A CONSIDERATION OF SOME LINGUISTIC PHENOMENA

IN OTHELLO AND KING LEAR

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A CONSIDERATION OF SOME LINGUISTIC PHENOMENA IN *OTHELLO* AND *KING LEAR*

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

This study was undertaken with the idea of determining to some extent the contribution of Shakespeare's linguistic peculiarities to his effectiveness. The observation of the trends of these phenomena suggested by specific examples constituted a further aim as a key to the nature of Shakespearean language. A revealing statement concerning the field of Shakespearean linguistics and its possibilities comes from W. S. Mackie, who says:

> While Shakespeare as a poet and dramatist has been an intensively cultivated field of research, the language of his plays and poems -- his grammar and syntax, his pronunciation, his vocabulary and use of words -- has not yet been fully explored. . . . Yet a careful examination of Shakespeare's words, their origin, their relationships, their uses, would not only be of great value in itself, but would almost certainly throw light upon some of the difficult problems of the Shakespeare canon.[1]

Although this work in no way purports to be exhaustive even within its own limits, the meagerness of contributions to this field seems to make a study of this sort worthwhile.

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[1]W. S. Mackie, "Shakespeare's English: and How Far It Can Be Investigated with the Help of the 'New English Dictionary,'" Modern Language Review, XXXI (January, 1936), 1.

Many phases of the question presented themselves in the course of the work, although it was possible to develop only a few of them within the limits of this thesis. It must be apparent to the most casual reader of the plays that Shakespeare's work is a model of economy of expression. The study of the mechanics of this ability to say so much in such a few words promised a rich reward. In the background was also the question of whether or not his language had anything to do with the fact that he has degenerated from the position of popular playwright in his own day to that of a poet of the literati today. Shakespeare, who had the wide appeal of a Saroyan in the seventeenth century, has been relegated to the rarefied limbo of a Browning in the twentieth, and, by most people, he is now studied rather than read or heard for amusement or enjoyment as he once was. In this connection were observed two language tendencies which might help to account for the transition, although neither is peculiar to Shakespeare. In the first place, there is some difference between Modern English and Elizabethan English; also, there is the matter of poetic diction to be taken into account. One quality of Elizabethan usage was its freedom from conventionality. In the seventeenth century, language was not the static, documented body of words that standard English is today. Because it had not yet been caught and imprisoned in dictionaries, it

underwent constant change; each writer and speaker could, and often did, amend and augment to his own taste the medium he used. Such license prevailed in syntactical function, form, spelling, and pronunciation. If this prevalence of unconventionality in the matter of language was general, however, it was probably more pronounced in the work of Shakespeare than in that of any other writer of the period. Shakespeare turned this condition to account both in the satisfaction of his poetic needs and in the free play of his brilliant individuality.

The matter of Shakespeare's linguistic idiosyncrasies offers two interesting suggestions. Through the present study only a hint may be gained concerning one, Shakespeare's influence upon the English language, and only an offhand guess may be hazarded in regard to the other, Shakespeare's linguistic artistry as a conscious power. Shakespeare, as it is frequently pointed out in the body of this thesis, is credited by the N. E. D. and by many English scholars[2] with the introduction of many new words and expressions, and with the assignment of new semantic values to words already familiar in form. (Such words, morphologically familiar, but semantically novel, will henceforth be called neosemalogisms.) Often the semantic and morphological

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[2]". . . Shakespeare uses a great many words which were new in his times, whether absolutely new or new only to the written language, while living colloquially on the lips of the people." -- Otto Jespersen, The Growth and Structure of the English Language, p. 206. Also cf. L. P. Smith, The English Language, p. 414.

creations of Shakespeare's pen have survived to be found in our modern dictionaries; often, too, the Shakespeareanisms appear in the work of later writers. An inference relative to Shakespeare's influence upon English may be drawn from these facts.[3] As to the playwright's conscious artistry, more minute documentary evidence stemming directly from the Elizabethan period is needed before any conclusions can be reached in this respect. Nevertheless, the manifestations of his linguistic genius are numerous and impressive.

Scope

For the purposes of this consideration two plays were made the basis for study; obviously the field is so rich as to make selection imperative. Othello and Lear were selected because they represent the mature period of Shakespeare's work, and also because the tragedies, fraught with intense drama, seem to offer the most likely field for linguistic study. Other late tragedies might have been as fruitful as these two; the choice was arbitrary. A further choice had to be made in the types of words to be considered. However, not all that was interesting or unusual linguistically in the two plays could be discussed. Such a course would require more categories than could be adequately handled in a work of this nature. The specific linguistic types considered are noted subsequently. Nor has this investigation in any way attempted to solve textual irregularities.

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[3]Cf. Harry Bradley, The Making of English, pp. 229-231.

The Oxford text has been used as a basis: passages quoted and words discussed are taken from this text. Significant variations in other texts, however, have been noted in individual discussions. Characteristic Elizabethan language, wherever identifiable as such, has not been included, no matter how unfamiliar to the modern ear. Likewise, the less singular expressions, explicit through etymology or wide use either shortly after Shakespeare's time or in comparatively recent periods, are not dealt with. Thus, language familiar to the sixteenth century or to the twentieth century has no place here, but the language, rather, of Shakespeare himself is under scrutiny.

Even in the consideration of Shakespeareanisms alone it was necessary to narrow the field of choice. There is a wealth of material in almost any one phase of Shakespearean idiom. The playwright's use of figure, his peculiarities of syntax, his coinages, and the influence of French, Latin, and Italian upon his phraseology are a few of the many subjects, any one of which offers a broad field of study. Each of these, to some degree, enters into the present study, which is undertaken from a semantic viewpoint. Within this limited scope, nevertheless, it is possible to note certain linguistic tendencies. Definite categorical distinctions are difficult to draw among these trends. They have many characteristics in common. First of all, although some of the words are referred to specifically as coinages,

all are Shakespeareanisms in either form, function or meaning or some combination of these, and so exhibit the quality of invention which characterizes coinages. However, special phases of this category have been noted in the three types of innovation: morphological, semantic, and syntactical.

Method

Careful reading of Othello and Lear produced a great many more unusual words than could be treated in this thesis. The words were chosen for their semantic significance only. Each word was checked against the Furness text and variorum and with the New English Dictionary. Scholarly semantic readings reported in Furness were considered in two aspects: their possible revelation in the matter of interpretation, and as examples of the impression made by Shakespeare's language upon his readers. The N. E. D. was employed as a guide in fixing the historical status of the words, although with the awareness that in point of absolute accuracy the N. E. D. is not always reliable, as Mackie points out:

> Shakespeare's genius as a manipulator of words is especially shown in his way of taking existing words and giving them new turns of meaning, and inventing them with metaphorical significances. In its recording of these new uses of words by Shakespeare we sometimes found the N. E. D. defective or unreliable.[4]

However, the minor inaccuracies or omissions in the N. E. D.

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[4]Mackie, op. cit., p. 2.

have no great bearing on the broad phases of Shakespearean innovation as considered here. Upon the basis of its findings the decision as to the validity of each word as a Shakespeareanism rests. The context in which each word appears has been consistently regarded as of the utmost importance, and, in some instances, the significance of a word in the mouth of a certain character has prompted a synoptic scrutiny of that character. Wherever possible the paraphrastic method of interpretation has been avoided, and the word, fortified by whatever clarification was discovered, allowed to speak for itself. Further, as has been previously noted, no textual difficulties have been approached for the purpose of solving them, but where significant they have been remarked. The works of various semanticists and linguists were consulted and are quoted occasionally. By pointing out general tendencies in the language, their work emphasized and guided the formulation of the nature of Shakespearean idiosyncrasies. Finally, an attempt was made to impart the heightened enjoyment in Shakespeare that an appreciation of his semantic seasoning will give. In this regard a conscious effort at restraint was made in both the freedom and enthusiasm of interpretation and the technicality of discussion.

Nature of Findings

The investigation of Shakespeareanisms reveals an attribute of the artistry which is unconsciously felt without

being defined in the reading of the plays. Shakespeare used words as his tools. He never confined his thoughts or his effects within the narrow limits of conventional usage, but instead he reached out for the striking, the dramatic word or expression; he wrought it masterfully to his own designs; he imperiously caused it to serve in whatever capacity he chose to place it, and to serve well. There are, it is true, some difficulties encountered in the interpretation of Shakespeare. At times the conventionally-schooled reader may not follow the bold departures. For the most part, however, his work is singularly free of obscure passages, although obscurity is a familiar quality in the realm of poetry.

The linguistic freedom which Shakespeare exploited to such good advantage, not only was characteristic of his age, but also exists today in American coloquial English; accordingly, it is interesting to note that there is a striking similarity between Shakespeare's general linguistic tendencies and those of American English. In regard to the latter, H. L. Mencken points out "an impatient disregard for grammatical, syntactical, and phonological rule and precedent," and "a large capacity . . . for taking in new words and phrases from outside sources and for manufacturing them of its own materials."[5] These same tendencies in

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[5]H. L. Mencken, The American Language, p. 90.

general as well as in some of their more specific phases are evident in Shakespeare. Hence, the modern American vocabulary shares with that of Shakespeare a variable quality. There is, however, a linguistic perception apparent in Shakespeare's diction which raises his unconventionality to the heights of artistry. Although Shakespeare could hardly be properly termed linguistically minded, because linguistics as a science was not developed in his day, he was nonetheless definitely language-conscious, and especially conscious of the powers of innovation in language.[6] According to Mencken, we Americans ". . . incline toward a directness of statement which, at its greatest, lacks restraint and urbanity altogether, and toward a hospitality which often admits novelties for the mere sake of their novelty, and is quite uncritical of the difference between a genuine improvement in succinctness and clarity, and mere extravagant raciness."[7] Of this fault, Shakespeare was never guilty. When he departed from convention in diction or syntax, it was with rare discernment. In colloquial originality association is a causative factor and therefore obvious; that is, a new word or expression or usage is suggested by an obvious analogy. In Shakespeare's individualism, however, the associational value is a calculated tool and is generally

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[6]"Yet the fact that it is in his words that we so often find the earliest known examples of words that are now current is at any rate instructive, as showing the keenness of his perception of the needs of language."--Bradley, op. cit., p. 232.

[7]Mencken, op. cit., p. 94.

subtle. The Shakespeareanisms strangest to the ordinary vocabulary are usually semantically clear through their associations without close study, even though study greatly enhances one's appreciation of them. Often the clarity comes from powerful phonic suggestion; sometimes it comes from a combination of phonetic with contextual relationships.

Another phase and evidence of linguistic artistry in Shakespeare is the semantic scope of his words as revealed by the variety of their interpretation. Frequently the commentators present a number of readings for one word. In general these interpretations agree in the basic idea, but merely display the difficulty of finding adequate synonyms or even synonymous rephrasing for Shakespeare's comprehensive implication. This quality of compactness is especially conspicuous in the opening scenes of the plays, where, often within the space of a few score lines, the scene is set, the problem stated, and the principal characters sketched. The problem of translating Shakespeare into foreign languages also emphasizes his semantic scope. It is not difficult to find a word in a foreign language for a familiar concrete concept, but in the face of the network of reference present in most Shakespeareanisms, translation of the plays appears to be a rather futile undertaking. Obviously, if transfixing a word with a synonym in its own language is difficult or undesirable, then translation is a delicate matter indeed.

Shakespeare displays artistry again in his skill in creating a character through that character's speech traits.[8] Not obviously, as in the case of a comic character, such as the well-known Mrs. Malaprop, but subtly, Shakespeare portrays, for instance, an Othello. A consistently elevated style characterizes the Moor as successful, naive, and confident, conscious of the position that he has won for himself. It is not what is said about Othello by others or what he says about himself that elucidates his character, but it is his diction that is revealing. He is much given to Latinisms and even in the moments of intense emotion expresses himself in characteristic stilted phraseology. On the other hand, there is at least one example of the use of a word entirely out of character, a departure which, in the light of Shakespeare's consistently careful verbal characterizations, has the effect of accenting the unnatural situation in which it appears. Unusual Latinisms occur frequently in these two plays and were apparently, aside from their effect as an element of characterization, chosen for their striking power to command attention. Slang, profanity, and dialectisms are elements of language sometimes employed for this purpose in the works of lesser writers. Here, again, Shakespeare's superior artistry is made manifest in his subtlety of technique.

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[8]Cf. Jespersen, op. cit., p. 198 ff.

Shakespearean language is characterized by a wide variety of individualisms which are difficult to classify accurately. However, for the purposes of discussion, further divisions of the three broad categories of phenomena previously indicated -- morphological, semantic, and syntactical -- are here presented. Individual consideration is indicated for such significant types as blends, Latinisms, affixal oddities, truncations, figurative innovations and syntactical mutations. The matter of Shakespeare's originality in the field of syntax has a place in this investigation only as it concerns semantic values. Medicine, after, and dispose illustrate this point. The reassignment of syntactical function in these words results in their becoming neosemalogisms. Their semantic force is the greater for their arresting singularity of function. Shakespeare's use of figure likewise is germane to this subject only as it is reinforced by the achievement of a new figurative concept, as illustrated by pliant and bombast. The truncations are exemplified by such a word as reverbs. In the consideration of Shakespeare's semantic force, truncations, which may be expediencies of metrical necessity, are valid principally because of the fact that they lose nothing, indeed may even gain, in semantic force by their morphological reduction. The individualistic treatment accorded the use of affixes by Shakespeare is interesting in its

effects. There is often a phonetic element apparently involved in his process as pointed out in whipster; furthermore, it is sometimes difficult to ascertain whether a word has been merely equipped with a new affix or whether it is a blend. An example of this elusive problem is remediate. In themselves, apart from their use as character accents, the Latinisms are interesting. Relume and stelled convey a poetic quality whose grace only points up the intense emotion of the passages in which these words appear. It may be pertinently remarked here that Shakespeare's diction is seldom merely poetic; his linguistic artistry exploits this quality in broadening his meaning. Blends and coinages reveal the delicacy and insight of Shakespeare's linguistic perception more clearly perhaps than does any other type of Shakespeareanism. In such words are packed the profundity and poignancy of import peculiar to Shakespearean expression. At first glance observants, attasked, or questrists may seem somewhat enigmatic, but, closely considered, as words and as units of their contexts, they disclose a significance heightened, rather than obscured, by their seemingly ambiguous qualities.

