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WORD-PLAY IN SHAKESPEARE

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A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty
Of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of Master of Arts

Department of English

by

Mary E. Burton

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Introduction

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION

A careful perusal of Shakespeare's works leads to one outstanding conclusion. Shakespeare was preëminently interested in words, as such. His every play shows a painstaking attention to words in their various shades of meaning. It is our interest to present some definite proof of this extraordinary emphasis on words, and to attempt in a small way to explain the reason for this particular trait of Shakespeare's.

Certainly as skillful a playwright as he would not have included so many carefully placed word-plays in his dramas if the audiences of the time were not interested in the language itself as well as in the dramatic qualities of the play. In those days when the language was in its infancy there must certainly have been a keen interest in the flexibility of the English tongue. Shakespeare was reflecting the spirit of an age in which new words were being coined daily, and new meanings for old words constantly discovered. The storm in Twelfth Night expressed the spirit of the age toward the language. After a lengthy word-play he says:-

"You have said; sir. To see this age. A sentence is but a cheveril glove to a good wit; how quickly the wrong side may be turned outward." (III.1.18)

Introduction

A careful perusal of Shakespeare's works leads to one outstanding conclusion. Shakespeare was preëminently interested in words, as such. His every play shows a painstaking attention to words in their various shades of meaning. It is our interest to present some definite proof of this extraordinary emphasis on words, and to attempt in a small way to explain the reason for this particular trait of Shakespeare's.

Certainly as skillful a playwright as he would not have included so many carefully planned word-plays in his dramas if the audiences of the time were not interested in the language itself as well as in the dramatic qualities of the play. In those days when the language was in its infancy there must certainly have been a keen interest in the flexibility of the English tongue. Shakespeare was reflecting the spirit of an age in which new words were being coined daily, and new meanings for old words constantly discovered. The clown in Twelfth Night expresses the spirit of the age toward the language. After a lengthy word-play he says:-

"You have said, sir. To see this age. A sentence is but a cheveril glove to a good wit: how quickly the wrong side may be turned outward." ((III.1.12)

In Love's Labour's Lost we find a few lines which reveal much of the real state of the language at that time. The King has praised Armado as an entertainer. Biron answers:-

"Armado is a most illustrious wight,
A man of fire-new words, fashion's own knight."
(I.:,178-179)

Fashion must, then, have favored the man who could coin new words, or make new linguistic discoveries.

In a period when many scholars were denying the ability of the English language to adapt itself to the uses of the nation, and were persistently proclaiming the merits of Latin as the only language of true flexibility and beauty, Shakespeare, Lyly, Jonson, and others, fortunately gifted with the power to mould the language to their purpose, successfully illustrated the great resources of the English tongue to a public keenly alive to the literary conflict then going on.

The present work does not attempt to prove or illustrate the great changes then taking place in the grammar, or to show the relation between Elizabethan grammar and that of the present day. It will not mention Shakespeare's rhetorical or grammatical use of the language at all, or make any effort to show the relation of his vocabulary to that of his contemporaries. The present thesis is an attempt to

show Shakespeare's interest in words themselves by means of his word-play in the form of direct puns, phrases, pronunciation, and misused words. Some of these word-plays are known by the writer to be borrowed. In such cases the source will be given. In such places where a proverb, saying, or custom of the time is the source of the play on words it will be classified as such.

Only the first ten plays of the author will be used for illustrative material:- Love's Labour's Lost, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, Midsummer Night's Dream, The Merchant of Venice, The Taming of the Shrew, The Merry Wives of Windsor, Twelfth Night, Much Ado About Nothing, As You Like It, The Comedy of Errors. Some effort will be made to show that Shakespeare used certain types of characters for his play on words, but it is impossible to limit the illustrations of his interest in words to these characters, as our author never lost an opportunity to play upon the meaning of a word in any scene.

Puns

Perhaps one reason for the modern distaste for puns is the overuse of them in literature and conversation when language was new. Shakespeare was eager, it seems, to give to the public his discoveries in the world of words. Words of identical sounds and different meanings attracted his attention. He was keenly alive to all the details of the language which was the tool for his great work in the drama. While he was greatly inspired by his contemporaries in these experiments in language, it was largely his own interest and the inquiring spirit of the age which prompted his extravagant use of word-play as an instrument for humor and instruction. He often put his plays on words in the mouths of clowns or jesters. He did so probably because these characters were supposed to provide humor and he considered puns a good type of wit.

Sometimes the word-play was in the mouths of pedants, again a saucy woman and a quick-witted man indulged in a bit of punning.

The clown in *Twelfth Night* states the real purpose of the clowns in Shakespeare's time. In answer to the question:-

"Art thou not the Lady Olivia's fool?" (III, I, 146)
he says:-

"I am not her fool, but her corrupter of words."

(III, I, 141)

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"Art thou not the Lady Olivia's fool?" (III,1,140) he says:-

"I am not her fool, but her corrupter of words."

(III,1,141)

We occasionally find quibbles where they seem entirely out of harmony with the subject matter. Ben Jonson has summed up Shakespeare's weakness in this point by saying in his Preface:-

"A quibble has some malignant power over his (Shakespeare's) mind, and its fascinations are irresistible. It was to him the fatal Cleopatra, for which he lost the world and was content to lose it."

There is in this excessive use of puns, we think, some ground for believing that the language was in a certain state of change. Shakespeare was definitely trying, as we have stated before, to show the possibilities of the language for its use in literature. As we review these puns, then, we keep constantly in mind the author's possible purpose in using them almost exclusively for the humor in his plays and attempt to ferret out the basic reason for this extravagant word-play. Since there are over two hundred plays on words in Love's Labour's Lost alone, the present thesis can only quote the more significant puns in the ten plays used. In Love's Labour's Lost and the other earlier plays, our author used so many of his favorite puns that he was forced to repeat a few of them in later plays. References to these repetitions in the case of an important play will be made at the first mention of the pun.

Love's Labour's Lost might easily be re-named A Comedy of Words, for the word-play is so important as to be almost the play itself. We can readily imagine Shakespeare, with a young man's enthusiasm, casting into this one play all of the proof in his possession of the great flexibility of the language.

Moth is one of the most voluble punsters in the play, but he is well supported by the other wits.

Armado remarks to Moth, his page:-

"I love not to be crossed." (I,ii,33)

and Moth, turning the meaning of the word "cross", answers:-

"He speaks the mere contrary; crosses love not him."

(I,ii,34)

In As You Like It is a similar pun on the same word. This time Shakespeare uses cross in the sense of "burden" and puns again on the common term-
ing of money, "crosses".¹

1. Halliwell: "Moneys generally have been termed 'crosses' owing to many of the early English coins having crosses impressed upon them; quibbles on the word are very common." Furness, page 43.

"Celia: I pray with you, bear with me: I cannot go no further.

Touchstone: For my part, I had rather bear with you than bear you: yet I should bear no cross if I did bear you, for I think you have no money in your purse."

(II, iv, 9-13)

Armado and Moth are the instruments for the next play on words, as well:

"Armado: Comfort me, boy. What great men have been in love?

Moth: Hercules, Master.

Armado: Most sweet Hercules. More authority, dear boy, name more, and, sweet my child, let them be men of good repute and carriage₂,

Moth: Samson, Master: he was a man of good carriage, and great carriage, for he carried the town gates on his back like a porter, and he was in love."

(I, ii, 67-72)

Shakespeare makes a certain distinction in his selection of characters for punning. His grosser characters, clowns, and servants, frequently explain their puns, or add to them, but when a woman puns, or a quibble slips from the tongue of a "man illustrious wight", it is very concise and to the point.

Jaquenetta puns on the common use of the word "hereby" to mean "as it falls out" or "as it may happen" in addition to the usual sense of "near":

"Armado: I will visit thee at the lodge:

"Jaquenetta: That's hereby."

(I, ii, 140-141)

The puns on the word "light" are so numerous that it

2- carriage, meaning "deportment":

is impossible to quote them all. Shakespeare uses the word in four ways: light, as opposed to darkness, light, meaning of fair complexion, light, in weight, and with the meaning of wanton, or loose in morals, less familiar to us.

In Love's Labour's Lost we have:-

"Boyet: A woman sometimes an you saw her in the light.

Longaville: Perchance light in the light. I desire her name."

(II,i,196-198)

"Katherine: -----for a light heart lives long.

Rosaline: What's your dark meaning, mouse, of this light word?

Katherine: A light condition in a beauty dark.

Rosaline: We need more light to find your meaning out.

Katherine: You'll mar the light by taking it in snuff,

Therefore I'll darkly end the argument.

Rosaline: Look, what you do, you do it still i' the dark.

Katherine: So do not you, for you are a light wench.

Rosaline: Indeed, I weigh not you, and therefore light."

(V,ii,17-27)

The above quotation is a sustained form of repartee which is consistent with the characters engaged in it. Shakespeare would not have put these speeches in the conversation of a fool or a clown.

In The Merchant of Venice Lorenzo says to Jessica, as she is standing on the balcony, ready to flee with him in the disguise of a page:-

"Descend for you must be my torchbearer."

(II,vi,39)

and she answers:-

"What, must I hold a candle to my shames?
They, in themselves, good sooth, are too, too light."

(II,vi,41-42)

In the same play Portia quibbles on the word:-

"Let me give light, but let me not be light."

(V,i,129)

Punning on proper names was one of Shakespeare's favorite means of twisting the language. He began this form of play in Love's Labour's Lost and continued it throughout his later plays.

In Love's Labour's Lost Moth comes in with Costard, limping.

"Moth: A wonder, master! here's a costard broken in a shin."³

(III,i,71)

Bottom, in Midsummer Night's Dream, plays upon his own name.

"Bottom: I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream: it shall be called Bottom's dream, because it hath no bottom."

