words for every individual referent. This would make communication impossible. Besides, polysemy makes possible figurative usage, thus adding flexibility and richness to the language. Figurative usage reflects the complex and imaginative nature of man, who is forever noting actual associations or finding new ones. Similarly, homophones can produce flexibility and be a rich source of word-play. They are a very complex class of words and the cross-fertilization of sense between them is very intricate.

In Chapter Four the tendency of words to become specific or restricted in sense was noted. When a word is only applied to a specific referent, it tells us more about the referent, i.e. whilst its extension is decreased, its intension is increased. It has been noted that once a word develops an unpleasant association its other general senses tend to die. In this way euphemistic terms often defeat their purpose (e.g. undertaker and shroud). Restriction also plays an important part in the changing emotive force of words (e.g. Ch.5B).

A special class of words having a high emotive content is affective terms. Here a bird or beast arouses certain feelings in a speaker, and he subsequently gives the name of the bird or

beast to a human being who arouses similar feelings in him.

It has been observed that terms used in special vocabularies become vaguer or less specific when they pass into the general vocabulary. Another tendency is for more refined and abstract senses to grow from concrete ones. Analogy has also been seen to play a part in semantic change (fustian and question).

Ambiguity is an important factor, for when the sense of a word is not clear, other senses may be attributed to it. Sometimes the context makes the meaning clear, but context is not an infallible guide. Other means of avoiding ambiguity are by changing a construction (e.g. bound to), or by assigning certain senses which cause ambiguity to another word (sensible/sensitive). When a word is ambiguous, it is not always necessary for the word to be lost completely, but it is often sufficient for some of its senses to die.

In the introduction it was said that an individual speaker's usage could become so well-established that it became general usage. This is often true of Shakespeare, whose writings have influenced later generations². His work is rich in different senses of one and the same word, for in it old and new senses often exist side by side. It would be only too easy to give our own senses to many of Shakespeare's words, and this can only be avoided by a greater awareness of earlier usage. Such an awareness can enrich our appreciation of the complexity of Shakespeare's meaning, for even

the Elizabethan hearer 'was in some manifest danger, not to understand him' (Introd. p.3). Above all, the complex nature of semantic change as a whole can be appreciated, when it is remembered that the intricacy of sense studied here can be found in the work of one man - granted that he was a master of language.

1. See Chs. I and 5 B respectively.
2. See such examples as shard, small deer, small beer,
costermonger.

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ABBREVIATIONS

acc.	= accusative	M.Du.	= Middle Dutch
adj.	= adjective	M.E.	= Middle English
adv.	= adverb	M.E.	= reflex of Middle English
Angl.	= <i>Anglian</i>		
astron.	= astronomical	Med.L.	= Mediaeval Latin
C	= century	M.F.	= Middle French
c	= circa	M.H.G.	= Middle High German
cf.	= compare	M.L.G.	= Middle Low German
C. Germ.	= Common Germanic	Mod.E./N.E.	= Modern English
Class.L.	= Classical Latin	Mod. Fr.	= Modern French
cogn.	= cognate with	Mod. G.	= Modern German
Da.	= Danish	N.E./Mod.E.	= New English
dial. G.	= dialectal German	neut.	= neuter
Du.	= Dutch	Norm.	= Norman
Eng.	= English	Norw.	= Norwegian
Fr.	= French	N.T.	= <i>The New Testament</i>
G.	= <i>German</i>	O.E.	= Old English
Germ.	= Germanic	O.F.	= Old French
Gk./Gr.	= Greek	O. Fris.	= Old Frisian
Icel.	= Icelandic	O.H.G.	= Old High German
i.e.	= that is	O.Ir.	= <i>Old Irish</i>
I.E.	= Indo European	O.L.G.	= Old Low German
It.	= Italian	O.N.	= Old Norse
L.	= Latin	orig.	= <i>originally</i>
L.G.	= Low German	O.S.	= Old Saxon
lit.	= literally	Pers.	= Persian
		pl.	= plural
		p.pple.	= past participle

ABBREVIATIONS (CONTD.)

p.ppl.	= past participial
p.ppl.adj.	= past participial adjective
pres. pple.	= present participle
pret.	= preterite
Prov.	= Provençal
Rom.	= Romance
sb.	= substantive
sc.	= namely
Skr.	= Sanskrit
Sp.	= Spanish
str.neut.	= strong neuter
Sw.	= Swedish
v.	= verb
V.L.	= Vulgar Latin

ABBREVIATIONS TO SHAKESPEARE'S WORKS

All's Well	= All's Well that Ends Well
Ant.	= Antony and Cleopatra
A.Y.L.	= As You Like It.
Cae.	= Julius Caesar
Com. Err.	= Comedy of Errors
Cor.	= Coriolanus
Cymb.	= Cymbeline
I.H.IV.	= Henry IV. Part I.
2.H.IV.	= " " Part II.
H.V.	= Henry V.
I.H.VI. etc.	= Henry Sixth Part I etc.
H.VIII.	= Henry VIII.
Hm.	= Hamlet
John	= King John
L.L.L.	= Love's Labours Lost
Lr.	= Lear
Lucr.	= The Rape of Lucrece
Mcb.	= Macbeth
M. for M.	= Measure for Measure
M.N.D.	= A Midsummer Night's Dream
Much Ado	= Much Ado about Nothing
M.V.	= The Merchant of Venice
M.W.	= The Merry Wives of Windsor
Oth.	= Othello

ABBREVIATIONS TO SHAKESPEARE'S WORKS (CONTD.)

R. II.	= Richard II.
R. III.	= Richard III.
Rom.	= Romeo and Juliet
Shr.	= The Taming of the Shrew
Timon	= Timon of Athens
Titus	= Titus Andronicus
T.N.	= Twelfth Night
Tp.	= The Tempest
Troil	= Troilus and Cressida
Ven.	= Venus and Adonis
W.T.	= The Winter's Tale.

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