More specific discussion of these as well as additional types of words not described here is left to ensuing pages. The principal discovery of this investigation was the fact that, unlike most of the metaphysical poets, Shakespeare so

employed words as to make analysis of them possible, profitable, and fascinating. He strove apparently for dramatic clarity and achieved that and more. The study of Shakespeare is not necessary to the enjoyment of the plays, but a study of his words sharpens that enjoyment. It is interesting, also, to notice that Shakespeare has rarely lost by semantic development. Surprisingly often that trend has followed the direction indicated by his pen. It is not necessary for the Shakespeare enthusiast to deduce from this circumstance Shakespeare's position as a linguistic Cagliostro, but one may see in it, nevertheless, a testimonial to the soundness of the playwright's linguistic instincts.

CHAPTER II

EXAMPLES

GROUP I. SEMANTIC INNOVATION

The words in this group deal with the most delicate of linguistic innovation -- that of semantics. There are great possibilities of augmenting effectiveness in the field of semantic innovation, but there are also many insidious dangers. A sure linguistic instinct is the indispensable factor of successful manipulation. Individual experience so influences the interpretation of the units of expression that the semantic shadings of each one are incalculable quantities; hence, a subtle distinction may be lost or misunderstood according to the semantic values recognized by the reader or hearer. The qualities of universality of impression and incisiveness of connotation would thus appear to be antithetical ones. They may, however, be somewhat reconciled, although one or both must diminish somewhat in the process, by linguistic artistry. That the quality of wide appeal be preserved and that of connotative value augmented is the ideal of semantic manipulation. For its achievement the individual responses, of course, cannot be

calculated, but their representation in the aggregate must be considered. Shakespeare's mastery of these principles is apparent in his contemporary popularity and in the validity of his semantic innovations, evident through the study of them, some three centuries later. The subsequent examples from Othello and Lear illustrate the principles involved in these conclusions.

BOMBAST

Shakespeare's opening scenes are uniformly packed with meaning. The whole situation is made manifest often in the space of less than two hundred lines. This strategy requires incisive language. Figures are rarely the most pointed devices of discourse, but Shakespeare often uses them with telling effect. Iago's words in the first scene of Othello reveal an instance of the power of Shakespeare's figure, with especial regard to atmosphere. Iago has had advocates at Othello's ear for the purpose of securing for Iago the post of Othello's lieutenant. Iago reports the outcome:

> But he, as loving his own pride and purposes,
> Evades them with a bombast circumstance
> Horribly stuff'd with epithets of war;[1]

Although bombast in this sense was probably not a common term in Shakespeare's day, a conclusion which the N. E. D.

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[1] Othello, I, i. 12-14. (This and all subsequent quotations from Shakespeare's plays are from W. J. Craig, editor, The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works of William Shakespeare.

suggests in recording the above use of it as the first one among their findings; nevertheless, common associations doubtless clarified the significance of bombast.

Following through the etymology of bombast is a fascinating pastime. A few words in a Furness note suffice to hint at the amusing steps on the way to specialization of the word. Crediting Nares, Furness quotes: "Originally cotton. Hence, because cotton was commonly used to stuff out quilting, etc., bombast also meant the stuffing of clothes, etc. Hence applied to tumid and inflated language."[2]

Othello's act of evasion, then, is understood to have been not only inflated, or enlarged, but, as Iago particularizes, enlarged through being stuffed horribly "with epithets of war." One infers from this figure the violence with which Othello silenced those who would have advised him in the matter of appointing his officers. In these few words both Iago's position and attitude and an important aspect of Othello's character are revealed, with bombast as the pivot word. Bombast is an epithet in itself, associated as it is with "padding" which implies "artificially stuffing." To the modern mind, bombast also suggests "extravagance" and "rant," and this further heightens the effect of Iago's figure. Semantic change has operated to deprive many Elizabethan words of their effectiveness; some have been been rendered meaningless. A surprising number

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[2]H. H. Furness, editor, The Variorum Shakespeare, VI, 4.

of Shakespeare's words, however, seem to have become affected advantageously by semantic development. Bombast, for instance, has specialized in meaning from the literal "inflated, puffed" to the figurative "stuffed with words." The fact that many Shakespearean words have developed, as bombast, in the direction into which they were impelled by Shakespeare's pen is worth consideration.

CADENT

In the grip of emotion Lear begs of Nature the reproduction of his own heartbreak in the cause of it, his daughter:

> Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth,
> With cadent tears fret channels in her cheeks.[1]

"The effect of an unusual word formed from the Latin or Greek is often very good in poetry," says Moberly, as quoted by Furness.[2] Literally cadent means "falling", according to its etymology, but "with falling tears" would hardly convey the same image to the reader or hearer as Shakespeare's phrase. A familiar cognate may have the power to intensify the import of such a word. Probably in this case the word channels, which follows, further suggests an analogy between cadent and cascade, and one feels an inexorable, unstanchable rush. There is also the significance of the cognate cadence to suggest a rhythmic and perpetual falling. A noteworthy quality of Shakespeare's choice of words in general is apparent here. Although like many poets he often chooses an uncommon word, his diction is seldom merely poetic; rather than requiring his reader or hearer to stretch his imagination in order to comprehend the import of the passage thus expressed, his choice usually emphasizes and broadens the meaning, and, however foreign to the vocabulary of the audience, it is usually incisively clear through etymological

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[1]Lear, I, iv, 308-309.

[2]Furness, op. cit., V, 90.

or phonetic kinships, or through the light of figure or situation in the context.

COLLIED

Othello recognizes the weakness that attacks him. He acknowledges its havoc in the words,

> Now, by heaven,
> My blood begins my safer guides to rule,
> And passion, having my best judgment collied,
> Assays to lead the way.[1]

Pertinently, D'Hugues, quoted by Furness, remarks: "On s'étonne qu' Othello puisse trouver de si belles métaphores pour exprimer sa colère, au moment même où il commence à la ressentir."[2] D'Hugues' astonishment at Othello's being able to find such beautiful metaphors to express his rage in the identical moment when he begins to feel it again is not shared by Steevens, who states merely that the passage indicates: "passion having discolored his judgment. To colly anciently signified to besmut, to blacken as with coal."[3] Further question regarding the figure is quoted by Furness, but on the basis of transcriptive inaccuracy. For the reading of collied Singer and Dyce take issue with Collier, who thinks that

> Quelled, i. e. subdued or conquered, is precisely the word wanted, and we find it in the [M.S.]. It is to be remarked that if short-hand were employed in obtaining the copy of Othello for the publisher, the very same letters which spell quelled would also spell 'collied', and even cool'd.[4]

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[1] Othello, II, iii, 206-209.

[2] Furness, op. cit., VI, 141. [3] Ibid. [4] Ibid.

But Singer says:

> To quell is never used by Shakespeare in any other sense than that of killing or exterminating. I pity the man who could for a moment think of displacing the effective, and now consecrated, word 'collied.' Its obvious meaning is darkened, obfuscated; and a more appropriate and expressive word could not have been used.[5]

Dyce, after referring to the use of "collied" in Midsummer Night's Dream, after citing with approval what Singer says of the uniform meaning of quell in Shakespeare, and after quoting what Collier says about short-hand spelling, goes on to say: "Yet no one knows better than Mr. Collier that the Othello of Furness, which has the reading of 'collied,' was, beyond all doubt, printed from a transcript belonging to the theater, and that in stage-copies of plays (whether intended for the use of the prompter or of the actors) short-hand was never employed."[6] (The italics are Dyce's.)

In support of Collier's thesis and in negation of Othello's figure, however, Keightley remarks: "Quelled is not so absurd as Singer thinks it."[7]

This lengthy discussion does not touch upon the quality of speech with which Shakespeare has endowed Othello. D'Hugues indicates, by questioning the psychological probability of the figure, that similar instances of Othello's elevated language in moments of intense feeling have escaped him. Observation of this characteristic of the Moor's soon

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[5] Ibid. [6] Ibid. [7] Ibid.

renders it a familiar and entirely credible one. One wonders, too, whether the phonetic qualities of collied do not suit it further to the passage, beyond the value of such synonymic possibilities as darkened, clouded, or sullied, for phonetically collied may suggest choler, colored, or even collared. It is not necessary to imagine that Shakespeare intended to suggest these phonetically related ideas through his choice of collied, but it is reasonable to suppose that because of his linguistic sensibilities they may have guided him in his choice.

COMPACT

Goneril sends Oswald to Regan with the following instructions:

> Take you some company, and away to horse:
> Inform her full of my particular fear;
> And thereto add such reasons of your own
> As may compact it more.[1]

This is the only illustration given in the N. E. D. of the word compact used in this sense. Furness quotes Wright as saying that Shakespeare uses it elsewhere only as a substantive or participle.[2]

There is some difference of opinion as to its signification. Johnson in an explanatory recast of the passage produces this rather odd translation: "Unite one circumstance with another so as to make a consistent account."[2] The N. E. D. suggests "to confirm, to give consistency to" as the meaning of compact in this figurative sense.

Perhaps, after all, there is no confusion of import here, and the discussion serves merely to point up Shakespeare's power with words. The synonyms suggested, as well as the recast passage, while indicating the general idea of Goneril's speech to Oswald, reveal nothing of the urgency of the situation or of the hard efficiency of Goneril's character. In the word compact Shakespeare suggests, it is

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[1] Lear, I, iv, 361-364.

[2] Furness, op. cit., V, 94. [3] Ibid.

true, clinching the argument, but, further, packing down the matter, thus making it solid and unshakable, with further "reasons" that Oswald may add. As in so many of Shakespeare's odd words, or odd uses of words, it is not the definition of compact which gives the passage its impact, but the suggestion which it arouses in the mind of the audience.

DAFFEST

Roderigo perceives that he is no nearer his objective than ever, and complains to Iago that the latter is not dealing justly with him. Iago allows him to proceed with this complaint:

> Every day thou daffest me with some device, Iago.[1]

In a discussion of Shakespeare as the greatest master of English poetry, from the standpoint of language rather than literary style, Jespersen remarks many words and phrases in our language which are traceable to Shakespeare.[2] Included in this list is the expression, "daff the world aside."[3] Shakespeare has used daff similarly again.[4] However, Roderigo's usage is set apart by the N. E. D. as the only example of daff in the sense of "put off" or "evade."

Modern dictionaries show daff in two different meanings: the Scottish word, which means "to act or talk sportively, to toy," is listed as an intransitive verb; the obsolete daff is given as a transitive verb meaning "to doff" or "to thrust aside." The evasiveness implied in the Scottish word may have recommended daff to Shakespeare for

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[1] Othello, IV, ii, 175.

[2] Jespersen, op. cit., p. 209.

[3] I King Henry IV, IV, i, 96.

[4] Much Ado About Nothing, II, iii, 187.

this context. Whether such a confusion of terms was intentional on Shakespeare's part or not is debatable, but there are a number of cases in which this possibility may be perceived, and the spicy aptness of this example encourages the idea.

DEROGATE

As Lear curses his eldest daughter, Goneril, his words are extravagant. Invoking the curses of Nature upon her, he cries,

> And from her derogate body never spring
> A babe to honor her![1]

Used here, derogate becomes an interesting semantic unit. It is perhaps too easy to invest Shakespeareanisms with a meaning beyond the pale of definition. This word, however, is illustrative of the abstractionisms which defy definition not because they have no meaning, but because they embrace many meanings. Although Shakespearean scholars attempt to explain the word derogate, their explanations are unsatisfactory because of their very variety. Synonyms and definitions are offered, such as unnatural, "whatever deviates from the course of nature"; degenerate; degraded or blasted; shrunk or wasted; dishonored, in opposition to the following "honor her"; short for derogated; depraved, corrupt; dishonored, degraded.[2] The semantic scope of this variety of interpretations serves as evidence of Shakespeare's power.

Bullokar's English Expositour (1621), one of the first dictionaries, almost contemporary, from the standpoint of the development of the English language, with the Shakespearean

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[1]Lear, I, iv, 304-305. [2]Furness, op. cit., V, 89.

canon, defines derogate as a verb: "to empaire, diminish, or take away."[3] And so the game goes on. The less scholarly reader, however, who is likely to see the play performed as he reads, may be inclined to experience the impact of the word without attempting, or indeed being able, to transfix it with a synonym or definition. Two ideas may influence his reaction. The etymological relationship of derogate to the familiar derogatory guides the understanding into a sense of restraint. De-, "away" or "from," plus rogare, "to ask," indicates mild detraction rather than denouncement, and it is in the former sense rather than the latter that derogatory is commonly used. Hereby is strengthened the implication of restrained passion in Lear's curse, of the fury of frustration directed at his offspring. The poignancy of the whole tragedy of Lear lies in the old man's consciousness that his sufferings are the result not merely of human injustice, but of the inhumanity of his own flesh and blood. In this passage is the first dawning of that consciousness; here Lear begins to be aware of the monstrous situation that exists. Still, however, this woman who is revealing her contemptible nature is his daughter, the child whom he has reared, the flesh of his flesh. Lear cannot call upon the gods to destroy or damn her, the symbol of his own immortality. The punishment he begs is less than

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[3] Ibid.

that. So the epithet which he applies to her is less than a specific curse. It is almost a euphemism. It is as though the old man were reluctant, indeed afraid, to characterize his own offspring with the words of calumny. So, even in moments of strongest passion, do we all hesitate to offend whatever taboos are deeply rooted within us, and we avoid actually damning with darn, actual profanity with gosh, good gracious, or similarly indefinite expressions.[4] Derogate implies, then, the realization of Goneril's base qualities, while avoiding a specific designation of them.