(IV,i,112-115)

Launcelot in The Merchant of Venice says:-

"It is much that the moor should be more than reason."

(III,v,43)

In Merry Wives of Windsor, when Simple is hiding in the closet of old Doctor Caius, he exclaims:-

³ costard:head

"Qu'ai-j'oublie! dere is some simples en my closet dat I vill not for the varld I shall leave behind."

(I,iv,65-66)

The common use of the word "cates" for dainty sweets occasioned much punning on the name of Kate in the Taming of the Shrew.

"Petruchio: Kate of Kate-Hall, my super-dainty Kate,
For dainties are all Kates."

(II,1,189-190)

A weak pun on Kate and "cat" occurs in the same scene:-

"Petruchio: For I am born to tame you, Kate,
And bring you from a wild Kate to a Kate
Conformable as other household Kates,"

(II,1,279-280)

Two more puns on the names of the characters in Merry Wives of Windsor reveal themselves.

"Caius: By Gar if I have not Anne Page I shall turn your head out of my door.
Quickly: You shall have An fools-head of your own."

(L,iv,128-131)

"Falstaff: Mistress Ford, I have had ford enough,
I was thrown into the ford."

(III,iv,36)

In Much Ado About Nothing there is an indefinite pun on the name of Hero, referring to her supposed falsity:-

Shakespeare "Claudio: Who, Hero?
Don John: Even she, Leonato's Hero, your
Hero, everyman's Hero."

(III, ii, 108-109)

Dromeo of Syracuse puns on the name of Nell
in The Comedy of Errors:-

"Nell, sir, but her name and three quarters, that's
an ell and three quarters will not measure her from
hip to hip."

(IV, ii, 111-113)

There has been much discussion of the passage
in Love's Labour's Lost just following Moth's exclamation
about Costard's shin. Armado, paying little attention to
Costard's injury, urges him to go on with his story:-

"Armado: Some enigma, some riddle: come, thy
l'envoy; begin.

Costard: No egma, no riddle, no l'envoy, no
salve in the mail, sir: O, sir, a plaintain, a plain
plaintain! no l'envoy, no l'envoy; no slave, sir, but
a plaintain!" 4

(III, i, 118-119)

(III, i, 72-76)

Some commentators have tried to place the
pun on l'envoy as a salve and the Latin farewell "salve".

Shakespeare himself takes pains to explain
the exact meaning of l'envoy in the first sense, as
'an epilogue or discourse to make plain some obscure
precedence that hath before been sain.' (III, i, 82-83)

Brae in his comment seems to supply the most
reasonable suggestion as to the other meaning which
strikes him:-

4 plaintain: medicinal root

Shakespeare had in mind.

"Surely Moth is not dreaming of the Latin word 'salve', he is thinking of salve, an emollient, which, -----, he likens to l'envoy, a propitiary address. Just as flattery at the present day, is vulgarly likened to butter; or as Dumain, further on in this play calls upon Biron for some flattery for the evil, some salve for the perjury."

That Shakespeare intended this quibble which has caused scholars so much concern, to be amusing, is made certain by the next line:--

"Armado: By virtue thou enforcest laughter."

(III, i, 76)

Again we find Moth and Costard the instruments for a pun, now worn threadbare for us, but probably acceptable in the Elizabethan age.

"Moth: I will tell you sensibly."

Costard: Thou hast no feeling of it, Moth."

(III, i, 112-113)

Dromeo of Ephesus makes the same pun in

The Comeday of Errors:--

"Antonio of Ephesus: Thou whoreson, senseless villain.

Dromeo of Ephesus: I would I were senseless, sir, that I might not feel your blows."

(IV, iv, 24-25)

And in The Taming of the Shrew Grumio makes a quibble on the same word. Grumio has promised Curtis a story. When Curtis bends his ear to listen Grumio strikes him:--

"Curtis: This is to feel a tale, not to hear a tale.

"Grumio: And therefore 'tis called a sensible tale."

and Dull answers in an aside:

(III, i, 66-67)

Moth and Armado provide a quibble:-

"Moth: Master, will you win your love with a French brawl? ⁵

Armado: What meanest thou? brawling in French?"

Least seem definitely planned by the author. (III, i, 6-7)₂

Moth, we soon learn, is capable of some very weak attempts at punning. Shakespeare carefully saves his best quibbles for the better characters, but because of the large number of very evident puns which he had in mind, we find Moth supplied with a seemingly endless store of such remarks as:

"And make them men of note, do you note me?"

(III, i, 25)

Schmitt(Lexicon) explains the old use of the word purchase as 'to draw oneself(an evil) in any manner, and Shakespeare makes use of the double meaning of the word.

"Armado: How hast thou purchased this experience?

Moth: By means of my penny of observation."

And thereupon thou speak'st the (III, i, 27-29)

Dull puns upon 'talent' meaning a special faculty, and 'talent' the old word for talon or claw. The verb, to claw, has also the meaning to flatter. After a speech by Holofernes Nathaniel exclaims:-

5 French brawl: a kind of dance.

"A rare talent!" (IV,11,67)

and Dull answers in an aside:

"If a talent be a claw, look how he claws him
with a talent."

(IV,11,68)

Although most of the puns in Love's Labour's
Lost seem definitely planned by the author, it seems,
occasionally, that Shakespeare's habit of punning causes
him to slip these little plays almost unconsciously
into some speeches. Biron's long speech upon finding
himself in love contains such a pun on watch:

"A woman that is like a German clock,
Still a-repairing, ever out of frame,
And never going right, being a watch,
But being watched that it may still go right!"

(III,1,192-196)

Shakespeare's enthusiasm for words often led
him to force a quibble in an effort to show that such
a play was possible. In the following lines the Princess'
answer to the Forester's direction seems most unnatural:

"Forester: Hereby upon the edge of yonder coppice,
A stand where you may make the fairest shoot.

Princess: I thank my beauty, I am fair that
shoot,

And thereupon thou speak'st the fairest shoot."

(IV,1,10-13)

And then again we find the Princess forcing
a double meaning:

"Costard: God dig-gon-den all! Pray you which
is the head lady?

Princess: Thou shalt know her, fellow, by the
rest that have no heads."

Costard: Which is the greatest lady? the highest?

Princess: The thickest and the tallest."

(IV,iii,42-47)

Several of the puns in this play are on the words "dear" and "deer" but because of their similarity only one will be quoted:

"Rosalind: Well, then I am the shooter (pronounced 'suitor')

Boyet: And who is your deer?"

(IV,i,115)

The same quibble occurs in The Taming of the Shrew:

"Tranio: (to Petruchio) 'Tis well, sir you hunted for yourself,
'Tis thought your deer holds you at a bay."e

(V,ii,55-56)

In Twelfth Night Sir Toby supplies another meaning for dear:

"Fabrian: (speaking of Sir Andrew) This is a dear manakin to you, Sir Toby.

Sir Toby: I have been dear to him, lad, some two thousand strong or so."

(III,ii,58-59)

Holoferne's pun on parson is one of the best in Love's Labour's Lost:

"Jaquenetta: God give you good marrow, master parson.

Holofernes: Master Parson, quasi pers-on
An if one should be pierced which is the one?"

(IV,ii,84-84)

6. We find the same pun in Euphues, Volume ii, page 70, 1.18 (R. W. Bond, "Lyly's Words"), "three sutors (and yet never a good archer)"

When Shakespeare's better characters pun, they often keep up a certain sparring back and forth for several speeches. This is evident in several of the following quotations from these characters:

In act five we have the type of wit presented by the pedant. In this case the characters are the school master, Holofernes, and the curate, Sir Nathaniel:

"Holofernes:-- -- I say none are so fit as to present the Nine Worthies (reference to an entertainment planned for the Princess in which the Nine Worthies were to be represented)

Nathaniel: Where will you find men worthy enough to present them?"

(V,1,130-131)

"Armado: For the rest of the Worthies?

Holofernes: I will play three myself.

Moth: Thrice worthy gentleman."

(V,1,149-151)

It is clear that Shakespeare classes his schoolmaster and his curate with Moth. Their wit is of very much the same type and distinct from that of the Princess and Armado.

As the entertainment proceeds Moth stumbles repeatedly over his lines and Boyet cleverly interrupts him:

"Moth: That ever turned their eyes to mortal views! -- -- --

Out -- -- --

Boyet: Out indeed!

Moth: Out of your favour heavenly spirits,
vouchsafe.

Not to behold-----

Biron:(aside to Moth) Once to behold, rogue.

Moth: Once to behold with your sunbeamed eyes,
---with your sunbeamed eyes---

Boyet: They will not answer to that epithet;
You were best to call it daughter-beamed eyes! "

(V,ii,163-171)

Another example of the continued pun is:

"King: Say to her we have measured many miles
To tread a measure with her on this grass.

Boyet: They say that they have measured many
a mile

To tread a measure with you on this grass.

Rosaline: It is not so. Ask them how many inches
Is in one mile: if they have measured many,
The measure then of one is easily told."

(V,ii,184-190)

Boyet repeats Rosalind's question to the King
and his companions, and Biron answers:

"Tell her we measure them by weary steps.

Boyet: She hears herself.

Rosaline: How many weary steps,
Of many weary miles you haveo'er gone,
Are numbered in the travel of one mile?

Biron: We number nothing that we spend for you."

(V,ii,194-198)

Rosaline chides Katherine about her pock-marks
and Katherine answers with a quibble on "pox", the disease
and "pox", the byword:

"Rosaline: O! that your face were not so full
O's!

Katherine: A pox of that jest! and I beshrew
all shrows!

(V,ii,44-45)

Speed, the servant to Valentine, provides much of the punning in The Two Gentlemen of Verona. Launce, the servant of Proteus, shows some real punning ability, but he has less actual wit than Speed.

Speed's first pun, however, is rather a forced one on "ship" and "sheep":

"Speed: Sir Proteus, save you! Saw you my master?"