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[4]Cf. Stuart Robertson, The Development of Modern English, p. 444.

DIFFUSE

After Kent has been banished by Lear he appears in disguise saying,

> If but as well I other accents borrow
> That can my speech diffuse, my good intent
> May carry through itself to that full issue
> For which I razed my likeness.[1]

The use of diffuse in the sense of "disguise" is apparently a Shakespeareanism. The N. E. D. quotes the context above as the sole illustration of the neosemalogism in this form, although it is found in the participial form in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, based, perhaps, on this usage.

Various Shakespearean scholars, as quoted by Furness, render the word as diffuse, defuse, and deface, and disagree as to the method of disguise Shakespeare intended to suggest, while agreeing upon the significance of the word.[2] Here is another case wherein the total import may be obscured by too careful attention to the details of its implications. For instance, Furness quotes one of the commentators, Capell, as urging his emendation, deface, through a rewording of the general idea of Kent's speech using the word deface in connection with the physical as well as the linguistic disguise, and pointing out that in this translation the word diffuse would not function as efficiently.[3]

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[1] Lear, I, iv, 1-4. [2] Furness, op. cit., V, 60-61.

[3] Ibid.

Another reads diffuse as signifying "disorder" and hence "disguise," suggesting that it may carry the connotation "to speak broad" with a clownish accent.[4] Theobald, it is suggested, may not have had a "correct notion" of the meaning of the word because he apparently thought that Kent would "disguise his speech by diffusing, i. e., by spreading it out."[5]

Diffuse, as an adjective, carries with it the accepted denotations of "confused" and "vague," and hence, "doubtful"; and these ideas suggest an interpretation of Kent's word that are sufficient to the significance of the passage. In trying to ascertain the specific thought through which the word was chosen by Shakespeare, one loses much of the enjoyment of the passage as well as practically all of the surprise impact of the word itself. One might as well try to read razed, which appears two lines later, as "tore down." Shakespeare in many instances depends upon the suggestiveness of words for their impact, and achieves a telling effect. In such cases a literal definition of the word destroys its poetic and evocative significance. It is reasonable to assume that disguise was at Shakespeare's quill in this instance, and was not chosen. The familiar and rather concrete word, suggesting a physical act -- the alteration

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

of various details of dress and appearance -- would hardly have been as effective in hinting at the subtle changes which Kent hoped to achieve in his speech by "borrowing other accents" as the word diffuse.

ELF

Edgar, son of the noble Gloucester, is being hunted and so must disguise himself. He expresses his intention to effect his translation into a mad beggar in the following lines:

> . . . My face I'll grime with filth,
> Blanket my loins, elf all my hair in knots,
> And with presented nakedness outface
> The winds and persecutions of the sky.[1]

To an Elizabethan audience Edgar doubtless provided an enjoyable shiver with the phrase, "elf all my hair in knots." In the sixteenth century, as Furness points out, matting hair was believed to be a prank of elves or fairies.[2] At this point, then, Edgar, cast out by his human associates, asserts his intention to work a fairy trick on himself. There is a strong hint here of the significance of the lines which follow. Until this phrase Edgar has only vowed "to take the basest and poorest shape" that penury ever made of man. A few lines later, however, he insinuates the lunatic character of this shape in describing the antics of those after whom he patterns his role. His Elizabethan audience, through their association of elves with madness, would have felt a tragedy in Edgar's anomalous position, anticipated from his avowal to elf his hair in knots and augmented

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[1] Lear, II, iii, 9-12. [2] Furness, op. cit., V, 136.

through his description of the character so familiar in the sixteenth century whom he intends to impersonate.

It is not reasonable to suppose that a modern audience would enjoy the same thrill or understanding of Edgar's position from these words. To a modern audience Edgar speaks only in emphatic figure when he refers to elfing his hair, if, indeed, the words carry any significance at all. Further, his description of the mad beggar awakens no associations in the twentieth-century mind, and, were it to do so, those associations would carry no suggestion of the spirit world. The tragedy of Edgar's position lies in the injustice and treachery which have driven him from family, friends, and security as an outlaw. To the Elizabethan mind, however, there was the further significant fact that he was driven, in his extremity, to invade the province of the spirits in feigning madness, and he first hints at his daring scheme when he resolves to "elf" all his hair in knots.

EXSUFFLICATE

Furness reports much discussion on the Shakespeareanism exsufflicate, and gives it an alternate reading as exufflicate.[1] The word appears only once, according to the N. E. D.: in Othello, when the Moor replies to Iago's insinuations with,

> Exchange me for a goat
> When I shall turn the business of my soul
> To such exsufflicate and blown surmises,
> Matching thy inference.[2]

One commentator reads the word as exsuffolate, derived from an Italian word and meaning "whispered, buzzed in the ears."[3] Johnson thinks that "the allusion is to a bubble" and restates the passage to illustrate his reasoning.[4] Another writer merely states his uncertainty as to whether Shakespeare had any "authority" for the word, which he thinks means "swollen."[5] Boswell agrees with a French writer to whom he refers on a significance which has to do with a form of exorcism.[6] Three other writers agree on "puffed, swollen, or exaggerated" as the connotation of exsufflicate, one saying, with welcome and wholesome plainness, "It is one of the words, the origin of which must not be traced with too much lexicographical curiosity."[7]

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[1] Furness, op. cit., VI, 182. [2] Othello, III, iii, 180-183.
[3] Furness, op. cit., VI, 182. [4] Ibid. [5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid. [7] Ibid.

Combining the views of nearly all of these writers while denying Shakespeare credit for choosing the word for any of its possible meanings, White comments:

> That is, puffed out, thin and bubble-like, or spat upon, according to its derivation, as to which, and as to his own exact meaning, I think that Shakespeare himself was not clear.[8]

Such a comment, perhaps, illustrates the danger of not enough lexicographical curiosity. Had this been a word in common usage in Shakespeare's day, it is entirely possible that the playwright, intent on the effect and aware of the various connotations of the word, would have used it without a mental designation of a particular meaning for it in this passage, allowing, rather, the force of a possible combination interpretation. If, however, one assumes that Shakespeare coined the word, a practice to which he apparently was no stranger, one may accept no part of White's conclusion.

The difficulty of the translation of Shakespeare into other languages testifies to the fact that synonyms are not easily found for many Shakespearean terms. This word might well illustrate the problem. Even the common blown, or blow'd, as it is sometimes rendered, which follows exsufflicate in a coordinate position, and is thought to serve it as an intensive, would present to the translator a difficulty. How much more, then, the unfamiliar word which

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[8]Ibid.

it is to anchor in the reader's or hearer's mind! Context, important always in evaluating a word, is an inextricable part of any Shakespeareanism. When Othello, the proud warrior, confused and hag-ridden, growls "exsufflicate surmises," one feels his relationship to Iago, his inarticulate and fiercely tender love for Desdemona, his forthright and unvanquished spirit in dismay at the intangible forces arrayed against him, the doubts within the man and his masculine swagger and impatience in the face of doubt. Not all of these qualities are discernible, it is true, from the one word, exsufflicate, but the word seems to deepen the colors in the portrait of the man in this situation. The use of this elaborate Latinism also serves to designate a character trait with which Shakespeare thus subtly endows Othello. The man of the world, successful, admired, confident, portrayed in other passages in the play, has come to accept and live up to his position as pointed out by his erudite choice of language in this instance and others as well.

The question of phonic suggestion may also be raised here: whether Shakespeare, consciously or unconsciously, depended on the sound of the word to interpret his character revelation to the audience. Many words share a phoneme with exsufflicate, among them snuffle, sough, puff, and snuff. For no etymological reason these words share a syllabic sound and a trend in meaning as well. Without an

analysis of this phenomenon, but equipped with sure instincts regarding the manipulation of words, Shakespeare apparently employed this device of phonic suggestion and emphasis in this and many other instances.

FASTENED

Hearing Edmund's accusation of Edgar, Gloucester exclaims:

Strong and fastened villain![1]

Here is illustrated a quality of Shakespearean diction which may bear special note in connection with consideration of fastened. Semantically there are several degrees of figurative usage. Some words, like strong, abstract in their very essence, are used commonly in so many senses that they connote merely emphasis wherever used. Many words, however, when used figuratively are obviously figures, borrowed from one field of expression to point up, by forcing an analogy in the reader's imagination, an idea in another field. The most effective of the unexpected words that Shakespeare employs fall into neither of these general categories, although he uses words of both degrees. Fastened, in this passage, however, illustrates Shakespeare's unique choice of figure as strong illustrates the commonest variety of the most familiar degree. By presenting it as a new morphological unit, he emphasizes a meaning familiar to his contemporaries.

In this word, as in many that Shakespeare fashioned or appropriated to his own purposes, is a richness above and beyond its mere signification or its figurative import.

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[1]Lear, II, i, 79.

The N. E. D. translates fastened in this passage as "settled, confirmed" and labels it obsolete. The above passage and one from Spenser are the only ones given which employ the word in this sense. Fast is one of the words in English which have, like strong, an elasticity of implication. It generally implies "rapid" or, in the figurative sense, "reckless" or "licentious" in our modern speech, but there are remnants of the Elizabethan signification today in "fast colors," steadfast, and "to hold fast." Fastened today signifies "fixed" or "secured," but neither of these two nor any synonym would make sense if substituted in Gloucester's line. They may only intensify the idea by definition. Where Gloucester describes his son as a "strong and fastened villain," one senses the fear and horror that the old man feels. A "strong" villain would be capable of more dastardly deeds than one not so characterized; a "fastened" villain (confirmed is not so violent a word) is past all hope of redemption and may not be turned from his villainous course.

FATHOM

An interesting use of the specific for the general appears in Othello where Iago declares that the State may not dispense with Othello:

> For he's embarked
> With such loud reason to the Cyprus Wars,
> (Which even now stands in act) that for their souls
> Another of his fathom, they have none,
> To lead their business.[1]

Commonly a term to designate a certain measure of depth, fathom has come to have the figurative meaning, as a verb, "to plumb" or "see into the depths of"; as a noun it still designates a measure of depth. In the above passage Shakespeare invests the word with the implication of "stature" or "worth." Consideration ofthis word offers the interesting postulate that Shakespeare, in choosing an irregular word, so sensed associational values that his terminology, in spite of its non-conformity, is instantly clear; frequently because of its singularity it gives an impetus to the idea it represents. Although few people are called upon to use fathom as a unit of measurement, it is a familiar designation to the extent that, as has been noted, it has come into use in everyday speech as a more general term than its technical use makes of it.

A delightful commentary upon Shakespeare's use of fathom

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[1]Othello, I, 1, 150-154.

in this passage is quoted from Booth by Furness. The great Shakespearean actor gave the following stage directions for the interpretation of these lines: "Touch your head to indicate judgement, not your breast to imply courage."[2] Whether or not this direction was intended to dictate a gesture to be actually employed in the interpretation of the lines on the stage, the comment illustrates, through the specific application made of the word by Booth, the scope of the semantic quality of Shakespeare's diction. A partial explanation of the wide appeal of the plays in Shakespeare's own day perhaps lies in this characteristic, for, as a modern semanticist notes in describing both the power and the danger of such words which he terms "vague":

> This vagueness of reference is almost essential for wide popular appeal. . . . Vague expression is easily understood emotionally, since all can read into vague words their own particular thoughts and reactions, and there is no conflict of one experience with another.[3]

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[2]Furness, op. cit., VI, 25.

[3]H. R. Huse, The Illiteracy of the Literate, p. 215.

INDUES

Desdemona is trying to understand Othello's strange behavior and, noting the fact that men often vent their misery upon whatever is handy rather than upon the cause of it, observes:

> For let our finger ache, and it indues
> Our other healthful members ev'n to that sense
> Of pain.[1]

Johnson, according to Furness, believed that Shakespeare meant Desdemona to say subdues rather than indues.[2] Further comment reported by Furness is of a paraphrastic nature and is hardly pertinent to a consideration of the word as such.

Furness gives the spelling of the word as endues, although the Oxford edition gives indues. The N. E. D. also refers the reader to endues for information on the word which it marks as obsolete and so rare as to have been found only once in the meaning which is implicit in the above passage. Both spellings are found in modern dictionaries, and there is an interesting situation in the confusion of these words with each other and with endow. Further, there is another cognate, induct, which may have a place in the consideration of indues. Endue and indue, both from the Latin root, which they share also with induct, bear the same denotation of "invest," especially "invest with a quality." The difference in spelling is accounted for by the fact

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[1] Othello, III, iv, 146-148. [2] Furness, op. cit., VI, 228.

that endue came through the French, whereas indue was formed directly from the Latin word. Endow, on the other hand, has an entirely different ancestry, and the interchangeability with endue is due possibly to a latitude of connotation which it has developed so that it embraces the same idea that endue suggests. Conversely, this confusion bestows upon endue a semantic shade borrowed from endow. The etymological and morphological relationships of induct and indue further strengthen, broaden, and clarify the Shakespearean word. The meaning of induct, "to initiate or introduce," is compatible with the context in question, but it is of too specific a connotation, as well as too abrupt a phonetic quality, to be as valuable in this passage as indues. Likewise endow is excluded by the limitations of its ordinary implications. Nevertheless, indue may borrow a semantic quality from its cognate as well as from the confusion of endue and endow, so that again Shakespeare packs a richness of semantic scope into one word. In effect, then, Desdemona, through indues, says that if our finger ache, it initiates (inducts), invests (endues), and bestows as with a fund (endows) our other healthful members to its sense of pain.

MUTUALITIES

Iago's designs are achieved through his genius for innuendo, and the lines in which he points out to Roderigo the demonstrations of affection between Desdemona and Cassio bear an impact by way of an unusual usage. He says:

> Villanous thoughts, Roderigo! When these mutualities so marshal the way, hard at hand comes the master and main exercise, the incorporate conclusion.[1]

If the Furness rendering is accepted here, the word in question will appear as mutabilities,[2] and will thus admit of very different interpretation and discussion from the mutualities of the Oxford edition. Iago is referring to "kisses and hand clasps" exchanged between Desdemona and Cassio. That these exchanges should be designated as mutabilities is puzzling. Mutualities, on the other hand, is a particularly apt designation of the idea.

The N. E. D. agrees with the editors of the Oxford edition upon the reading, for the above lines appear first in illustration of the use of mutualities as "intimacies." Two other examples of the word in this sense are given: one from 1628 and the other from 1827.

There is a striking implication in mutualities unexpressed by intimacies. The former word urges the idea of reciprocation, besides implying, without specifying (a characteristic of Iago's language) a monstrous significance.

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[1]Othello, II, i, 268-271. [2]Furness, op. cit., VI, 118.

Probably more noteworthy than the mere appearance of mutualities is the fact that it does not come into general usage, for it is a remarkably logical and convincing form. Further, in this passage, while it expresses completely "reciprocal intimacies," it simultaneously colors the idea with the sarcasm of obvious restraint of terminology. Both by the incisiveness of expression, then, and by its quality of innuendo, mutualities here is indicative of Iago's character. Shakespeare's artistry in revealing and emphasizing a character portrait through a manner of speaking is here exemplified.

NEAT

Kent sets upon Oswald with sword and epithet and begs him to stand and fight:

> Strike, you slave; stand, rogue, stand;
> you neat slave, strike.[1]

It is curious to find neat used as a term of opprobrium. Several considerations may have occasioned the choice of neat in this passage. Shakespeare as a dramatic artist was aware of the effectiveness of restraint and of the importance of diction as a phase of character delineation. Further, as a linguistic artist he had an instinct for the power of the unusual word as well as for characteristic phraseology. In the light of the dramatic implications, neat is here a felicitous choice. Kent, although in disguise, is a gentleman and so cannot stoop to vilify the servant, Oswald. The vulgar term of abuse would be out of character in this situation. Kent's word, in either of its possible interpretations, shows well-bred restraint even in his anger.

Linguistically, the possibilities of interpretation are, finally, the criteria in determining the value of the word. Neat, in this passage, may carry either of two suggestions, apparent through the comments of Shakespearean scholars. To some, Kent's "neat slave" connotes the same idea as

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[1]Lear, II, ii, 46.

"neat whiskey" implies, that is, "pure, unmixed," hence, "mere."[2] Others read in Kent's epithet the word of Anglo-Saxon origin which means "cattle."[3] In this connection various interpretations are offered, such as that Kent means to label Oswald "base cowherd," and that he implies that the servant is "like a tenant of neat land; that is, a base, dirty fellow."[4] None, in considering Kent's neat as the Anglo-Saxon term, however, has regarded the possibility that Kent might be including Oswald's employers in the contumely, much as, in certain circles, a man's forebears are disparaged by his adversary. If such is the case here, then by neat Kent does not describe the slave's person, but his duties, terming him rather a "slave of cattle" than a "mere slave." Read as "base cowherd," the term loses its strength, for that reading does not extend Kent's contempt beyond Oswald himself. Kent obviously despises Oswald, but he includes in that feeling the whole household of which Oswald is a part.

Two further considerations argue for this latter interpretation of neat: the nature of Kent's idiom, and the character of Shakespeare's phraseology. Kent's speech, as remarked in the Furness notes,[5] is natural, and so the more common Anglo-Saxon neat would be expected of him,

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[2]Furness, op. cit., V, 118. [3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid. [5]Ibid., p. 61 (Capell's note on defuse).

rather than the neat of French derivation. Moreover, Shakespeare's propensity for choosing the broad term is so marked as to indicate a reading of wide implications where possible. Shakespeare rarely used two words where one would serve, and this characteristic makes his diction colorful. Many an epithet might have served Kent's contemptuous fury at Oswald, but the neat which showers indignity upon those whom Oswald serves, as well as upon his service, is more characteristically Shakespearean than the neat which is applicable merely to his station in life.

PLIANT

In relating how he won Desdemona, Othello gives his auditors a sample of his enchanting discourse. How he encouraged her interest in his autobiographical tales he describes thus:

> This to hear
> Would Desdemona seriously incline;
> But still the house-affairs would draw her thence;
> Which ever as she could with haste dispatch,
> She'd come again, and with a greedy ear
> Devour up my discourse. Which I observing,
> Took once a pliant hour, and found good means
> To draw from her a prayer of earnest heart
> That I would all my pilgrimage dilate,
> Whereof by parcels she had something heard
> But not intentively.[1]

There is a naïveté of expression in the phrase "a pliant hour" that properly belongs to the character of Othello. A similar disregard of the restrictions imposed by idiom may often be noted in the language of untutored persons and of those speaking a foreign tongue. Often the results are ludicrous; sometimes they are charming. In Othello's case they are inevitably forceful, evidences of neither of the conditions suggested. Othello's use of such irregular expressions manifests qualities of his character. His individualistic disdain for and unconsciousness of conventional formulae point up his virile strength and bland egotism, and his unsophisticated imagination italicizes his ingenuous

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[1] Othello, I, iii, 145-155.

frailty. Pliant, as Othello's choice, bears these implications, but as Shakespeare's choice for this context it indicates on the playwright's part a linguistic genius, an instinctive feeling for the power of words.

Pliant is labeled "rare" in the N. E. D. in the sense in which Othello uses it here. Only one other instance of similar usage is recorded, and it appears in the nineteenth century, less a similarity than a borrowing, for it is also a pliant hour.[2]

Othello's statement that he "took once a pliant hour" leaves little doubt as to what he means by pliant: an hour that could be bent to his purposes, an hour that escaped the rigor of Desdemona's household responsibilities, an hour which he could turn to good account. Pliant here is a happy choice. Ostensibly meaning the same as flexible or pliable, it is further and more closely related to compliant, which implies a quality of character rather than of form, willingness rather than mere inertia. Although unidiomatic in this context, it is here semantically intelligible, suggestive, and forceful.

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[2]1861. J. Pycroft, Ways and Words, p. 60: "Noble companions of many a pliant hour."

SIEGE[1]

SEIGE[2]

Othello is not afraid of the harm which Iago hints that Roderigo will try to do him. He feels secure in his position with the state by reason of his lineage as well as his military glory, for, as he declares,

> I fetch my life and being,
> From men of royal siege.[3]

In modern dictionaries one of the meanings listed for this word is "place, seat, rank, or station," but this definition is marked "obsolete." The N. E. D. calls this use of the word figurative and gives the above lines of Shakespeare's as the only example of siege in this sense. A comment quoted by Furness offers the interpretation of siege as "seat," from which it denotes "rank," "because people sat at table and elsewhere in order of precedence."[4] An interesting note on this word is the fact that it is spelled seige in the Furness edition and siege in the Oxford edition. The obsolete meaning is listed in modern dictionaries under siege, and the above example is offered under that spelling in the N. E. D.

By his own statement Othello won Desdemona by his accounts of his colorful life; the inference follows that

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[1]Spelling of the Oxford edition.

[2]According to the Furness edition.

[3]Othello, I, ii, 21-22. [4]Furness, op. cit., VI, 32.

he was a most convincing speaker. It is only natural that such a man would have a powerful vocabulary at his command and with it would phrase his expression in unusual ways. The passage where siege appears in its unusual sense is worth quoting as an example of Othello's individual mode of expression. He confidently says:

> Let him do his spite;
> My services which I have done the signorie
> Shall out-tongue his complaints. 'Tis yet to know,
> Which when I know, that boasting is an honour,
> I shall promulgate. I fetch my life and being
> From men of royal siege, and my demerits
> May speak unbonneted to as proud a fortune
> As this that I have reach'd; for know, Iago,
> But that I love the gentle Desdemona,
> I would not my unhoused free condition
> Put into circumscription and confine
> For the sea's worth.[5]

The characteristic elevated style apparent here manifests the consistency of Othello's use of the dignified figure in which siege appears. "I fetch my life and being" is quite grandiloquent enough to prepare the reader or hearer for what follows.

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[5]Othello, I, ii, 17-28.

SQUINY

Lear says to blind Gloucester,

Dost thou squiny at me?[1]

Modern dictionaries record squiny as a variant of squinny, an obsolete word meaning "to squint." Furness quotes the comment that it is still used in Suffolk and adds himself that it is still used in the United States.[2] As an appurtenance of Cornish dialect, squiny is described by Sandys: "This word is used for one looking askance, or under the eyelids, as it is called, a kind of magpie-ish look. 'I don't like she, she do squiny so.'"[3]

Shakespeare's use is the first one noted by the N. E. D., but in the Furness note attention is called to a similar usage by Armin, Shakespeare's fellow comedian. The word has a colloquial or dialectal flavor, rather out of keeping with Lear's position. An impatience is felt through dialectal terms, however, which is not easily expressed in more formal speech as illustrated by the impatient force indicated in the expression, "Don't gawk at me," in contrast with "Don't stare at me!" The condition of Lear's mind at the time of his meeting with Gloucester in the fields near Dover is such that control and calm consideration have

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[1]Lear, IV, vi, 141. [2]Furness, op. cit., V, 281.

[3]William Sandys, "Shakespeare Illustrated by the Dialect of Cornwall," The Shakespeare Society's Papers, III, 31.

fled from his grasp. He is nervous and unstrung and would be inclined to respond to Gloucester's earnest and gentle groping with an irritability apparent in his inelegant squiny. In the mouth of the mad king, the word is forceful, then; for, being ignoble, it emphasizes the low estate of the mind of the erstwhile king as vividly as his surroundings and appearance evidence the pitiful situation of his person.

UNBOLTED

Kent is enraged at having been prevented from lambasting Oswald, and says to Cornwall:

> My lord, if you will give me leave, I will tread this unbolted villain into mortar, and daub the wall of a jakes with him.[1]

At first glance unbolted may suggest an amusing epithet bearing upon Oswald's mental status in the vein of "unhinged" or of the colloquialism "having a screw loose." It is pointed out, however, by a commentator quoted by Furness, that unbolted is a part of the whole figure that Kent uses as his threat. "'Unbolted mortar,'" he explains, "is mortar made of unsifted lime, and to break the lumps it is necessary to tread it by men in wooden shoes."[2] From the analogy he concludes that unbolted means, in this case, "coarse." Likewise, "unsifted" is the meaning given for unbolted by the N. E. D., with "unrefined" as its figurative counterpart. Kent's lines, however, are the only ones presented in which unbolted is applied as a personal epithet. Oswald is apparently the only villain in literature who was ever threatened with being trod into mortar. Yet the tenor of the figure has doubtless been duplicated in anger so frequently that it must be easily intelligible to the most casual reader. Such modern idiom as "beat him to a pulp" and "I'll smash you" suggest the same fate for

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[1]Lear, II, ii, 70. [2]Furness, op. cit., V, 121.

the victim, but Kent's calculated figure rising to its climax of contempt delivers an impact impossible to a mere careless or furious extravagance. In this, unbolted plays a curious part. Unrecognized as an integral part of the figure, it does not hamper the effect. Unbolted is significantly contemptuous through its harsh phonetic quality aside from and beyond its position in the figure. Yet, perceived in its proper relationship, it enhances by much the reader's appreciation of the situation. Oddly enough in the work of one who wrote so compactly, this felicitous ambiguity is frequently encountered in Shakespeare's words. It has been noted that the flavor of Shakespeare is hard to preserve in translation into foreign language or, more recently, into Basic English. It may be here added that, for the same reasons, Shakespeare is easily translated into the reader's perceptions. Although there is a remarkable economy of expression throughout Shakespeare's works, a wealth of meaning in almost his every word when properly understood, his expression is, at the same time, so elastic as to permit a wide latitude of understanding short of verbatim assimilation.