Proteus: But now he parted thence, to embark for Milan.

Speed: Twenty to one then he is shipped already, And I have played the sheep in losing him."

(I,i,69-72)

If we kept in mind the English broad "a" and "o" the next quibble seems more evident to us:

"Speed: Ay, sir;, I a lost mutton, gave your letter to her, a laced mutton, and she, a laced mutton, gave me, a lost mutton, nothing for my labour."

(I,i,101-104)

Speed's best punning occurs in the following conversation with Proteus:

"Proteus: Nay: in that you are astray, 'twere best pound you.

Speed: Nay, sir, less than a pound shall serve me for carrying your letter.

Proteus: You mistake, I mean the pound--a pinfold.⁹"

8. Schmidt defines a laced mutton 'according to glossants and commentators, a cant term for a prostitute, but probably only a woman's flesh, a petticoat, a smock.'

9. pound--'to shut up as in a pinfold' (Schmidt)
pinfold--'a place to which beasts are confined, a pound' (Schmidt)

Speed: From a pound to a pin? fold it over and over.
'Tis threefold too little for carrying a letter to your lover.

Proteus: But what said she?

Speed: (First nodding) Ay. (II,1,1-2)

Proteus: Nod-ay-why that's noddy.

Speed: You mistake, sir; I say, she did nod; you ask me if she did nod and I say, 'ay'.

Proteus: And that set together is noddy.

Speed: Now you have taken the pains to set it together, take it for your pains.

Proteus: No, no, you shall have it for bearing the letter.

Speed: Well, I perceive I must be fain to bear with you.

Proteus: Why, sir, how do you bear with me?

Speed: Marry, sir, the letter very orderly, having nothing but the word 'noddy' for my pains.

Proteus: Beshrew me, but you have a quick wit.

Speed: And yet it cannot overtake your slow purse.

Proteus: Come, come, open the matter in brief: what said she?

Speed: Open your purse, that the money and the matter may be both at once delivered.

Proteus: Well, sir, here is for your pains. What said she?

Speed: Truly, sir, I think you'll hardly win her.

Proteus: Why, couldst thou perceive so much from her?

Speed: Sir, I could perceive nothing at all from her; no, not so much as a ducat for delivering your letter."

Speed: That's because the one (I,1,100-148) and the other out of all count.

This sustained form of repartee is not quite consistent with the character of Speed. It is very evident that here Shakespeare was intent on the words, themselves, and that every possible quibble was carefully planned. Proteus' part in the punning tends to prolong the conversation.

The following is one of the weaker types of puns:

hard-favoured = harsh-featured, ugly (Dyce)
well-favoured = good-looking (Dyce)

"Speed: Sir, your glove.

Valentine: Not mine, my gloves are on.

Speed: Why, then this may be yours, for this is but one."

(II,1,1-2)

Speed and Valentine are also capable of good repartee:

"Valentine: What, are these things perceived in me?

Speed: They are all perceived without ye.

Valentine: Without me? They cannot.

Speed: Without you? Nay, that's certain, for, without you were so simple, none else would, but you are so without these follies, that these follies are within you."

(II,1,40-43)

Speed, in speaking to Valentine about Julia,

says:

"Is not she hard favoured, sir?¹⁰

Valentine: Not so afair, boy, as well-favoured.

Speed: Sir, I know that well enough.

Valentine: What dost thou know?

Speed: That she is not so fair, as, of you, well favoured.

Valentine: I mean that her beauty is exquisite, but her favour infinite.

Speed: That's because the one is painted and the other out of all count.

Valentine: How painted? and how out of all count?

Speed: Marry, sir, so painted to make her fair, that no man counts of her beauty."

(II,1,52-63)

Valentine uses a play on "earnest" as "serious" and as "a partial payment of money":

"Speed: But did you perceive her earnest?

Valentine: She gave me none, except an angry word."

(II,11,162-63)

10. "hard-favoured= harsh-featured, ugly"(Dyce)
well-favoured= good-looking (Dyce)

Shakespeare uses Launce and Speed as a pair for a punning dialogue in several scenes of this play.

Speed, in speaking of Valentine and Julia, says:

"What are they broken?"

(II,v,15)

and Launce answers:

"No, they are both as whole as a fish.

Speed: Why, then, how stands the matter with them?

Launce: Marry thus: when it stands well with him, it stands well with her.

Speed: What an ass art thou! I understand thee not.

Launce: What a block art thou, that thou canst not! My staff understands me.

Speed: It stands under thee, indeed.

Launce: Why stand under, and understand is all one."

(II,v,16-22)

And again Speed attempts a conversation with

Launce:

"Speed: How now, Signior Launce! What news with your mastership?

Launce: With my master's ship, why, it is at sea.

Speed: Well, your old vice still; mistake the word.

What news, then, in your paper?

Launce: The blackest news that ever thou heardest.

Speed: Why, man, how black?

Launce: As black as ink."

(III,1,279-289)

The following pun on "sew", like so many of our author's witticisms which seem very commonplace to us, was perhaps highly amusing in his day:

"Speed: she can sew.

Launce: That's as much as to say, Can she so?"

(III,308,309)

Launce, himself, probes a good punster in spite of the stupid air with which Shakespeare has endowed him:

"Pantheno:- - - you'll lose the tide if you tarry any longer;
 Launce: It is no matter if the tied were lost, for it is the unkindest tied that ever any man tied.
 Panthino: What's the unkindest tide?
 Launce: Why he that's tied ~~here~~, crab, my dog."

(II,iii,40-45)

Gratiano's pun on "sole" and "soul" in The Merchant of Venice is probably the most famous one in all Shakespeare. As Shylock is sharpening his knife on the sole of his shoe Gratiano exclaims:

"Not on thy sole, but on thy soul, harsh Jew."

(IV,i,124)

Launce uses the same pun in this earlier play, The Two Gentlemen of Verona. He is trying to enact his parting with his family on leaving home, and, in placing his imaginary characters, he says:

"- - - this left shoe is my mother: nay, that cannot be so neither; yes, it is so, it hath the worser sole."

(II,iii,38-40)

Proteus and Valentine **indulge** in a little sparring in one of the most serious scene of this play, but it so happens that in this one play Shakespeare refrains from introducing much quibbling into the mouths of his more serious characters. This one example is not altogether

out of place:

"Valentine: Is Sylvia dead? (I, i, 94-95)

Proteus: No, Valentine.

Valentine: No Valentine indeed for sacred Sylvia.
Hath she forsworn me?

Proteus: No Valentine is Sylvia have forsworn me."

(III, i, 210-213)

In as light a comedy as Midsummer Night's Dream

we might expect much more punning than we find. But in this play Shakespeare's interest in words is manifested rather in a very carefully chosen vocabulary than in open punning. We have no one character prone to play on words in this play, and the only puns we find are scattered and of little consequence.

The first one is upon the preposition "to" and the adverb "too", when Hermia and Lysander are bemoaning Theseus decision to marry Hermia to Demetrius:

"Hermia: O cross! too high to be enthralled to low."

(I, i, 134)

and:

"Hermia: O spite! too old to be engaged to young."

(I, i, 136)

When the entertainment is being planned Bottom is told to select whatever beard he will wear. He answers:

"I will discharge it in either your straw-color beard, your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain beard, or your French-crown-colour beard, your perfect yellow.

"Quince: Some of your French crowns have no hair at all, and then you will play barefaced."

(I, i, 94-98)

Demetrius in the wood, followed by Helena, says to her:

"And here am I, and wode within this wood,
Because I cannot meet my Hermia."

(II, i, 192-193)

Demetrius, playing on "bond" addresses Lysander who is held back by Hermia:

"I would I had your bond, for I perceive
A weak bond holds you: I'll not trust your
word."¹²

(III, ii, 266-267)

Hermia to Helena says:

"What, are you grown so high in his esteem,
Because I am so dwarfish, and so low? "

(III, ii, 294-295)

After the Wall has spoken in the play presented before Theseus, Demetrius remarks:

"It is the wittiest partition that ever I
heard discourse, my lord:"¹³

(V, i, 167)

11. "wood or wode—mad" (Dyce)

12. "weake bond: alluding to Hermia's arms, which were clinging around Lysander. Demetrius scornfully intimates that Lysander from cowardice does not really wish to be free. This explains Lysander's vehement reply. (Furness, page 156)

13. "former: I believe the passage should be read 'This is the wittiest partition that ever I heard in a discourse' alluding to the many stupid partitions in the argumentative writings of the time. Shakespeare himself, as well as his contemporaries, uses discourse for reasoning, and he here avails himself of the double sense, as he had done before in the word 'partition'. (Furness, page 218)

And after the Lion's speech Demetrius tries another pun, more simple this time:

"The very best at beast, my lord, that e'er I saw."

(V,i,232)

and again:

"Pyramus: (after stabbing himself) Now die, die, die, die, die."

Demetrius: No die, but an ace for he is but one."¹⁴

(V,i,11-12)

Launcelot, whom we expect to be the punning agent in The Merchant of Venice, disappoints us. He is humorous, but he does not indulge in word-play. The reason is, doubtless, that Shakespeare did not create him an intelligent enough character for quibbling. The only clever piece of punning apportioned to Launcelot is in the following lines with Lorenzo:

"Lorenzo: Go in, sirrah, bid them prepare for dinner."

Launcelot: That is done, sir; they have all stomachs:.

Lorenzo: Goodly lord, what a wit-snapper are you! then bid them prepare dinner.

Launcelot: That is done, too, sir; only 'cover' is the word.

Lorenzo: Will you cover, then, sir?

Launcelot: Not so, sir, neither, I know my duty."