UNBOOKISH

Iago, laying his snare around the unwary Othello, plans a conversation with Cassio in Othello's hearing, the course of which shall seem to indicate a light intimacy between Desdemona and Cassio. Iago gloats in anticipation of the effect that this conversation will have on Othello:

> And his unbookish jealousy must construe
> Poor Cassio's smiles, gestures, and light behaviours
> Quite in the wrong.[1]

Shakespeare's unusual modification of jealousy here draws some rather puzzled comment from various scholars as recorded by Furness, none of which seems satisfactory to the student or to the writers themselves. Walker, however, notes a connection between unbookish and construe[2] and, because a sustained figure is characteristic of Shakespeare, it is upon this basis that it seems reasonable to proceed. In the discussion upon this point it seems somewhat unwise to follow the scholars in fastening a denotation upon unbookish. The advisability of translating Shakespeare's terms into more familiar or concrete ones is often thus doubtful. There is a mere suggestion here, which takes its cue from construe, that one who is "unbookish" would be likely to "construe" improperly. Shakespeare's figures are frequently of the character of colored lights upon his subject, forming no intrinsic part of it, thus easily

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[1]Othello, IV, 1, 102-104. [2]Furness, op. cit., VI, 241.

separable from it, yet investing it with qualities of effect impossible without them. Iago merely says here that Othello's jealousy will misinterpret Cassio's response to Iago's words to him. The unbookish and construe are unnecessary to the meaning of the passage but add the force of Iago's contempt and Othello's untutored passion. Validly some of the commentators mention the connection between unbookish jealousy and the books of love to which lovers were wont to go for guidance in their affairs. Except that this calls for a great effort on the part of the reader in specializing Shakespeare's meaning, the point is well taken. Obviously all the shades of unbookish may be called into play. Othello's jealousy is "unbookish," not the kind dictated to lovers by the books of love; it is "unbookish" -- natural, untutored; it is "unbookish" -- unguided, unbound by rules, wild; it is "unbookish" -- unstudied, unschooled.

The word unbookish is not a rare one, although the quoted passage is the first one in which it is found by the N. E. D. Milton employed it soon afterward and many others incorporated the word into their writings later. Shakespeare's apt unbookish with construe, however, is peculiarly his own, laden with characteristic suggestion.

UNTENTED

As Lear finds himself being heaped with indignities by his eldest daughter, his fury increases, and he rages at her:

> Blasts and fogs upon thee!
> The untented woundings of a father's curse
> Pierce every sense about thee![1]

The word tent without any affix has numerous meanings. It is used as a verb as well as a substantive and is a cognate in one sense of tempt, in another of attention, and carries both implications. It has also been used to signify a probe or dressing for a wound. In another sense the verb form means "to cover with a tent." The example above is classified by the N. E. D. as being made from the form which means "probe," doubtless because of the contextual woundings. Such seems to be Theobald's idea, for Furness quotes the following comment from him: "A wounding of such a sharp inveterate nature that nothing else shall be able to tent it -- i. e., search the bottom and help in the cure of it." Steevens also allows this related meaning, for he says, "It may possibly signify here such wounds as will not admit of having a tent put into them."[2]

To the modern ear tent suggests merely a canvas shelter. Few, it would seem, of Shakespeare's coinages, or words that he has used in functions or contexts uncommon to them,

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[1] Lear, I, iv, 323-325. [2] Furness, op. cit., V, 91.

lack an etymological of phonetic suggestion intelligible to the twentieth-century reader. There is, however, no immediate etymological significance to the layman in untented. The word may have had more specific suggestions for Shakespeare's audience, as implied by the fact that he used it in Hamlet, too, unmistakably designating there "to probe."[3] It is reported as a derivative of the Latin tentare, "to touch, handle, test."

The Shakespeare devotee may see a significance in the fact that the line containing untented may still have a full meaning by the only interpretation possible to the modern reader unwilling to track untented to its beginnings. That Lear should have meant "uncovered by a tent," thence "uncontained" or "boundless," is a plausible interpretation. Even after the earlier implications of the word are gone into so that the validity of "unprobed" for untented is established, the acceptance of this interpretation is likely to be mechanical and productive of no appreciation to the Shakespeare amateur. In any case the emphasis of Lear's words is evident.

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[3]Hamlet, II, ii, 634; also cf. Cymbeline, III, iv, 118.

GROUP II. MORPHOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS

The examples included in this group are of various types. Shakespeare's penchant for using affixes to his own taste is evident in many instances, as is also his flair for creating words as he needed them. His inventions, besides the affixal remodellings, include blends, Latinisms, and truncations. The Latinisms are not necessarily words formed directly from Latin, although many apparently follow this pattern; some forms in this general class, however, are apparently adaptations of French or Italian words. Shakespeare's process here involves the use of a familiar foreign root presented in a form unfamiliar in English, and thereby endowed with a fresh meaning. Truncations are not uncommon in poetry, but those considered here seem to evidence an additional validity beyond metrical necessity through their semantic values. Many coinages are the results of a conscious choice of Latin words rendered into English. However, the blends, by their very nature, are semantically the most powerful of the coinages. In them Shakespeare has compressed, with startling brevity, a multiplicity of meaning which strikes the reader with powerful impact -- whether or not he is aware of the source of the impression. It is probably in this group of words that Shakespeare's linguistic power is best disclosed.

ARRIVANCE

At Cyprus, when Othello's ship is over-due, Montano suggests to his companions that they all go to the sea-side to see what ship has come in and to watch for Othello. One replies:

> Come, let's do so;
> For every minute is expectancy
> Of more arrivance.[1]

The suffix -ance unexpectedly replaces -al in arrivance and thereby produces a Shakeapeareanism of interest. The question of why Shakespeare contrived such forms is not always surely and accurately answered, but the effect which he thus achieved may be considered. In the case of arrivance few of the obvious keys fit into the situation: the change of ending does not affect the meter; here is no poetic figure to challenge the imagination; no intensive or extensive blend results; and the new form, unlike many other Shakespeareanisms, is no more compact than the common one.

There is, however, a subtle intensity of impact in the form, although there must be admitted a strong probability that it may be recognized only by the Shakespeare devotee, and relished only by the student of philology. The usual arrival employs in its suffix a form that makes nouns of

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[1] Othello, II, i, 40-42.

action from the stems of verbs. -Ance, on the other hand, suggests two ideas which bring to the form arrivance a further semantic value. It indicates a concrete fact, as in eminence, or dependency, and it implies the act or fact of doing what the verbal root denotes, as in assistance. The suffix -al also appears as an adjectival ending, and its duality of usage may serve subtly to detract from its emphasis. Arrival is of course a perfectly clear and common usage; arrivance, in analysis, conveys no more. Yet by its very oddity it achieves emphasis, and by its definiteness of sound in the final syllable perhaps serves up a more specific image.

ATTASKED

Apparently a Shakespearean coinage, this word is found in the following lines where Goneril, with her usual brisk efficiency, is pointing out to Albany his errors:

> This milky gentleness and course of yours
> Though I condemn not, yet, under pardon,
> You are much more attasked for want of wisdom
> Than praised for harmful mildness.[1]

The N. E. D. finds attasked only in Shakespeare and explains it as "take to task, blame." The Furness reading has it at task, after Johnson, and Collier reads it attacked.[2] Apart from scholarly research into the various manuscripts, quartos, and folios, there seems to be one very good reason for assuming the word to be attasked: it is a more subtle and delicately-balanced antonym for praised than is attacked. Proceeding from the assumption that the word is attasked also heightens the flavor of the passage. In this word is the implication of the velvet glove offering the mailed fist of attacked, as though Goneril were slyly warning Albany of the possible consequences of his "want of wisdom." Such a word may be designated as one of Shakespeare's "effect" words, and though it is understood that one does not attribute to the poet a mental listing of the

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[1] Lear, I, iv, 366-369.

[2] Furness, op. cit., V, 95.

specific suggestion which he intended a word to convey, it is evident that many of the words that he chose had a suggestibility far beyond their definable meanings.

FESTINATE

The Duke of Cornwall, busy attempting to sate his royal aspirations, speaks with pomp and ceremony even in haste as he speeds Edmund upon an errand to the Duke of Albany:

> Advise the duke, where you are going, to a most *festinate* preparation.[1]

As some modern writers are inclined to emphasize their meanings with slang words, by speaking the idiom of their audience, Shakespeare employed many Latin derivations to catch attention. Even the portions of Shakespeare's audiences whose background might render them insensible to subtleties and niceties of implication were accustomed to the sounds of French, Italian, and Latin around them. The sketchiest education of the times had as its basis Latin grammar and composition. Such a word as *festinate*, then, built on the Latin *festinare* -- "to hasten" -- could well have suggested to the seventeenth-century theatre-goer its urgent message. Along with the advent of the omniscience and omnipotence of the dictionary, however, the disfavor into which the study of Latin has fallen has contributed something to the impoverishment of English. Only to those who have studied Latin could the word *festinate* have a meaning, even after it is translated; for to others there would

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[1] *Lear*, III, vii, 10.

remain a lack of association which would obstruct its assimilation. This circumstance may exemplify what, in part, probably accounts for the decrease in popularity of Shakespeare's plays. A playwright whose appeal was wide and strong in his own day and who dealt with the changeless qualities of human nature in portrayal rather than in evaluation, the standards of which do fluctuate, he might be expected, as indeed he is by his admirers, to exert a timeless appeal. Paradoxically enough, the very quality that stamps Shakespeare as Elizabethan also serves to render him timeless. There is little in Shakespeare that might become outmoded; he dealt with basic human qualities. His language, often by its very Latinisms, is universal rather than Elizabethan idiom. However, the limitations of the modern reader often give it an esoteric and unintelligible flavor.

FINELESS

Othello begins to sense the medium of his destruction -- fear -- and he expresses the insidiousness of its influence in the following philosophic passage:

> Poor and content is rich, and rich enough,
> But riches fineless is as poor as winter
> To him that ever fears he shall be poor.[1]

Fineless is termed a rare word by the N. E. D. These lines of Othello's are the first example recorded of its use and the only one until the nineteenth century, when Bailey used it in his Festus and Browning in "La Saisiaz." In modern usage fine as it is employed in fineless is found only in components such as finite and final and their various combinations of forms. As a substantive with adjectival ending it is possibly a Shakespeareanism. There is no obvious reason why boundless, or even endless would not have been as good here as fineless. However, in recognition of Shakespeare's semantic sensitivity, further speculation is pertinent. It seems plausible that for several reasons, infinite may have suggested itself insistently for Othello's lines and that Shakespeare, unable to pass it up, substituted fineless for reasons of meter. The scope of the semanteme fine is broader and its implications deeper than those of end or bound or count which might have been used here. The differentiation is no doubt a rather delicate one, but it is typical of Shakespeare's linguistic

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[1] Othello, III, iii, 172-174.

tendency. Further, Othello is characterized by his unusual and often elevated choice of words, and fineless is appropriate in his speech. There is also a poetic feel to the word which is lacking in its synonym , and is suitable in this passage. Finally, although it is not difficult to understand, it is strikingly original and thus dramatically calls attention to, and points up, the significance of Othello's figure. It is not suggested that Shakespeare indulged in such a marshaling of arguments for the use of fineless but only that these factors probably influenced him, however unconsciously, in using it in this passage.

FLESHMENT

Oswald, in recounting Kent's mistreatment of him, thus complains:

> It pleased the king his master very late
> To strike at me, upon his misconstruction;
> When he, conjunct, and flattering his displeasure,
> Tripped me behind; being down, insulted, rail'd,
> And put upon him such a deal of man,
> That worthied him, got praises of the king
> For him attempting who was self-subdu'd;
> And, in the fleshment of this dread exploit,
> Drew on me here again.[1]

An interesting comment upon fleshment is quoted by Furness from Henley, who says:

> A young soldier is said to flesh his sword the first time he draws blood with it. "Fleshment," therefore, is here metaphorically applied to the first act of service which Kent, in his new capacity, had performed for his master; and, at the same time, in a sarcastic sense, as though he had esteemed it an heroic exploit to trip a man behind that was actually falling.[2]

Henley's words furnish sufficient commentary upon the word in relation to its context. It is interesting, however, to note several further details in this connection. The N. E. D. reports fleshment as found solely in this one example, a fact which argues that the word is a Shakespearean usage only. Then if Henley's interpretation is as correct as it is logical and interesting, this is an example of a Shakespeareanism which the progress of civilization has rendered ineffectual. There are many local and timely

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[1] Lear, II, ii, 123-131. [2] Furness, op. cit., V, 127.

references in Shakespeare, but few of them are obscure because the event, customs, or people to which they refer are familiar data in some degree to the reader as a part of his general information. A few terms, like fleshment, appear, which are puzzling because they must be interpreted in terms of the sixteenth century rather than in those of our own. In such cases, a reader, unaware of the limitations which he faces, may sometimes read into the word a meaning suggested by the context. There is the chance of losing the Shakespearean implication through this practice. An apparently valid reading here is suggested by the sound of the word in itself and in full harmony with its context. The reading of fleshment as enlargement misses the implication of Oswald's sarcasm in the connection mentioned by Henley, it is true, but it is easy to understand fleshment as a fattening up, or filling out through the fleshing or putting on of flesh, hence enlargement. It must be understood that in no case may one word be actually read for another, for in the act of substitution the elusive quality which is here under consideration is obscured completely. Shakespeare's expression is the essence of his thought more successfully than is the case with any other writer.

GERMENS

Amidst the fury of the storm, Lear calls upon the raging elements to lash the world. In a powerful figure he says:

> And thou, all-shaking thunder,
> Strike flat the thick rotundity o' the world!
> Crack nature's moulds, all germens spill at once
> That make ungrateful man![1]

In germen Lear has the Latin word for "sprout, shoot, or bud."[2] This word has come into English, through French, as germ, signifying "seed." An audience of Shakespeare's contemporaries, familiar, for the most part, with Latin, probably received the word without especial notice. The modern audience, through association with the familiar germ, is left in no doubt about the interpretation of the passage; but the unusual form, germens, calls attention to the image. The latter form also is of value as a metrical contrivance in this case. Further, there is the suggestion here, both through the ear and through the eye, of semantic specialization. In relationship to the context in which Shakespeare goes on to specify germens "that make ungrateful man" as well as in morphological quality, the subtle suggestion of the blend of the two semantemes germ and men is felt as suggestive of human relationships rather than of mere physical seed. The figure is extravagantly unrestrained,

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[1]Lear, III, iii, 6-9.