(IV,v,41-47)

Portia, in speaking of the Neapolitan prince,

14. "To make even a lame conundrum of this you are to suppose that 'die' implies 'two' as if it came from 'duo'". (Furness, page 231)

used emotionally, and in the physical sense. "but she plays on the word "colt" as meaning "witless": quickly changes it to the noun, "moveable" an article of

"Ay, that's a colt indeed, for he doth nothing but talk of his horse."

"Petruchio: Myself an moveable (I,11,43) then for my wife.

In Act Three Shylock quickly answers Salanio's speech: move you hence! I know you at the first. You were a moveable."

"Salanio: And Shylock, for his own part, knew the bird was fledged, and then it is the complexion of them all to leave the dam.

Shylock: She is damned for it." a ready answer.

He starts a play on "be" and "bee" (III,1,31-34) immediately

by turn Gratiano and Salarino are thinking respectively of Bassanio's success in his love suit and Antonio's loss of his merchant ships: be! should be!

"Gratiano: We are the Jasons, we have won the fleece. take that!"

Salarino: I would you had won the fleece that he hath lost."

(III,11,243-244)

The battle of wits between Katherina and Petruchio in The Taming of The Shrew affords much opportunity for punning, and, since Shakespeare represents them both as very intelligent characters, the puns are of a good type. As we read the play, we grow to expect a witty answer to every speech made by one of these two characters in the presence of the other. Shakespeare has made this word-play the strongest element in the play.

Katherina answers Petruchio's first advances toward love-making with a clever pun on the word "moved"

be a blockhead, take a buzzard! (a worthless hawk). To take one bird for another was in proverbial use, as typifying an ignorant. (Kobbs, page 144)

used emotionally, and in the physical sense. Then she quickly changes it to the noun, "moveable" an article of furniture.

"Petruchio: Myself am moved to woo thee for my wife.

Katherina: Moved! in good time, let him that moved you hither Remove you hence! I knew you at the first You were a moveable."

(II, i, 195-198)

Petruchio is capable as well of a ready answer. He starts a play on "be" and "bee" and Katherina immediately turns it:

"Katherina: -- and yet as heavy as my weight should be.

Petruchio: Should be! should buzz!

Katherina: Well taken, and like a buzzard.

Petruchio: O, slow-winged turtle! shall a buzzard take thee?

Katherina: Ay for a turtle as he takes a buzzard."

(II, i, 103-109)

Petruchio's threat to "cuff" Katherina after she has struck him is quickly answered by a play on "arms" as limbs of the body and as an heraldic insignia denoting the rank of a gentleman:

"Katherina: So may you lose your arms, If you strike me, you are no gentleman And if no gentleman, why then no arms."

(II, i, 222-224)

- 15: "Clarke: 'This word is here used in its double signification of a degenerate hawk and a blockhead, dunce, or simpleton. Katherina first uses it in the latter sense. Petruchio replies, using it in the former sense, and then Katherina uses it in both senses: 'as he (a blockhead) takes a buzzard' (a worthless hawk). To take one bird for another was in proverbial use, as typifying an ignoramus.'" (Robe, page 144)

In the same conversation Kate again answers

Petruchio:

"Katherina: Where did you study all this goodly speech?

Petruchio: It is extempore from my mother-wit.

Katherina: A witty mother! witless else her son."

(II,1,264-267)

The word "stomach" was used in the Elizabethan age to denote "anger" as well as "hunger". Petruchio plays on the word:

"Come, Kate, sit down, I know you have a stomach."

(IV,1,161)

Lucetta, in The Two Gentlemen of Verona, uses the same pun:

"Julia: Is't near dinner time?

Lucetta: I would it were

That you might kill your stomach on your meat
And not upon your maid."

(I,11,66-168)

Shakespeare again uses the play on "sun" which we found in Midsummer Night's Dream.

"Katherina: I know it is the sun that shines so bright.

Petruchio: No, by my mother's sun, and that's myself- - -"

(IV,v,5-6)

Petruchio and Katherina sometimes indulge in

16. "Every man in His Humour contains the same pun:

Stephen- - - I could eat the very hilts for anger.

A sign of good digestion! You have an ostrich stomach, cousin.

Stephen: A stomach? would I had him here, you should see, an' I had a stomach."

(III,1)

punning with the other characters:

"Baptista: You are welcome, sir.

Petruchio: - - - - And yet I come not well." 17

(III,1,89-90)

"Widow: And now you know my meaning.

Katherina: A very mean meaning.

Widow:

Right, I mean you.

Katherina: And I am mean, indeed, respecting you."

(V,11,30-33)

Grumio, servant to Petruchio, is also a punster.

His first pun is on "figure" as a piece of furniture, and the verb "disfigure":

"I'll tell you what, sire, and she stand him but a little, he will throw a figure in her face and so disfigure her with it that she shall have no more eyes to see withal than a cat."

(I,11,112-115)

Grumio appears ignorant of the second meaning of "countenance", "to do credit", and "to honor".

"Curtis: Do you hear, ho? You must meet my master to countenance my mistress.

Grumio: Why, she hath a face of her own.

Curtis: Who knows not that?

Grumio: Thou, it seems, that calls for company to countenance her.

Curtis: I call them forth to credit her.

Grumio: Why, she comes to borrow nothing of them."

(IV, 1, 100-106)

The sewing term "to face" is a target for Grumio's wit. He says to the tailor:

17: This pun also is found in Everyman in His Humour.

Stephen: Nothing, but am come to see you doe, uncle.

Knowele: That's kindly done, you are welcome, cousin.

Stephen: Ay, I know that, sir, I would not ha' come, else."

(I,i)

"Thou hast faced many things.

Tailor: I have.

Grumio: Face not me. Thou hast braved many men; brave not me, I will neither be faced nor braved."

(III,iii,123-125)

Grumio puns on the tailor's "bill, and "bill"

a weapon.

(I,ii,43-45)

"I am for thee straight: take thou the bill, give me thy mete-yard, and spare not me."

(IV,iii,152-153)

The other characters find double meaning also in a few instances.

When Baptista suggests that Bianca's suitors court Katherina, Gremio changes "court" to "cart".

"Baptista: Leave you shall have to court her at your pleasure.

Gremio: To cart her, rather: She's too rough for me."

(I,i,54-55)

Shakespeare even finds a way to pun on the simple word "I":

"Petruchio: What's this? Mutton?

First Servant: Ay.

Petruchio: Who brought it?

Peter: I."

(IV,i,163)

We look, naturally, to Falstaff for much of the wit in The Merry Wives of Windsor. He puns first on "waste" and "waist" answering a pun by Pistol on "about" in its two senses of "around" and "on the verge of" or

(V,v,7-10)

"in the act of":

Falstaff: My honest lads, I will tell you what I am about.

Pistol: Two yards and more.

Falstaff: No quips now, Pistol! Indeed I am in the waist two yards about, but I am now about no waste, I am about thrift."

(I,ii,43-45)

Another is on the words "council" and "counsel" meaning "silence":

"Shallow: The council shall know this.

Falstaff: 'Twere better for you if it were known in counsel, you'll be laughed at."

(I,i,121-123)

Perhaps Shakespeare had in mind Pope Gregory's famous pun on "angel" and "angle" when he gave Falstaff a pun on "angel"; in its usual sense, and meaning the English gold coin of that name.

"Falstaff: Now the report goes she has all the rule of her husband's purse, he hath a legion of angels."

(I,iii,58-60)

Falstaff shows some ingenuity in turning nouns into adjectives with a changed meaning. Perhaps the popularity of the modern English adjective "beastly" can be traced back to Falstaff. He has been made to come into the park, disguised in horns as Herne, the hunter.

"So was also Jupiter a swan for the love of Leda. O, omnipotent love! How near the god drew to the complexion of a goose. A fault done first in the form of a beast. O Jove, a beastly fault! And then another fault in the semblance of a fowl, think on't Jove: a fowl fault!"

(V,v,7-10)

Sir Hugh Evans, the Welsh Parson, is responsible for a few of the quibbles of this play. His dialect is one of the few examples of the influence of a foreign tongue in a Shakespearian character's speech. But it so happens that he forgets his native tongue entirely when he sees an opportunity for a quibble in English.

"Slender: I may quarter, coz.

Shallow: You may, by marrying.

Evans: It is marring indeed if he quarter it." ¹⁸

(I,i,23-25)

Evans quibbles again on "marriage" in the same scene:

"Evans: But that is not the question: the question is concerning your marriage.

Shallow: Ay, there's the point, sir.

Evans: Marry it is, the very point of it."

(I,i-228 -237)

Slender, too, can wrest a second meaning from a word:

"Anne: What is your will?

Slender: My will? 'od's heartlings, that's a pretty jest indeed! I never made my will yet, I thank heaven. I am not such a sickly creature, I give heaven praise."

(III,iv, 58-62)

The Host plays on "husband" in its second sense, "to guard":

18. "Quarter: A term in heraldry for combining the arms of another family with one's own by putting them in one of the four compartments of the shield. This, as Shallow intimates, was often done by marriage." (Rolfe, M.W.W. page 130)

"Fenton: And, in the lawful name of marrying to give our hearts united ceremony.

Host: Well, husband your device."

(IV,vi,50-53)

There are several rollicking characters who keep us amused by their word-play in Twelfth Night, and there are several scenes in which two or three characters prove equally proficient in word-jiggling, so that it is impossible to point out any one person as the wit in this play. Many of the puns have been mentioned in connection with previous plays. It is only natural that by the time Twelfth Night was written Shakespeare should have been forced to repeat his puns. His continued use of them is proof of his untiring interest in the study of words.

Maria attempts to rebuke Sir Toby:

"Maria: Ay but you must confine yourself within the modest limits of order.

Sir Toby: Confine! I'll confine myself no finer than I am: these clothes are good enough to drink in; and so be these boots, too; and they be not, let them hang themselves in their own straps."

(I,iii,8-13)

The clown finds a ready answer for Olivia's rebuke, as well:

"Olivia: Go to, you're a dry fool; I'll no more of you: besides you grow dishonest.

Clown: Two faults, madonna, that drink and good counsel will amend."

(I,v,8-11)

Malvolio's answer to Olivia in the same scene is a quibble:

"Olivia: Whatkind o' man is he?
 Malvollio: Why, of mankind.
 Olivia: What manner of man?
 Malvollio: of very ill manner: he'll speak
 with you, will you or no."

(I,v,159-167)

Sir Toby puns on the word "contagious" as equivalent to our slang phrase "catchy" with reference to music, and as meaning "infectious". After the Clown's song Sir Andrew says:

"A mellifluous voice, as I am true knight.
 Sir Toby: A contagious breath.
 Sir Andrew: Very sweet and contagious, in faith.
 Sir Toby: To hear by the nose, it is dulcet
 in contagion. But shall we make the welkin dance
 indeed? shall we rouse the night owl in a catch
 that will draw three souls out of one weave? shall
 we do that?
 Sir Andrew: An you love me, let's do it, I am
 dog at a catch."
 Clown: By'r lady, sir, and some dogs will
 catch well."

(II,iii,56-66)

Sir Toby puns on "O" as a letter and as an exclamation, while Malvollio is reading the note Maria had written:

"Malvollio: A should follow but O does.
 Fabian: And O shall end, I hope.
 Sir Toby: Ay, or I'll cudgel him, and make
 him cry O."

II,v,143-145)

The clown and Viola quibble on "by" used to denote proximity and to mean "by means of":

"Viola: Save thee, friend, and thy music, dost thou live by thy tabor.

Clown: No, sir, I live by the church.

Viola: Art thou a church man?

Clown: No such matter, sir: I do live by the church, for I do live at my house, and my house doth stand by the church.

Viola: So thou mayst say the king lies by a beggar if a beggar lives near to him: and the church stands by thy tabor if thy tabor stand by the church."

(III,i,1-11)

Viola and Sir Toby enjoy a little fencing with words:

"Sir Toby: Taste your legs, sir, put them to motion.

Viola: My legs do better understand me, sir, than I understand you what you mean by bidding me taste my legs.

Sir Toby: I mean to go, sir, to enter.

Viola: I will answer you with gait and entrance." 19

(III,i,84-89)

It seems in the above passage that, since our author had in mind one more pun than he could conveniently use, he had Viola only threaten to use it. His eyes were open, it is evident, for a pun upon every word that he used.

There are so many puns upon the two meanings of the verb "lie" that it is useless to quote them. Since they are all very similar, Sir Toby's in the following line is typical:

"And as many lies as will lie in thy sheet of paper."

(III,ii,49)

19. "Gait--proceeding." (Dyce)

sarcasm, which, it seems, is capable of various interpretations:

The sparring of Beatrice and Benedick is so famous that, when we turn to Much Ado About Nothing, we expect much in the way of word-play from them. But some of their wit is turned into other channels, and we must be content with only a few real quibbles from them and almost an equal number from the other characters.

Benedick manages to include three puns in one sentence when he says of Hero:

"Why, i' faith, methinks she's too low for high praise, too brown for a fair praise, and too little for a great praise."

on the word "steal" as meaning "to talk" (I, i, 172-174)

Again Hero is the subject of his pun. He is chiding Claudio about his love before Don Pedro:

"He is in love, with who? No that is your grace's part. Mark how short his answer is; with Hero, Leonato's short daughter."

In the same scene Borachio (I, i, 215-216)

Beatrice complains of an illness and Margaret suggests "some of this distilled Carduus Benedictus and lay it over your heart."²⁰

Beatrice accuses her of having some moral, or latent meaning in her suggestion, but Margaret firmly demies it.

After Claudio's denunciation of Hero at the marriage altar, Beatrice hurls out the following bit of

20. Carduus Benedictus: "It was evidently one of the great medicines and lotions of the age." (Furness, page 85)

sarcasm, which, it seems, is capable of various interpretations:

"Princes and count~~ies~~! Surely a princely testimony
a goodly count, Count Comfect, a sweet gallant, surely."

(IV,1,316-317)

Confects in those days were sweet meats, but White has interpreted Count Comfect as "Conte Comfect", the French for "a story made up", and perhaps Beatrice meant both. If she did, we have, certainly, a very clever pun.

Dogberry in his instructions to the watch puns on the word "steal" as meaning "to take feloniously" and "to slip away".

--- "the most peaceable way for you, if you do take a thief is to let him show you himself what he is and steal out of your company."

(III,iii,59-62)

In the same scene Borachio tries his wit on Conrade with a quibble on "scab," as on a sore, and "scab-be", a term of contempt, still used by modern unionists against non-union laborers.

"Conrade: Here, man, I am at thy elbow.
Borachio: Mass and my elbow itched,
I thought then would a scab follow."

(III,iii,105-107)

When Borachio and Conrade are arrested or "taken up" by the watch, Borachio finds an opportunity

to pun on "bills", as in "bills of credit" and as "a weapon".

"Borachio: We are like to prove a goodly commodity, being taken up of these men's bills." ²¹

(III,iii,190-191)

When Benedick comes to challenge Claudio to a duel, Claudio innocently asks him to amuse him and Don Pedro by his wit. Benedick threatens to draw his sword.

"Don Pedro: Dost thou wear thy wit by thy side?

Claudio: Never any did so, though very many have been beside their wit. I will bid thee draw as we do the minstrels draw, to pleasure in us." ²²

(V,1,124-128)

The punning in As You Like It, like the quibbling in Much Ado About Nothing, is well divided among the characters. The Clown and Jaques do not take upon themselves the burden of the word play, but shift it to the other characters. Shakespeare seems to have found that some of the quibbles used by the jesters were not quite consistent with the characters and, in his later plays, he gives more and more of the best plays on words to the more prominent characters. Rosalind herself proves an adept at shifting words to suit her purpose, and Celia,

21. "Commodity was formerly as now the usual term for an article of merchandise. To take up, besides its common meaning, to apprehend, was the phrase for obtaining "goods on credit." (Malone) Furness, page 174)

22. Dyce: "According to Malone, the allusion is to the minstrels drawing the bows of their fiddles; according to Mr. Collier, to their drawyng their instruments out of their cases."

her cousin, takes great delight in quibbling.

Rosalind plays on "natural" in its usual sense, and as the noun for "an idiot", used at that time to designate a fool. Touchstone's entrance has cut short an argument of Rosalind and Celia as to the relative merits of Fortune and Nature.

"Celia: Though nature have given us wit to flout at Fortune, hath not Fortune sent in this fool to cut off the argument?"

Rosalind: Indeed, then is Fortune too hard for nature, when Fortune makes Nature's natural the cutter-off of Nature's wit."

Jacques just used this doubt (I, ii, 48-52) in this

way: Rosalind and Celia enjoy a good pun on feet in verse and in a physical sense.

"Celia: Dids't hear these verses?"

Rosalind: O, yes, I heard them all, and more, too, for some of them had in them more feet than the verses would bear.

Celia: That's no matter: the feet might bear the verses.

Rosalind: Ay, but the feet were lame and could not bear themselves without the verse, and therefore stood lamely in the verse."

"Rosalind: Thou speakest well (IV, ii, 172-180)

Rosalind puns on "suit" as "love-making" and as "apparel":

"Orlando: What, of my suit (meaning out of)

Rosalind: Not out of your apparel, and yet out of your suit."

(V, i, 87-88)

Jacques uses the same pun in connection with one on "weed" as "rank growth" and as a "garment":

"Jacques: O, that I were a fool!
I am ambitious for a motley coat.

Duke: Thou shalt have one.

Jacques: It is my only suit.
Provided that you weed your better judgements
of all opinion that grows rank in them
That I am wise."

(II,vi,42-46)

Furness in his note on the following passage
explains it in this way:

"In Cooper's Thesaurus (1573) the Dictionary
which Shakespeare probably used (we are told that
Queen Elizabeth used it) the second definition of
nomina is 'the names of debtes owen'". (page 95)

Jacques just used this double meaning in this
way:

"Jacques: - - - Come, more; another stanza.
Call you 'em stanza's.

Amiens: What you will, Monsieur Jacques.

Jacques: Nay, I care not for their names,
They owe me nothing."

(II,v,19-22)

We naturally expect a few quibbles from
Touchstone.

"Rosalind: Thou speakest wiser than thou are
ware of.

Touchstone: Nay, I shall ne'er be ware of
mine own wit till I break my shins against it."

(II,iv,58-60)

Touchstone asks Corin:

"Hast any philosophy in thee shepherd?"

(III,ii,22)

And Corin relates his small bit of philosophy
ending with:

(III,i,78-85)

"- - - -that he that hath learned no wit by nature
nor art may complain of good breeding or comes of
a very dull kindred!

Touchstone: Such a one is a natural philosopher."

(III,ii,29-33)

The two Dromio's are almost the sole punning
instruments in The Comedy of Errors, and their puns suffice.
It is refreshing to find so many new plays on words at a
time when we thought Shakespeare's supply of such quibbles
must surely be exhausted.

Antonio of Ephesus inquires of Dromio of Syra-
cuse:

"Where is the thousand marks thou hadst of me?"

(I,ii,81)

and he, knowing nothing of the money, answers:

"I have some marks of yours upon my pate,
Some of my mistress' marks upon my shoulders,
But not a thousand marks between you both."

(I,ii,82-85)

In addition to the obvious pun on "cross"
in the following lines, Dromio of Ephesus uses "round"
in the second sense of "plain spoken":

"Adriana: Back, slave, or I will break thy
parts across.

Dromio of Ephesus: And he will bless that
cross with other beating.
Between you I shall have a hold head.

Adriana: Hence, prating peasant! Fetch thy
master home.

Dromio of Ephesus: Am I so round with you as you
you with me,
That like a football you do spurn me thus?
You spurn me hence, and he will spurn me hither.
If I last in this service you must case me in leather."