[2]Walter A. Skeat, An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language.

but in these imprecatory lines of Lear's, spoken to and among the powerful agents of the tempest, Shakespeare may validly dispense with restraint. Lear, in his agony and bitterness, limns the world as the womb of mankind, round with its burden of "nature's moulds" which hold the countless potential men. This is no image of the end of the world as an impersonal catastrophe, but a tremendous conception of Nature in disintegration, universal in scope but individual in effect, as "all germens spill at once."

GUARDAGE

Brabantio excoriates the Moor for having enchanted his daughter, Desdemona, and thereby won her hand. In his paternal distress he cries:

> Damned as thou art, thou hast enchanted her:
> For I'll refer me to all things of sense,
> If she in chains of magic were not bound,
> Whether a maid so tender, fair, and happy,
> So opposite to marriage that she shunn'd
> The wealthy curled darlings of our nation,
> Would ever have, to incur a general mock,
> Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom
> Of such a thing as thou;[1]

Guardage is labeled "obsolete" and "rare" by the N. E. D. Only one other example of its use is listed, and that is from Beaumont and Fletcher in 1621.[2]

It is easy for a Shakespeare enthusiast to read into such words as this one a depth of meaning unacknowledged, perhaps, by the reader who views Shakespeare as out of date and unreadable. These two divergent opinions are probably irreconcilable for the reason that to the former critic Shakespeare is powerful and these odd words and usages in the plays are evidences and, to some extent, explanatory examples of his power, while to the latter the power of Shakespearean drama is unperceived and thus non-existent; consequently, to him there is very little reason or manifestation of genius in the unusual expressions found therein.

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[1] Othello, I, ii, 63-71.

[2] "Thierry and Theodoret," V, i, The Works of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, Cambridge English Classics, edited by A. R. Waller, X, 58.

The appreciation, however, of such a word as guardage, while likely to lead the expositor onto the thin ice of individual interpretation and exaggeration, is justifiable in many respects. There are more grounds for designating guardage a Shakespeareanism than in many cases, since if it had been in use in an era before or in the era contemporary with Shakespeare's, it is reasonable to suppose that other writers before or after him would have employed it. Furthermore, because it may be acceptably termed a Shakespeareanism, whatever noteworthy qualities it has are significant as comments upon Shakespeare's technique. These considerations are clearly not valid if applicable in only a few isolated instances, but the evidence seems to preponderate in favor of the proposition that Shakespeare's semantic sensibility, whether consciously or unconsciously exerted in phraseological discrimination, was keen and apparent in many examples of his idiom.

In guardage a quality often evident in Shakespeareanisms is present. The suffix -age serves to invest the term with such an implication of fixity as is felt in other words with this inflection, such as orphanage, anchorage, hermitage, or parsonage, which indicate settled stations; or in such words as heritage, foliage, parentage, patronage, and tutelage, which indicate a stable state or quality of being. Aside from being inacceptable from a metrical consideration,

guardianship, the only apparent alternative here, associated as it commonly is with a legal relationship, would hardly be an adequate synonym in suggesting the idea of a state or place of being guarded that Brabantio implies by guardage. The phrase "tender, fair, and happy" removes any feeling of restraint that guard might evoke, yet leaves in the word the sense of protection. Always the context is necessary to the full savoring of a word, and in the case of Shakespeareanisms the word and the context complement each other with unusual effectiveness.

INGENER

Cassio's praise of Desdemona is extravagant as he describes, in a passage which has elicited much critical discussion, Othello's good fortune in such a wife:

> . . . he hath achieved a maid
> That paragons description and wild fame;
> One that excels the quirks of blazoning pens
> And in the essential vesture of creation
> Does tire the ingener.[1]

Furness devotes a great deal of space to this passage, quoting various opinions on essential, vesture, creation, and tire, as well as ingener, and on their relationships.[2] A literal translation of the last two lines does involve semantic difficulties. However, the meaning of the passage seems clear enough, if fancifully expressed through devious figures. Rather allowing a latitude of impression than further confusing the words by more words in an attempt to transfix the lines dogmatically, we may here assume that Cassio's meaning is clear to the reader. Aside from the play of shadings upon ingener suggested by the various interpretations of the words preceding it, ingener itself offers interesting matter for consideration.

In the N. E. D. this form is found listed as a verb meaning "to engender." The only listing as a substantive is as an obsolete variant form of engineer, but the lines under

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[1] Othello, II, i, 61-65. [2] Furness, op. cit., VI, 99-102.

consideration do not appear in that discussion, although the definition there -- "one who contrives, designs, or invents" -- is applicable, broadly, to ingener as it appears in Cassio's speech. The example that is used by the N. E. D. is found in Hamlet:

> For 'tis the sport to have the enginer
> Hoist with his own petar:[3]

The form here is different by the transposition of a letter, and therein lies the scope for further consideration of the implications of ingener as a separate entity. The suffix -er has virtually the same effect on a root with which it is combined as -eer, with the possible difference of a shade of specialization found in the latter. Broadly speaking, then, Hamlet has used, in effect, the word engineer in its basic meaning of "doer" or "worker."

The ramifications of ingener are not so easily disposed of. In consideration of the word the suggestion of its kinship with ingenuity and ingenious insinuates itself. There is also scope for further semantic speculation in the related form generate and even more specifically in the less familiar but significant ingenerate. The latter two relationships are emphasized by the verb form of ingener which the N. E. D. describes as meaning "to engender."

Further specifying the semantic properties of ingener

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[3]Hamlet, III, iv, 206-207.

renders the word less effective than merely allowing the possibilities to color the interpretation, for the word, like many of Shakespeare's most interesting usages, gains by its very scope, sometimes even by intangibility of implication. The power of _ingener_ lies partially in this scope and partially in its oddity. No general term, such as _creator_, or _maker_, nor specific one such as _designer_ or _artificer_ would convey the suggestion of the genius involved in the creation of such a one as Desdemona. There is also a mystical quality in _generate_ beyond the idea of "fashioning from tangible materials" implied in other words of "making."

INJOINTED

A messenger declares to the Duke and Senators in the Council Chamber:

> The Ottomites . . .
> Have there injointed them with an after fleet.[1]

These lines contain a word which is so rare as to have been found in written English only twice: once in the above passage and once in another passage in the opposite sense (Philemon Holland's Plutarch's Philosophie, 1603). Obviously the messenger here states that the Turks have joined themselves with a fleet of ships sent after them. The prefix in- intensifies the idea of "joint" or "join," although in the form which conveys the opposite sense it must be considered the negative prefix. The unmistakable clarity of Shakespeare's term here, however, is due to the subsequent with and to the nature of the context. Often, in seeing a Shakespearean play performed, one must accept the first meaning because the rapidity of movement and the profusion of atmospheric details will not permit deliberation. With the exception, then, of a few words which are in some way lost to the modern idiom, this method is advisable in the reading of Shakespeare as well. One only needs to be reminded of the futility of trying to reconstruct the patter of the popular comedians in order to see that much of the

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[1] Othello, I, iii, 33-34.

effectiveness of dialogue is gained from its continuous flow. That Shakespeare's lines not only bear familiarity and analysis but also gain by them is further proof of his precision in semantic force, but to attempt to savor the implications of the words before the implications of the play itself are understood is an injustice to playwright and reader alike. Furthermore, the oddity of many of Shakespeare's words is apparent sometimes only after a study of unusual words in his plays, for many of them, because of their obvious implications, pass unnoticed in casual reading. The startling news, conveyed by the messenger quoted above, is, to be sure, more startling by virtue of its phraseology. It is, however, clear and portentous enough to carry the reader quickly on into the situation without analysis of its mechanics of effect.

ITERANCE

When Othello tells Emilia that it was Iago who had first informed him about Desdemona's misdeeds, Emilia unbelievably repeats, "My husband?" again and again, and Othello impatiently says:

> What needs this iterance, woman? I say thy husband.[1]

Iterance may not be an unfamiliar word to the modern reader, but it was probably an innovation to Elizabethan English. The N. E. D. quotes the passage above as the first example of its use and cites its later appearance in the work of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Dowden, and D. C. Murray in the nineteenth century. Furness refers merely to a word with a similar ending -- reprobance -- further on in the same play and notes there that -ance is often used as an inflectional substitute for -ation.[2] Some editors have changed the ending of both iterance and reprobance to -ation, but Furness preserves the -ance of both, and the Oxford edition changes only the latter word, leaving iterance, which, as one commentator suggests, is necessary to the meter.

Here is an instance of the Shakespearean prerogative of individualism in the choice of inflectional endings to suit the purpose. In this case Shakespeare's product came

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[1] Othello, V, ii, 148. [2] Furness, op. cit., VI, 312.

into the language and remains a valid variant of iteration. Iterance has an abrupt phonetic quality which suits it admirably to this passage. Perhaps it is this same phonetic quality that has caused it to survive side by side with iteration. Its fewer syllables and concentrated stress give iterance a more specific connotation than the four syllables and divided stress of iteration achieve. For Shakespeare's purpose the difference in syllabic quality is important also as a metrical consideration. It is interesting to notice that Shakespeare here, as in numerous other instances, has gained in effect through a metrically expedient substitution.

OBSERVANTS

The plainness of speech which Kent avows is distasteful to Cornwall, stirs in him, too, an obscure fear which he expresses in the following lines:

> These kind of knaves I know, which in this plainness
> Harbor more craft and more corrupter ends
> Than twenty silly-ducking observants
> That stretch their duties nicely.[1]

The perspective from which a casual reader might notice such a word as observants is lost to a great extent in the closeness of the regard that linguistic study entails. Yet because of the context it seems not unlikely that there would be little difficulty in understanding the word as the N. E. D. allows it -- "obsequious attendants." Aside from the guidance of the context, however, there are interesting linguistic ideas represented in observants.

Observe, from the Latin observare, is an elastic word which embraces many meanings, one of which is "to keep," preserved in our modern idiom in "keeping a holiday" or "observing a rite." By extension, probably because in observing a rite one is usually paying homage or showing respect, observe bears these implications also; thus it is clear how observants may be "those who pay homage, or show respect," i. e., "obsequious attendants."

One familiar with the singular quality of Shakespearean

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[1] Lear, II, ii, 107-110.

expression, however, may be tempted to explore the further possibilities of such a word as observants, on the hint of blending that it conveys. Shakespeare, faced with the necessity and equipped with the power of choosing one r ight word for his purpose from among many, doubtless heard the advocacy of some of them in detail. In this process, however subconscious and momentary, it is possible that the balances might have been weighted in favor of a word like observants by the apparent fusion of the two terms which he meant to indicate -- obsequious and servants. The semantic relation serves to accentuate the inherent meaning of observants.

PORTANCE

In the passage wherein Othello describes the stories by which he won Desdemona's admiration and love are these lines:

> Her father loved me; oft invited me;
> Still questioned me the story of my life
> . . . . . .
> Wherein I spoke of most disastrous chances
> . . . . . .
> Of being taken by the insolent foe
> And sold to slavery, of my redemption thence
> And portance in my travel's history;[1]

The Latin root of portance offers the idea of carriage, bearing, or demeanor. There is, however, some difference of opinion among critics as to its reading. Rymer, in quoting this line, reads portents.[2] The fact that the plays were often taken down during performances makes a reading of such variance plausible; nevertheless, the preponderance of critical opinion seems to favor portance as authentic. Of three other commentators quoted by Furness, Johnson renders the denotation of portance as "behaviour," and Steevens and Dyce concur in this interpretation.[3] In view of the fact that so much of Shakespeare is beyond translation on account of the semantic scope of his language, a comment by a French scholar is interesting. Morel, reports Furness, says, referring to portance: "Montaigne l'emploie

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[1]Othello, I, iii, 128-139. [2]Furness, op. cit., VI, 55.

[3]Ibid.

comme synonyme de 'façon d'agir,'"[4] which is in accordance with the interpretation of the three English scholars, since Montaigne's use of portance as "way of doing" or "manner of acting" is synonymous with "behavior." The fact that both the stem and suffix of portance came into English through French from Latin is significant in considering this note. Shakespeare, as has been noted elsewhere in this study, put pretentious terms into Othello's speech; the Moor was much given to the use of Latinisms. In Othello's character, too, one may detect a pompous quality which clothes his accounts of his own deeds and emotions in impressive words. Portance here, then, is in character; yet it may have more significance than that. Of the synonyms suggested for portance only bearing and carriage are compatible with the meter, irregular as it is in these lines. Both of these words commonly refer to the manner of carrying oneself physically and so would hardly express Othello's conception of his attitude among the "insolent foe." In portance, also, Othello has a word of lofty import, partly through its striking originality and partly through the learned quality of its derivation. Hardly a word to be taken into ordinary usage, because of its rather pretentious quality, it nevertheless appears in our modern dictionaries labeled "archaic" with the general definition of "carriage."

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[4] Ibid.

As an item of Othello's vocabulary, however, it seems fitting and expressive. Through it Othello refers to his mien throughout his adventurous life, and subtly invests that demeanor with a stately arrogance.