(II,i,78-85)

Dyce gives "a round fortification" and "a head" for the two meanings of the word "sconce" played upon by Dromio of Syracuse in the following way:

"Antonio of Syracuse: Or I will beat this method in your sconce.

Dromio of Syracuse: Sconce, call you it? So you would have battering, I would rather it a head: an you use these blows long, I must get a sconce for my head and insconce it too: or else I shall seek my wit in my shoulders."

(II,ii,33-40)

The use of "basting" for "beating" and "dry-basting" for "beating" that does not draw blood gives the same Dromio a chance to quibble in the following conversation with his master:

"Antonio of Syracuse: - - - But say, sir, it is dinner-time?

Dromio of Syracuse: No, sir, I think the meat wants that I have.

Antonio of Syracuse: In good time, sir, what's that?

Dromio of Syracuse: Basting.

Antonio of Syracuse: Well, sir, then t'will be dry.

Dromio of Syracuse: If it be, sir, I pray you eat none of it.

Antonio of Syracuse: Your reason?

Dromio of Syracuse: Lest it make you choleric and purchase me another dry basting."

(II,ii,55-64)

The other Dromio is fond of quibbling, especially when his master is the target of his wit:

"Antonio of Syracuse: Well, I'll break in, go borrow me a crow.

Dromio of Ephesus: A crow without a feather? -

Antonio of Syracuse: Go get thee gone, fetch me an iron crow."

(II,i,79-82,84)

It is strange that Shakespeare does not use our familiar pun on heir and hair in an earlier play. Dromio of Syracuse uses it first in talking about Nell, in whom he says he can locate countries because she is spherical, like a globe.

"Antonio of Syracuse: Where is France?

Dromio of Syracuse: In her forehead, armed and reverted,
Making war against her heir."

(III,ii,125-126)

Antonio of Ephesus again tries to locate his money. This time he questions Dromio of Ephesus, who has only a rope.

"Antonio of Ephesus: To what end did I bid thee hie home?

Dromio of Ephesus: To a rope's end, sir, and to that end,
Am I returned.

Antonio of Ephesus: And to that end, sir, I will welcome you."
(beating him)

(IV,iv,16-19)

There are several puns on "bond" and "bound" in this play, but this one will suffice to illustrate the use of the words:

"Dromio of Ephesus: Within this hour I was his bondman, sir,

But he, I thank him, gnawed in two my cords,
Now am I Dromio and his man unbound."

(V,1,289-291)

PHRASES

"Julia: But say, Lucetta, now we are alone.
Wouldn't thou then counsel me to fall in love?"

In some instances Shakespeare's pun is not on the word alone, in contrast to another word of the same sound, but is a pun on its sense in some particular phrase. In most cases these are peculiar expressions which have come down even to our day, and to which we give no thought, but to Shakespeare, intent as he was on the study of just such details, these phrases were of much importance.

(I, 11, 133-134)

The phrase, "learn by heart", common to school children of today, was, it seems, used by the Elizabethans as well, to mean "memorize". Shakespeare uses this, and the phrase "out of heart" or "downcast" in a punning way in Love's Labour's Lost.

(II, 1, 80-91)

"Moth: But have you forgot your love?
Armado: Almost I had.
Moth: Negligent student! learn her by heart.
Armado: By heart and in heart, boy.
Moth: And out of heart, master; all those three will I prove."
Armado: What wilt thou prove?
Moth: A man if I live; and this, by, in, and without upon the instant: by heart you love, because your heart cannot come by her; in heart you love her, because your heart is in love with her; and out of heart you love her, being out of heart that you cannot enjoy her."

(V, 1 (III, 1, 30-46)

Lucetta, in The Two Gentlemen of Verona plays on the phrase "to fall in love":

Dromio of Ephesus plays on the phrase "at hand"

"Julia: But say, Lucetta, now we are alone.
Woulds't thou then counsel me to fall in love?"

Lucetta: Ay, madam, so you stumble not unheedfully."

(I, i, 1-3)

Lucetta again plays on the meaning of a phrase when she answers Julia's direction to "take up" some papers from the floor by changing the phrase "taken up" to mean "scolded":

"Julia: If you respect them, best to take them up.

Lucetta: Nay, I was taken up for laying them down."

(I, ii, 133-134)

Speed, in the same play, ridicules the expression "stand affected to":

"Valentine: In conclusion stand affected to her.

Speed: I would you were set, so your affection would cease."

(II, i, 90-91)

The old expression "to suffer love" is played upon by Benedick in Much Ado About Nothing:

"Beatrice: For which of my good parts did you first suffer love for me?

Benedick: Suffer love, a good epithet. I do suffer love, inded, for I love thee against my will.

Beatrice: In spite of your heart, I think; Alas, poor heart! If you spite it for my sake I will Spite it for yours; for I will never love that which my friend hates."

(V, ii, 66-70)

The play on the phrase "in spite of" in Beatrice's speech is obvious.

Dromio of Ephesus plays on the phrase "at hand"

used for "near" in The Comedy of Errors:

"Adriana: Say, is your tardy master now at hand?
Dromio of Ephesus: Nay, he is at two hands with
me and that my two ears can witness:"

(II,i,44-45)

In the Taming of the Shrew Shakespeare ridicules
not any one expression in particular, but the use of the

Dative in the following sense in any phrase:

"Petruchio:- - - Here, sirrah Grumio, knock,
I say.

Grumio: Knock, sir! who shall I knock?
Is there any man has rebused your worship?

Petruchio: Villain, I say, knock you here soundly.

Grumio: Knock you here, sir! Why, sir, what am
I, sir, that I should knock you here, sir?

Petruchio: Villain, I say, knock me at this gate.
And rap me well, or I'll knock your knave's pate.

Grumio: My master is grown quarrelsome.
I should knock you first,
And then I know after who comes by the worst."

Costard: in manner and form following, sir:
all those three. I was seen with (I,ii,5-15)

There are a few law phrases in these early
plays upon which Shakespeare puns in their meaning as
law terms and as words in general use. There are, of course,
numerous law terms in these early plays, but Shakespeare
has found only a few of them suitable material for word-
play.

The term "fine and recovery" used in The Comedy of Errors in a punning way is defined in Dyce's Glossary
quoted from Ritson as "'the strongest assurance known
to English law'". It was a custom of paying a fine and

1. Ephesus: "not his great manners, but thy good manners."
"Lilya Works", R. W. Bond., Volume 1, page 225, line 35,
(also 317, line 12)

recovering possession of a piece of property under question in a law suit.

"Dromio of Syracuse: There's no time for a man to recover his hair that grows bald by nature.

Antonio of Syracuse: May he not do it by fine and recovery?

Dromio of Syracuse: Yes, to pay a fine for a periwig and recover the lost hair of another man."

(II,ii,73-76)

In Love's Labour's Lost the law term "manner and form following" used purely as a matter of form in documents is the source of much quibbling on the part of Costard:

"Costard: The matter is to me, sir, as concerning Jacquenetta. The manner of it is, I was taken with the manner.

Biron: In what manner?

Costard: In manner and form following, sir: all those three. I was seen with her in the manor-house, sitting with her upon the form, and taken following her into the park; which, put together, is in manner and form following. Now, is, sir, for the manner, --it is the manner of a man to speak to a woman: for the form, --in some form.

Biron: For the following, sir?

Costard: As it shall follow in my correction."¹

(I,i,203-215)

Shakespeare twice used in his early plays a phrase which has given scholars much concern, and the exact meaning of which has not as yet been definitely settled upon. This expression is "to take into one's books", and is capable of varied interpretations, but

1. Euphues: "not his great manners, but thy good manners" "Lyly's Works", R. W. Bond., Volume I, page 225, line 35, (also 317, line 12)

whatever the exact meaning, it is evident that it is used in a punning sense in both of the present instances. If we accept the definition of Schmidt, "to be in one's favor", for "to be in one's books", we can understand the puns.

In Much Ado About Nothing the Messenger says to Beatrice about Benedick:

"I see, lady, the gentleman is not in your books."

and she answers:

No, an he were, I would burn my study."

(I,i,77-78)

In The Taming of the Shrew, immediately after Katherina's pun on "arms" (mentioned above) Petruchio says:

"A herald, Kate? O, put me on thy books."

(II,i,20-21)

Rolfe, in this instance says in his notes:

"Petruchio plays on the common meaning of the phrase 'take me into thy favour' and 'being enrolled in the heraldic registers'."

(I,i,66-67)

Some of Shakespeare's puns were based entirely on the meaning which they had to the audience of his time, and are wholly unintelligible to us without an understanding of the allusion in the Elizabethan mind. These word-plays differ from those mentioned above in that they are not puns on the word itself in its several meanings, but on the word with reference to its use in some contemporary game, custom, song, dance, old familiar story, or proverb. The puns will be quoted, then, in the order just named.

In Love's Labour's Lost there is a pun on the words "fast and loose" as they were used in a game of the time. Furness in his edition of this play quotes, "'Brand(ii,435) Pricking at the Belt." A cheating game, also called 'Fast and Loose'.

"Costard: Let me not be pent up, sir; I will fast, being loose.

Moth: No, sir; that were fast and loose; thou shalt to prison."

(I,ii,161-162)

When Baptista, in The Taming of the Shrew, informs the suitors of Bianca that she cannot marry until Katherina is mated, and suggests that they court Katherina, she says:

"I pray you, sir, is it your will
To make a stale of me amongst these mates?"

(I,i,66-67)

The allusion to the term "stale-mate" in the notches upon a post occasioned Dronio's quibble in game of chess is easily understood by the modern devotee of the game, as well as it was by the Elizabethan.

In The Two Gentlemen of Verona Lucetta and Julia combine a pun on a musical term and reference to a game. Julia, in speaking of the song she and Lucetta just have finished, says:

"The mean is drowned with your too unruly
bass."