PROBAL

Iago is happy with the apparent honesty of his really nefarious plot. After advising Cassio to try to reinstate himself into Othello's good graces through Desdemona, Iago, in wicked glee, muses:

> And what's he then that says I play the villain?
> When this advice is free I give and honest,
> Probal to thinking, and indeed the course
> To win the Moor again.[1]

The discussion of probal reported by Furness largely hinges upon its status as a contraction of probable or, as one writer suggests, of proveable.[2] It would seem likely, however, considering Shakespeare's penchant for originating words, forms and syntactical functions, as well as his apparent familiarity with Latin and French, that he resorted to the Latin root of probity in creating a new adjective for his purposes. The interpretation in this case would be something like "integritous." On the other hand, it seems quite possible that Shakespeare made probal from another Latin word which has given probe to English. In this case the reading would be either "this advice is proof against thinking" or "this advice will bear the probe of thinking." Craig, in his glossary appended to the Oxford edition, somewhat arbitrarily renders probal as "satisfactory, reasonable."

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[1]Othello, II, iii, 345-348. [2]Furness, op. cit., VI, 150.

Craig's reading obviously renders Iago's general idea -- that no evil can be descried in his actions by thoughtful analysis of them--but there is more to Shakespeare's semantic quality than mere translation or definition. The idea of contraction seems questionable through a phonetic difficulty. A more natural form for a contracted probable would seem to be prob'ble or even probble. Furthermore, that Iago's scheme would appear "probable" to thinking is not a particularly impressive idea, nor one likely to be comforting to him, for there is a doubtful quality in probable. As a contraction of proveable, probal seems rather far-fetched to be acceptable. It is difficult to imagine which of the other possibilities under consideration may have influenced Shakespeare, but it is not too much to believe that the implications of both of them were easily embraced by his linguistic consciousness and incorporated into one form. Shakespeare is capable of making one word do the work of several and thus having Iago say that his advice is probal -- i. e., found true when probed by thinking.

QUESTRISTS

Just as the word quest conveys a shade of meaning not apparent in its synonym search, so does Shakespeare's coinage questrist suggest more than "a seeker." In King Lear Oswald says:

> Some five or six and thirty of his knights,
> Hot questrists after him, met him at a gate.[1]

This unique word has inspired some comment regarding its form and etymology, but its semantic measure remains to be taken. As to form, one commentator states that, "If we would read English we must read questrists";[2] another scholar asserts without remark that questrist is a word of Shakespeare's coinage.[3] In reference to definition, we are told that questrist means "an inquirer or quester," and is derived from the French questeur.[4]

Some of Shakespeare's coinages have met with more favor than questrists has. The N. E. D. reports only the above example of its use. This circumstance suggests various considerations. "Why do authors," questions one linguist, "hesitate to coin words and, when they do, why do others hesitate to take up what seems to be an attractive and useful addition to the vocabulary? The answer to both questions," he suggests, "would appear to be in part that

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[1] Lear, III, vii, 16-17. [2] Furness, op. cit., V, 218.

[3] Ibid. [4] Ibid.

at present, the usual attitude to the dictionary forbids. . . . A reader meets a word that is new to him, wonders if it is in the dictionary, does not find it -- and silently registers his disapproval of the effrontery of the writer."[5] Robertson speaks here primarily of the modern viewpoint, of course, but it is interesting to notice that a conscious seeking for linguistic authority began to assert itself shortly after Shakespeare's era, evidenced by the birth and development of the dictionary. Shakespeare himself freely resorted to borrowings, blends, and coinages for the clear and impressive expression of his ideas. The century following him, however, exemplified conformity and, hence, discouraged originality. Before the reaction to this era had set in, the dictionary as the great arbiter of verbal usage had become established.

The close relationship which the English- and French-speaking peoples bore in the sixteenth century, and, in fact, bear yet, is evidenced in the English language. To the seventeenth-century Englishman the words of French were familiar, and many of them became incorporated into his own speech. In this light questrist is no strange word. Insofar as its form, questrist rather than questist, is questioned, it may be well to remember that as a linguist Shakespeare was no purist but rather an intuitive genius. To the ear,

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[5]Robertson, op. cit., p. 416.

if not to the etymological sensibilities, *questrist* is the more acceptable form of the two. Oswald, the servant who spoke of the *questrists*, would hardly have governed his tongue for etymological nicety.

In regard to Oswald, the propriety of his using the unusual term *questrists* might be argued from various viewpoints and to various conclusions. Nevertheless, Shakespeare never allowed a major characterization to be blurred by language unsuitable to the portrait, depending, naturally, upon the words for the characterization. From the modern viewpoint, Oswald, a commonplace person, here uses an unusual word, but the Elizabethan viewpoint, if considered, reveals the lack of any inconsistency in this circumstance. It is not a learned word. Based on the familiar French, its meaning is perfectly clear. If, as it may be argued, Shakespeare intended a shade of meaning beyond a more usual synonym, it is not necessary to identify that intent with Oswald, nor to surmise any coloring of the characterization from this diction.

RELUME

Brokenly, yet with his characteristic elegance of expression, Othello mourns Desdemona:

> I know not where is that Promethean heat
> That can thy light relume.[1]

Shakespeare sprinkled Othello's speech with Latin compounds for impressiveness, and in this case, as in many others, the Latinism is probably more poignant, because of its poetic quality, than its Anglo-Saxon synonym relight would be. The latter word would, besides, be impossible here because of the unpleasant repetition it would entail.

Although this is the first example of relume recorded by the N. E. D., it is found later in eighteenth-century literature, notably in Thomson's Winter. It also appears in Swinburne's vocabulary, as well as in modern dictionaries.

The etymology of relume is rather uncertain, but it is interesting as an illustration of Shakespeare's way with words. From either the Latin reluminare or the French rallumer (ralumer in Old French) Shakespeare chose the semanteme -lume-, which indicates light, as in illumine, luminous; and, possibly with the Latin word as a model, added the prefix re-, meaning again.

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[1] Othello, V, ii, 12-13.

Such a word as relume draws no comment from Furness and suggests very little discussion upon any grounds, for it is semantically clear and forceful even though it is an unusual form.

REMEDIATE

Another peculiar Shakespearean blend comes to light in remediate, which Cordelia uses in calling upon nature to work towards Lear's relief:

> All blest secrets,
> All you unpublished virtues of the earth,
> Spring with my tears! Be aidant and remediate
> In the good man's distress.[1]

Wright asserts that this word is a Shakespearean coinage and considers immediate as its possible model.[2]

Because of the context in which it appears and because of its association with remedial, the meaning of remediate is clear. The unconscious association with immediate likewise gives additional emphasis. The substitution of the morpheme -ate for -al develops remedial into "urgently remedial." Somewhat the same urgency is felt in expedient, possibly because of comparable syllabic patterns, assonance, and similar plosive endings.

Examples of confusion of form and, especially, ending, usually accounted for through the tendency toward analogy, are numerous in colloquial English. For instance, similiar by analogy with familiar often appears for similar; maxium is heard frequently for either maxim or maximum. Hence, this isolated instance in Shakespeare does not necessarily argue his linguistic genius. His happy faculty, however,

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[1] Lear, IV, iv, 15-18. [2] Furness, op. cit., V, 261.

of achieving emphasis through this manipulation of words implies the clarity of his thought as well as his freedom from artificial intellectual restriction. In spite of the fact that Shakespeare in his day could not have been aware of the principles of modern linguistic science, such a creation as remediate palpably demonstrates consciousness of the power of word associations.

REVERBS

In speaking of Cordelia's failure to express her filial love to Lear's satisfaction, Kent observes,

> Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sound
> Reverbs no hollowness.[1]

As a commentary on the word reverbs, Furness quotes Steevens' opinion that the word is probably one of Shakespeare's own making and means the same as reverberates.[2] The N. E. D. mentions no further examples of it in evidence until 1854, with the suggestion that the word in modern usage is probably after Shakespeare.

There is some danger in going too deeply into the question of particularized semantics. A fine distinction must be drawn between allowing the subtle import of a word as implied by the author's use in context, and dissecting the word upon either psychic or etymological principles. The impression that the author intended to convey is of very little interest or value unless he has conveyed it. If the word has certain derivational or associational implications which broaden the scope of its contextual import, it may be valid to note them, but in going into these matters it is well to tread cautiously lest the author's own meaning be superseded. In the case of poets this is especially true, for often a poet abbreviates or contracts a word for

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[1] Lear, I, i, 155-156. [2] Furness, op. cit., V, 24.

the purpose of rhyme or meter and otherwise permits himself verbal liberties with no intention of altering semantic effects. Therefore only those words whose unusual form or use makes them especially significant are proper subjects for analysis. It is quite possible that reverbs is no such word; yet there are several aspects of it which are worth attention in noting the subtleties of Shakespeare's linguistic powers. Granting that reverbs is an abbreviated form of reverberates, we find it functioning here as a transitive verb. Skeat, in An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language, describes reverberate as meaning "to re-echo, reflect sound." In Kent's speech it is the sound itself which reverberates something, while in customary usage the sound is generally used with the passive form, and the instrument is the subject of the active form. The abbreviation of the form in this context is an oddity which adds no significance except as it calls attention to the word and thus heightens the dramatic effect of the passage. There is, however, another item of interest which this word shares with countless other words in Shakespeare, and that is the fact that it conveys in itself a powerful suggestion which, phrased differently, would require many words to express. Shakespeare's power lay, to some degree, in his ability to say so much in so few words. This word is illustrative of that quality.

STELLED

Throughout The Tragedy of King Lear emotion is at a high pitch. The cosmic nature of the tragedy is emphasized by the frequent references to the forces of nature. As a result the language and the figures are often intense. Gloucester manifests the general attitude toward nature when he, in strong figure, portrays the enormity of the inhumanity against Lear:

> The sea, with such a storm as his bare head
> In hell black night endured, would have buoy'd up,
> And quenched the stelled fires.[1]

There is a variance of opinion regarding two of the expressions in this passage, and the two are somewhat interdependent. The Latinate stelled strongly suggests "starred" or "starry," an appellation which might describe any fire. The N. E. D. thus recognizes the word, credits Shakespeare with having used it before any other outstanding writer, and reports only two other examples of its use. Schmidt, however, says that "Shakespeare uses the verb to stell, i. e., to place, to fix,"[2] and the idea of "fixed fires" could hardly be applicable to other than the stars.

At this point the rendering of buoy'd becomes interesting. Furness quotes three differing opinions on this word: Heath asserts that it is used as the middle voice in Greek,

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[1]Lear, III, vii, 59-61.

[2]Alexander Schmidt, Shakespeare-Lexicon.

signifying to buoy, or lift, itself up; White reads it as "boiled"; and Schmidt considers it used as a transitive verb, conveying the idea that the sea would have lifted up the fixed fires and quenched them.[3]

The words of Shakespeare urge an interpretation spart from scholarly logic in the light of the turbulence which Gloucester's own emotions impel him to express regarding Lear's misfortunes. In a figure of cosmic proportions he imagines the sea in upheaval, protesting the stress of an unworthy and unbearable storm such as Lear endured, and reaching up to the very stellar fires above to extinguish them in righteous protest. Carried along by the power of this figure, the reader needs no suggestion about buoy'd, no translation of stelled.

The question of the derivation of the latter word, however, directs attention to an interesting linguistic phenomenon of which the word for star in various languages is an example. Robertson shows how a knowledge of the "shift of liquids" clarifies the relationship between such words as star, stellar, and astronomy.[4] In Middle English, Old English, and Greek the r of the word for star appears; in Latin and French the l is present. Besides star, which came through the early English forms from the Latin, English also has direct Latin derivations such as constellation,

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[3]Furness, op. cit., V, 222.

[4]Robertson, op. cit., pp. 180-181.

retaining the l. Greek derivations such as astronomy show the r found in the Greek word aster; likewise the r is in the German star: Stern. The Old French, from which the Modern French étoile comes, takes the l of the Latin.

Shakespeare often adapted Latin words to his peculiar purpose. Often, too, he chose words wide in their signification with the result that their various phases culminate in emphasis. Such a choice further has the effect of allowing a generous scope of interpretation, and thus appealing to a wide audience. Stelled exemplifies, to some extent, this type of word: it is adapted from the Latin; it may suggest "starred" or "fixed," and in the combination of these two meanings intensify the strength of the figure; and its poetic associations suggest color even as they avoid limning outlines.

SUPERFLUX

In one of the rare cryptic passages in Shakespeare appears a word of which the implication is not altogether clear. Lear, within the frenzy of the tempest, mourns for the inevitable waifs of the world who must bear, uninsulated, the severity of the storm. Concluding, he admonishes himself thus:

> Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
> That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,
> And show the heavens more just.[1]

The N. E. D. catalogues superflux under the synonyms "superfluity, superabundance, surplus," and reports its derivation from the Latin word which produced "superfluity." At first glance there seems to be little semantic advantage in the more unfamiliar form; yet an intensity of significance inheres in the latter, partly through its very unfamiliarity and partly through its phonetic quality. The flowing quality of the -fluity, sharing with other familiar forms such as fluid and fluent a similar dissyllabic phonetic quality, gives way, in Shakespeare's superflux, to a monosyllable which suggests, rather, a rush, as in flood and flush. Thence, in superfluity one feels a flowing of abundance, but in superflux, a flood of abundance. There is a delicacy of distinction here appreciated by

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[1] Lear, III, iv, 34-36.

some later writers, notably Charles Lamb and Robert Browning, both of whom used superflux in their own writings. In Popular Fallacies Lamb writes: "If nothing else could be said for a feast, this is sufficient, that from the superflux there is usually something left for the next day." And Browning in Fifine: "Art . . . discards the superflux, Contributes to defect." According to the N. E. D. Shakespeare was the first to use superflux; and Schmidt, a Shakespeare lexicographer, further labels it "a hapax legomenon in Shakespeare," or a word used but once.