(I, ii, 96)

and Lucetta answers:

"Indeed I bid the base for Proteus."

(I, ii, 97)

Dyce, in his Glossary defines this reference as "base, -prison-base, or prison-bars, a rustic game: as the base, foot, or undersong." Shakespeare uses this term "burthen" twice in a quibble on "burden" and an encounter on behalf of Proteus!)

In Much Ado About Nothing Benedick's toothache brings about a quibbling allusion to the customary punishment of "hanging, drawing, and quartering."

"Benedick: I have a toothache.

Don Pedro: Draw it.

Benedick: Hang it!

Claudio: You must hang it first and draw it afterwards:"

(III, i, 21-24)

The old custom of keeping score by making

Much Ado About Nothing:

notches upon a post occasioned Dromio's quibble in

The Comedy of Errors:

"Dromio of Ephesus: I from my mistress come to
you in post,
If I return I shall be post indeed,
For she will score your faults upon my pate."

(I,ii,63-65)

Many of Shakespeare's musical allusions resulting in puns are repeated several times. His references to the arts of singing and dancing show us, however, that his repetition is not occasioned by a lack of knowledge.

Dyce quotes Chappell's Popular Music of the Olden Time, volume I, page 222, second edition, "The burthen of a song, in the old acceptation of the word, was the base, foot, or undersong." Shakespeare uses this term "burthen" twice in a quibble on "burden" and "light" when the song Light O' Love is mentioned.

In The Two Gentlemen of Verona Julia tells Lucetta:

"Best sing it to the tune of Light O' Love."

and Lucetta replies:

(I,ii,83)

"It is too heavy for so light a tune.

Julia: Heavy! belike it hath some burden then?"

I,ii,84-85)

Margaret makes use of the same quibble in

Much Ado About Nothing:

"Clap's into Light O' Love, that goes without a burden: do you sing, and I'll dance it."

(III, iv, 43-44)

The frequent puns on "measure", a dance, and "measure", moderation, and "measure", the verb, have been quoted elsewhere. Another dance is referred to in a quibbling way in Much Ado About Nothing when Beatrice compares courtship and marriage to various dances. The "cinque-pas" punned upon in the following lines is defined by Dyce as "a dance the steps of which were regulated by the number five". The French pronunciation of "cinque" gives rise to the pun:

"Beatrice: The fault will be in the music, cousin, if you be not wooed in good time: if the prince be too important tell him there is measure in everything and so dance out the answer. For, hear me, Hero: wooing, wedding, and repenting, in as a Scotch jig, a measure, and a cinque pace: the first suit is hot and hasty, like a Scotch jig, and full as fantastical; the wedding, mannerly, modest, as a measure, full of state and ancientry; and then comes repentance, and, with his bad legs falls into the cinque pace faster and faster, till he sink into his grave:"

(II, i, 72-82)

In the Taming of the Shrew after Hortensio has attempted to teach Katherina to play the flute he answers Baptista's inquiry with a pun on the "frets" of the lute, and the verb "to fret" quoted from Katherina's exclamation to him.

"Baptista: Why, then, thou cans't not break her to the lute?

Hortensio: Why, no, for she hath brake the lute to me.

I did but tell her she mistook her fret,

And hov'd her hand to teach her fingering,

When, with a most impatient devilish spirit,

'Frets call you these?' quoth she, 'I'll fume with them'."

(II,i,148-153)

Hortensio uses another musical pun in talking to Lucentio:

"Hortensio: Madam, 'tis now in tune.

Lucentio: All but the base:

Hortensio: The base is right: 'tis the base knave that jars."

(III,i,145-147)

Two of the quibbles in these early plays were based on old stories familiar to Shakespeare's audience and to the modern reader. The legend that Judas was hanged with an elder tree prompted the following pun in Love's Labour's Lost:

"Holofernes: Begin, sir, you are my elder.

Biron: Well followed: Judas was hanged on an elder."

(V,ii,608-610)

Proteus in The Two Gentlemen of Verona says:

"Upon some book I love I'll pray for thee,

Valentine: That's on some shallow story of deep love.

How young Leander crossed the Hellespont.

Proteus: That's a deep story of a deeper love."

(I,i,19-22)

Several of the quibbles in these plays resulted from the quoting of some old proverbs, or more often a proverbial expression, by some one character who is answered by a play on the words quoted.

The phrase used in the following lines from Twelfth Night, 'bring the hand to the buttery bar and letting it drink', is explained in the Variorum edition by the following quotation from Kendrick (page 94); "The bringing the hand to the buttery bar and letting it drink is a proverbial phrase among forward Abigail, to ask once for a kiss and a present. Sir Andrew's slowness of comprehension in this particular at once gave her a just suspicion of his great frigidity and avarice. She therefore calls his hand dry; the moistness of the hand being a sign of liberality, as well in matters of love as in money."

The lines are:

"Sir Andrew: Fair lady, do you think you have fools in your hand?

Maria: Sir, I have not you by the hand.

Sir Andrew: Marry, but you shall have, and here's my hand.

Maria: Now, sir, thought is free: I pray you, bring your hand to the buttery bar and let it drink.

Sir Andrew: Wherefore, sweetheart? what's your metaphor?

Maria: It's dry, sir.

Sir Andrew: Why, I think so: I am not such an ass but I can keep my hand dry. But what's your jest?

Maria: A dry jest, sir."

"Give me not the boots," a proverbial expression for "don't make a laughing stock of me" (Dyce) is the real source of this pun on the different uses of the word "boots" in The Two Gentlemen of Verona:

Valentine: 'Tis true: for you are over boots in love:

And yet you never swum the Hellspont.

Proteus: Over the boots? Nay, give me not the boots.

Valentine: No, I will no, for it boots thee not."

(I,i,25-28)

In the same play when Speed is enumerating the characteristics of the maid about whom he is reading, Launce replies with a proverbial saying "to set the world on wheels", meaning, according to Schmitt, to have all the world on a string, and to drive it before one."

"Speed: Item: she can spin:

Launce: Then may I set the world on wheels and she can spin for her living."

(III,1,316-317)

In the same scene the proverbial saying "more hair than wit" is used by Speed and played upon by Launce:

"Speed: 'Item: she hath more hair than wit.'

Launce: More hair than wit? It may be. I'll prove it. The cov r of the salt hides the salt, and therefore it is more than the salt; the hair that covers the wit is more than the wit, for the greater hides the less,: What's next?"

(III,1,66-72)

The Widow in The Taming of the Shrew quotes a proverb and is quickly answered by Petruchio:

"Widow: He that is giddy thinks the world turns round.

Petruchio: Roundly replied."

(V,ii,19-20)

Beatrice in Much Ado About Nothing plays upon the old proverb "Curst cows have short horns", found in Ray's Collection of Proverbs.

"Antonio: In faith she's too curst:

Beatrice: Too curst is more than curst: I shall lessen God's sending that way, for it is said, 'God sends a curst cow short horns', but to a cow too curst he sends none.

Leonato: So, by being too curst, God will send you no horns:

Beatrice: Just, if he send me no husband.

(II,i,22-26)

The old saying "to fear no colours", is not only played upon in Twelfth Night, but the source of the saying is given by Maria:

"Clown: Then let her hang me, he that is well hanged in this world needs to fear no colours.

Maria: Make that good.

Clown: He shall see none to fear.

Maria: A good lenten answer: I can tell thee where that saying was born, of "I fear no colours!"

Clown: Where, good Mistress Mary?

Maria: In the wars, that may you be bold to say in your foolery."

(I,v,5-10)

MISUSED WORDS

We have seen in how great measure Shakespeare manifested his interest in words in his use of puns in his plays. These puns showed an identity in sound but difference in meaning. Our author's interest in words

CHAPTER III

MISUSED WORDS

There are many 'Mrs. Malaprop's' in Shakespeare and sometimes several of her in one play. These mistakes are ridiculous, of course, for Shakespeare meant them to be, but under their amusing effect is a definite index to Shakespeare's purpose in his word play. Again he was making of himself a "juggler of words" and showing his interested public the vast possibilities of his language.

The Henry Fifth of Bladder shows the largest number of characters who are not at all sure of their vocabulary, or who are too sure of their own verbosity, as the case may be.

Bladder and Evans are both guilty of a few errors in the choice of their words. Bladder says of Shallow's custom of signing "Arrigero" at all times:

"All his predecessors gone before him hath done it, and all his successors that come after him may."

(1.1.14-15)

MISUSED WORDS

We have seen in how great measure Shakespeare manifested his interest in words in his use of puns in his plays. These puns showed an identity in sound but difference in meaning. Our author's interest in words also took the form of a study of words only similar in sound and of very different meaning--the Mrs. Malaprop use of them. There are many 'Mrs. Malaprop's' in Shakespeare and sometimes several of her in one play. These mistakes are ridiculous, of course, for Shakespeare meant them to be, but under their amusing effect is a definite index to Shakespeare's purpose in his word play. Again he was making of himself a "juggler of words" and showing his interested public the vast possibilities of his language.

The Merry Wives of Windsor shows the largest number of characters who are not at all sure of their vocabulary, or who are too sure of their own verbosity, as the case may be.

Slender and Evans are both guilty of a few errors in the choice of their words. Slender says of Shallow's custom of signing "Armigero" at all times:

"All his successors gone before him hath done it, and all his ancestors that come after him may."

(I, i, 14-16)

Evans, in the same scene, uses the wrong word for compromises:

"--- I am of the church and will be glad to do my benevolence to make atonements and compromises between you."

(I,1,33)

Bardolf commits the next errors, and is shortly corrected by Evans:

"Bardolf: Why, sir, for my part, I say the gentleman had drunk himself out of his five sentences.

Evans: It is his five senses: fie what the ignorance is!"