The obscurity of the passage in which superflux appears, it may be noted in passing, lies not in this irregular word, but in the odd expression of which it is a part. To "shake the superflux to them" may be Lear's expression, but it is not an idiom easily intelligible to modern readers. Had Lear said, "Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel, That thou mayst shake the superflux at them, And show the heavens more just" the idiom would have been comprehensible to the modern understanding. With this alteration the phrase becomes intelligible by analogy with familiar phrases such as "to shake one's fist at," "to make a face at." To, in such a phrase, implies a vague "towards" or "in the direction of," whereas at, at least in our modern idiom, implies "before" or "in the face of."

The problem of the preposition, however, is not essentially a Shakespearean one. It is suggested here merely as a possible solution to the enigmatic quality of the passage, so that the import of superflux may not be obscured by this trivial oddity of construction.

UNPROVIDE

Othello acknowledges the power of his feeling for Desdemona when he says:

> I'll not expostulate with her, lest her body and beauty unprovide my mind again.[1]

According to Rolfe this is the only line in which Shakespeare uses the form unprovide.[2] The N. E. D. reports only a disprovide in 1530 and again in 1793. The singular form put into Othello's speech is clear enough, however. He has "provided" (and this implies a deliberate effort) his mind with the determination to kill his lovely but supposedly faithless wife, and he knows that her appeal will destroy that determination.

In using the negative prefix Shakespeare merely gives a negative meaning to a word generally used in a positive sense. He has no hesitation, as this one of many such examples reveals, in departing from the usual usage. A literary tendency in his language is also exemplified here, and, in the combination of both of these qualities, by virtue of his effectiveness in each one, probably lies a partial explanation of his genius.

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[1] Othello, IV, i, 216-217. [2] Furness, op. cit., VI, 248.

WHIPSTER

In complaint against those who would deny him the fallen warrior's prerogative of dying by his own sword, Othello cried:

> But every puny whipster gets my sword.[1]

By whipster he indicates his contempt for those appointed to guard him. The epithet seems to derive its significance through its phonetic quality as well as through its connotation. The lowly station of groom is implied through the association offered by whip, the badge of the groom's office. The morpheme -ster often carries a slighting or derogatory impact in words such as gangster, punster and others of which it is a part, the sharp phonetic quality of it in this instance adding to its implication of contempt. The current literary sense of the word, which is often used with the epithet puny, after Shakespeare, as the N. E. D. points out, is "a slight, insignificant, or contemptible person." Many such Shakespeareanisms have come to current English in this way, some of which remain, as does whipster, conscious oddities, their associations literary rather than commonly familiar. That his figures, thus divorced from their logical suggestion, became, nevertheless, integral units of expression, argues the semantic impressiveness of his writing.

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[1] Othello, V, ii, 242.

GROUP III. SYNTACTICAL INNOVATIONS

In this section are found words whose oddity lies principally in their peculiarity of function. Shakespeare's syntactical idiosyncrasies extend over a very wide field; the paucity of the examples included here is accounted for by the fact that only those of unusual semantic implications were included. Often an alteration of function produces greater emphasis of diction, and Shakespeare availed himself of this stratagem freely. Most of the following examples are familiar words enough, arresting only in their function. It is interesting to notice their value as tools of compactness of expression.

AFTER

A mere messenger is responsible for two noteworthy terms in Othello. They occur in a single line as he announces:

> The Ottomites, reverend and gracious,
> Steering with due course toward the isle of Rhodes,
> Have there injointed them with an after fleet.[1]

The first word, injointed, is considered elsewhere; the other, common in the most limited vocabulary, obviously occupies an irregular situation. No prominent writer thus used after before Shakespeare. Whether or not he employed

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[1]Othello, I, iii, 35.

an Elizabethan idiom is not so easy to determine nor so significant.

An odd Shakespearean characteristic is evident here. Elsewhere has been noted the semantic richness of Shakespeare's expression as a corollary to the observation that he divulged much regarding plot, situation and character within the scope of a very few words. This characteristic shows itself often in the necessary but unglamorous devices of announcements by messengers and unimportant underlings. A modern technique is to write such lines down to the level of pure mechanical announcement or mild comedy. Shakespeare, on the other hand, allowed his semantic genius to play here as well as in the tenser moments of the tragedies. The technique is sound: in a few words of vivid import, not only the matter itself is presented more clearly and impressively by virtue of the captured attention of the audience, but also the situation and atmosphere are more surely projected through their verbal accent.

Accordingly, the announcement that the Turks "have there injointed them with an after fleet" is a compelling one. The word after to a seafaring man would instantly connote "hinder" or "rearward"; to anyone else its significance would, of course, be similar: "later" or "subsequent." From that connotation the mind is able to grasp easily the idea and, because of the unusual function of the word, is

likely to be impressed with the excitement of the situation. In this passage, again, one feels the precision of Shakespeare's choice. Subsequent here would be clumsy, second might be confusing, suggesting an ally; successive conveys an ambiguity, hinting that one fleet succeeds another, and so it goes through the list of possible synonyms emphasizing the peculiar fitness of Shakespeare's term.

BESORT

As Othello prepares to go to the wars he thus requests that Desdemona be taken care of:

> I crave fit disposition for my wife . . .
> With such accommodation and besort
> As levels with her breeding.[1]

The prefix be- is used exclusively on verbs and is variously an intensive or a prepositional addition. In Lear Shakespeare uses besort as a verb;[2] its use here as a substantive is the only such example given in the N. E. D.

Upon close examination it seems only natural that this oddity of speech is found among Othello's words. The idea that his unusual choice of words adds emphasis to the character that he reveals through his speech is often provoked. Othello is here concerned with his lady. By accommodation he apparently refers to her material conveniences; by besort to the attendants with whom she shall be supplied.

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[1] Othello, I, iii, 238-240. [2] Lear, I, iv, 274.

COMPEERS

When Albany questions Edmund's right to advise with him, Goneril and Regan in matters of policy, Regan announces that Edmund carries her commission and asserts:

> In my rights
> By me invested, he compeers the best.[1]

Compeers as a verb in this sense is recorded in modern dictionaries as obsolete. It, however, survives as a noun, an intensive as it stands since peer means "of equal rank with" and the prefix com- merely repeats "with." Thus both the word and its prefix indicate "co-ordinate." The use of a noun as a verb, a practice common to Shakespeare, produces, probably through commanding attention, an effect of emphasis. In this case, also, a phrase would be necessary to express the implication offered by the one word, compeer. Shakespeare is never prodigal with words.

No other writers before Shakespeare are known to have used the word in this sense, and but two examples of its use after him are recorded by the N. E. D.: in 1615 Sandys used it, and in 1848 Bailey in his Festus combined it in participial form as a part of a poetic figure. Through the familiar sounds of both its base and its prefix, however, it is, and must have been in the sixteenth century, easily intelligible. The unusual words used by Shakespeare, whether

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[1] Lear, V, iii, 70.

coinages, blends, or adaptations in meaning, generally possessed this quality of clarity.

DISPOSE

Iago's foul plot begins to form in his mind. Cassio is to be an unconscious instrument of his evil designs, and will fit into his schemes well, because, as Iago points out:

> He hath a person and a smooth dispose
> To be suspected.[1]

The singularity of dispose in its function in this context prompts one writer, puzzled, to suggest the possibility that it should be read discourse, and another to read it as a truncated form of disposition.[2] The N. E. D., however, lists the word as it appears in this passage under an allied but extended meaning of disposition. In this passage, dispose apparently connotes "the evidence of disposition," or, as the N. E. D. has it, "external manner; air; pose." For this meaning there seems to be no synonym whose accentual and syllabic qualities would be as compatible with Iago's lines as those of dispose.

Further, it is almost as if the sly Iago himself points out the suggestion of the related pose which colors the implication of dispose here and well befits it for Iago's idiom. Apart from that suggestion, however, dispose allows the inference of a slur in this context possibly through the familiar cognate disposed, which implies "inclined to" or "tending toward," in connection with "smooth."

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[1]Othello, I, iii, 403-404. [2]Furness, op. cit., VI, 89-90.

The latter word, in its turn, carries the connotation of "suave" or "unctuous" and so indicates "that which is not as it seems." It is by no means intended, through the examination of these ramifications, to detail the process necessary or desirable in reading Shakespeare's meaning. The intention is merely to analyze the impression and account for it linguistically.

MEDICINE

With his usual forceful originality, a kind of naive eloquence, Othello says,

> Not poppy . . .
> Shall ever *medicine* thee to that sweet sleep . . .[1]

Not just Othello but Shakespeare himself is consistently eloquent when handling the subject of sleep. The mystical relation between sleep and death is often touched upon as well as the ineffable quality of spiritual and mental refreshment which sleep offers to weary, confused humanity. The latter curative quality of sleep is here suggested in Othello's words. Not the most powerful of the soporific drugs, says Othello, naming them, can effect the desirable condition of sleep in this instance.

The use of *medicine* as a verb here is termed a "nonce-use" by the *N. E. D.* Shelley also used it thus. In view of the fact that there are many such instances of substantives used as verbs in poetry, especially in Shakespeare, it is interesting to examine an example of the practice. The unusual form itself adds significance; furthermore there is a semantic scope in the inclusion of substantive with verb impossible in ordinary terminology except through a more wordy expression. The *N. E. D.* gives the meaning of *medicine* as it appears in this passage as "to

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[1] *Othello*, III, iii, 333.

bring by medicinal virtue to." Unlike the metaphysician who force-feeds his patient student with words piled upon words, Shakespeare must not only coat his pills of wisdom with the sugar of humor and drama but he must also, while making them small enough to be taken without effort or discomfort, invest them with concentrated potency. Therefore the terse way is always Shakespeare's way, and effective assimilation is enhanced by a more thorough savoring of his presentation, beyond the needs of mere enjoyment.

MONSTERS

The King of France, after Lear disowns Cordelia for her lack of voiced affection, says to the old man:

> This is most strange
> That she, who even but now was your best object,
> The argument of your praise, balm of your age,
> The best, the dearest, should in this trill of time
> Commit a thing so monstrous, to dismantle
> So many folds of favor. Sure, her offence
> Must be of such unnatural degree
> That monsters it, or your fore-vouched affection
> Fall into taint;[1]

In using monster as a verb Shakespeare is apparently deviating from the usage of his time. The N. E. D. describes the word in this function as rare, giving only one example of it as transitive and that from King Lear. Not only is the meaning of it in the passage perfectly clear, but also the function of it here is towards an ironic emphasis. The repetition of monster after monstrous in a preceding line forces the enormity of the situation upon the reader. The King of France subtly conveys an impression of horror when he implies the conversion of the normal into the monstrous with reference to the conduct of Lear's daughter. Had such an idea had the power to penetrate Lear's frenzy, it would surely have sobered him to the realization of the invalidity of his attitude. Monstrous is an adjective of strong connotation used infrequently and suggestive of tremendous and strange brutality. Used repetitively, as it is here,

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[1] Lear, I, i, 216-224.

its intense implication is striking.

Further impressive is the word monster in its unusual function. A little later Shakespeare used it again as a verb, but in a different sense; yet the meanings are closely related. The warrior Coriolanus says, when urged to sit and listen to eulogies of himself:

> I had rather have one scratch my head i' the sun
> When the alarum were struck than idly sit
> And hear my nothings monster'd.[2]

The N. E. D. gives this example as the first use of the word in the sense of "to point out as something wonderful," and only two other examples are given, they from the nineteenth century. In the passage from Lear, the King of France's obvious allusion is to enormity; Coriolanus' words convey the suggestion of exaggeration, or making much of. Although the meanings of the word in these two passages are not identical, they are closely related, and both are clear and emphatic.

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[2] Coriolanus, II, ii, 80-82.

SEQUENT

Michael Cassio, Othello's lieutenant, brings a message to the General from the Duke requesting Othello's presence. Othello inquires as to the matter, upon which Cassio answers:

> Something from Cyprus, as I may divine:
> It is a business of some heat. The galleys
> Have sent a dozen sequent messengers
> This very night at each other's heels;[1]

Sequent is found in modern dictionaries in the sense which Cassio gives it here: "successive." However, the word is worthy of comment by virtue of the fact that it apparently came into being in the Elizabethan era and was not in prominent usage thereafter until the nineteenth century. Sequent does not appear in common usage today. Yet because of its kinship with the commonly used sequence, it is immediately intelligible and more expressive. The staccato sound of the word contributes to both qualities of it. It is in such words, unfamiliar as they are in current speech in either Shakespeare's era or our own, that one sees the incisive power of Shakespeare's expression. Sequent, suggesting sequence, indicates an idea further emphasized by the expression "at each other's heels"; it would seem also to intensify the urgency implied by "a dozen . . . this very night." Consecutive and successive seem rather ineffective as synonyms for sequent, and others do not

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[1] Othello, I, ii, 39-42.

suggest themselves readily. Hence Shakespeare's word, his, in this instance, by virtue of his employing it in a unique position, characteristically crystallizes his meaning.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Blend. -- The result of the fusion of two words, such as brunch, from breakfast plus lunch.

Hapax legomenon. -- Said or used but once, as a rare word, verbal form, etc., evidenced by a single citation.

Morpheme. -- An element of language showing relationship of words, such as prefix, suffix, accentuation, etc.

Neosemalogism. -- A familiar word used in a novel sense.

Nonce word. -- A word formed and used for the nonce, that is, to suit one particular occasion, but not adapted into use. A nonce word is sometimes used independently by different writers.

Phoneme. -- A group of variants of a speech sound, usually all spelled with the same or equivalent letter, and commonly regarded as the same sound.

Semanteme. -- An element of language that expresses a definite image or idea, as contrasted with the elements (called morphemes) that relate and connect these images or ideas in sentences. A semanteme is a word or a part of a word.

WORD INDEX

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