(I,1,179-181)

Evans again makes a mistake. It seems that Shakespeare endowed him with a Welsh accent in order to use him for such word errors:

"Evans: Give ear to his potions, Master Slender, I will description the matter to you, if you be of capacity of it."

(I,1,221-222)

Shakespeare's way of explaining the correct use of the mistaken word shows us very plainly that he did not expect his audience to understand the error, but wished to instruct them.

"Slender:-----but if you say 'Marry her' I will her marry, that I am freely dissolved, and dissolutely.

Evans: It is a fery discretion answer: save the fall is on the ort 'dissolutely', the ort is, according to our meaning 'resolutely', his meaning is good."

(I,1, 259-261)

Mistress Quickly reminds us most strongly of Mrs. Malaprop.

"Mistress Quickly: Well, thereby hangs a tale: good faith, it is such another Nan: but, I detect, an honest maid as ever broke bread. - - - But indeed she is given to too much allicholy and musing."

(I,iii,159-164)

Her use of canary for quandary and of alligant for elegant occurs in the same speech:

"Marry, this is the short and long of it: you have brought her into such a canaries as 'tis wonderful. The best courtier of them all, when the court lay at Windsor, could never have brought her to such a canary, - - - and in such alligant terms."

(II,1,60-64,69)

In talking to Falstaff she mistakes "infection" for "affection":

"But Mistress Page would desire you to send her your little page, of all loves: her husband has a marvellous infection to the little page;"

(II,ii,118-120)

Sir Toby provides the only error of this kind in Twelfth Night, when he confuses "detractors" with "subtractors":

"Sir Toby: By this hand, they are scoundrels and subtractors that say so of him. Who are they?"

Maria: They that add, moreover, he's drunk nightly in our company."

(I,iii,36-39)

Launcelot is responsible for the few misused words in The Merchant of Venice. He and his father are

talking to Gratiano when Launcelot, meaning that the father will explain their errand, says:

"To be brief the very truth is, that the Jew, having done me wrong, doth cause me, as my father, being, I hope, an old man, shall frutify unto you--"

(II,ii,141-143)

And later in the same conversation, after Launcelot has told Bassanio that he wishes to serve him Gobbo says:

"That is the very defect of the matter, sir."

(II,ii,152)

In his farewell to Jessica Launcelot confuses exhibit and inhibit:

"Adieu! tears exhibit my tongue:"

(II,iii,10)

Later he tells Shylock when he means "approach", that:

"- - -: My young master doth expect your reproach."

(II,iv,20)

Grumio makes the only mistake of this kind in The Taming of the Shrew:

"Grummio: (to Petruchio) Knock, sir, whom shall I knock? is there any man has rebused your worship?"

(I,ii,67)

In As You Like It Touchstone uses "parlous" colloquially for "perilous":

words, is evident from the above use made of such material
 "Thou art in a parlous state, shepherd."
 by our author. He was, of course, interested in this
 (III, ii, 45)
 growing study of the language he himself used so skillfully
 Launce, in The Two Gentlemen of Verona blunders
 and manifested his interest in his plays.
 and is corrected:

"Launce: Sir, there is a proclamation that you
 are vanished.
 Proteus: That thou art banished: O, that's the
 news!"

(III, i, 215-216)

Quince finds an opportunity in Midsummer Night's
 Dream to correct an error in words and is, in turn, cor-
 rected for a later error of his own:

"Bottom: Thisby, the flowers of odious savours
 sweet,--
 Quince: Odours, odours."

(III, i, 83-84)

"Quince: Yea, and the best person too, and he is
 the very best paramour for a sweet vouce.
 Flute: You must say 'paragon' a paramour is,
 God bless us, a thing of naught."

(IV, ii, 11-13)

Shakespeare was careful in displaying this
 particular kind of word study to use the most appropriate
 characters for such blunders. Many people in Shakespeare's
 own audiences were guilty of such mistakes, no doubt,
 but, being the skillful playwright that he was, he held
 a mirror before them and taught them to laugh at themselves,
 That the people were, at that time, experimenting in new

words, is evident from the above use made of such material by our author. He was, of course, interested in this growing study of the language he himself used so skillfully and manifested his interest in his plays.

PRONUNCIATION

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There is at all times a tendency on the part of the English speaking people to change the pronunciation of the language. CHAPTER IV This change is so gradual that it is little noticed or commented upon by the people of any one period of time. That the Elizabethan period was one of the change and growth of vocabulary we are sure, and that it was one of unusual interest in words we have attempted to prove, but the changes manifest in the pronunciation of those words shows even a stronger proof of the Elizabethan interest in language.

There is only one instance, in these early plays, of a direct reference to the existing controversy over certain pronunciations, but other puns on words, apparently not similar in sound shew a great difference in the pronunciation of the Elizabethan period and our own.

Holofernes in Love's Labour's Lost furnishes us a most interesting key to the changes going on in the pronunciation of certain sounds. The words he uses as examples are, it seems, merely indicative of changes in other words of similar spelling.

"Holofernes; He draweth out the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his argument. I abhor such fanatical phantasies, such insupportable and point-devise companions; such rackers of orthography, as to speak doubt, fine, when he should say doubt; det, when he should pronounce debt, -d-e-b-t, not d-e-t, he clipeth a calf, ewe, half-haut, neighbour vocatur nebour, -which he would call abominable; it insinuateth me of insanie; anne intelligis, dompet to make frantic, lunatic."

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There is at all times a tendency on the part of the English speaking people to change the pronunciation of the language, but, as a rule, this change is so gradual that it is little noticed or commented upon by the people of any one period of time. That the Elizabethan period was one of the change and growth of vocabulary, we are sure, and that it was one of unusual interest in words we have attempted to prove, but the changes manifest in the pronunciation of those words shows even a stronger proof of the Elizabethan interest in language.

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Holofernes in Love's Labour's Lost furnishes us a most interesting key to the changes going on in the pronunciation of certain sounds. The words he uses as examples are, it seems, merely indicative of changes in other words of similar spelling.

"Holofernes: He draweth out the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his argument. I abhor such fanatical phantasies, such insociable and point-devise companions; such rackers of orthography, as to speak dout, fine, when he should say doubt; det, when he should pronounce debt, -d-e-b-t, not d-e-t, he clipeth a calf, cauf, halfhauf, neighbour vocatur nebour,--which he would call abominable; it insinuateth me of insanie: anne intelligis, domino? to make frantic, lunatic."

That the "gh" in "eigh" was formerly pronounced we have further evidence in Much Ado About Nothing. There is also an indication that "ache" was pronounced like the letter "h":

"Beatrice: By my troth, I am exceeding ill;
heigh-ho!

Margaret: For a hawk, a horse, or a husband.

Beatrice: For the letter that begins them all,

and "H."

"Touchstone: I am here with thee (III, iv, 54-55)

There are two word-plays that lie upon the pronunciation of "qu" as hard "c".

In The Two Gentlemen of Verona "quote" must be pronounced "cote(coat)" for the sake of the pun on jerkin:

"Thurio: How quote you my folly?

Valentine: I quote it in your jerkin."

(II, ii, 18-20)

In Love's Labour's Lost the play is on "qualm" and "calm":

"Katherine: Lord Longaville said, I came
o'er his heart, - - -

And trow you what he called me?

Princess: Qualm, perhaps.

Katherine: Yes, ingood faith.

Princess: Go, sickness as thou art!"

(V, ii, 75-80)

The pronunciation of "h" with "s" or "t" seemed doubtful. In Much Ado Bout Nothing Don Pedro puns on

Although these instances are few, their import-

"noting" and "nothing": the changes taking place at that time, and "Balthasar: Note this before my notes. There's not a note of mine that's worth the noting. Don Pedro: Why, these are very crotchets that he speaks; Note, notes, forsooth, and nothing." puns, were meant perhaps to ridicule the pronunciation upon (II,iii,57-60)

Touchstone in As You Like It puns on "goats" and "goths":

"Touchstone: I am here with thee and thy goats, as the most capricious poet, honest Ovid, was among the Goths."

(III,iii,4-6)

There are several puns in Love's Labour's Lost on "suitor" and "shooter" evidently caused by the similarity in pronunciation. Only one is here quoted:

"Rosaline: Well, then, I am the shooter.
Boyet: And who is your deer?"

(IV,i,115)

The above quotation under Puns from Twelfth Night, (I,iii,95-103) on "tongues" and "tongs" showed that the "ue" after "g" was ignored in pronunciation.

In The Two Gentlemen of Verona Lucetta hints at a pronunciation of "meat" like "mate":

"Julia: Is't near dinner-time?
Lucetta: I would it were,
That you might kill your stomach on your meat,
And not on your maid."

(II,ii,67-69)

Although these instances are few, their import-

ance is great in showing the changes taking place at that time, and Shakespeare's interest in those changes. There are few instances of such pronunciations as those above quoted after the time of Shakespeare. His puns, were meant perhaps to ridicule the pronounciation upon which the quibble rested.

CONCLUSION

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The examples of Shakespeare's interest in words, as given above, lead us to several outstanding conclusions. First, we cannot escape the fact that our author's word-play indicates much more than a passing fancy for that type of humor. It shows a definite desire on the part of Shakespeare to illustrate the power of the language. Our second conclusion, as we read these extracts from his plays, is that he was not satisfied to draw his plays on words from his own information, but studied the available material in a constant effort to find new plays on words. There was nothing casual about this part of our writer's work. We may conclude, also, because we find similar word-plays in contemporary works, that Shakespeare's own interest in word-play was the result, in part, of a widespread movement in behalf of the English language. This was a season of trial for his native tongue and Shakespeare gallantly used every means at his command to raise it above the much esteemed Latin as the language of literature. If Shakespeare had not, at this time, carried the colors of his language into such an exalted field of literature, it would have been many years before the real beauty of the language had been discovered.

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