

Beard's Trove: *Shade*

This project essay will investigate the dictionary entries for the word *shade*. My investigation will stem from the entry found in Beard's Trove - a current research project which is working to organise and present the workings of Charles Rely Beard. Over many years he developed his *Dictionary of Arms, Armour, and Fashion*, in which he collected illustrative quotations to provide evidence of the usage of lexical items and listed them chronologically in each entry. Much like the structure of historical dictionaries such as the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED). This entry will be further compared with those from the OED, the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* (DOST), and the *Middle English Dictionary* (MED). The analysis of the various entries of the word *shade* will examine the etymological, orthographic, phonological, and semantic data provided by the related dictionary entries. The aim of this project essay is to review the current linguistic information available concerning the word *shade* to build up as detailed a picture of its history.

Dictionaries such as the OED tend to provide us with information surrounding the etymology of the lexical item. This is something which Beard's trove does not provide in his entry for *shade*. However, this is most likely due to Beard's focus being on the medieval and Early Modern periods. Beard also focused on 'arms, armour, and fashion', therefore the history of *shade* including its earlier senses would not have been of interest. The OED provides us with a significantly greater insight into the word's etymology, as *shade* is described as originating from the Old English (OE) word *sceade*. The Middle English (ME) *schade* descended from 'the nominative *sceadu* of the feminine noun and from the dative *sceade*' (Proffitt, 2019). Likewise, the DOST states that *shade* standardised as the spelling found in Present Day English (PDE) during the ME and Early Modern English periods.

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Through examining the etymology of *shade*, we can see that orthographically, the word has been altered through its history. The variation of a word's spelling was often dependent on the prestige of the language (Smith 1999, p. 51). Due to English not gaining prestige as a language until later periods, the spelling of *shade* takes multiple forms throughout both the OE and ME periods.

The OED, MED and the DOST all claim that the earliest form of *shade* is *sceadu*. This varies in spelling depending on its case and function within the sentence (e.g. the dative *sceade*). The OE period ranges from the sixth century AD, to the Norman Conquest in 1066. During this time the relationship between sound and spelling was much closer in comparison to later periods of English. Smith (2005, p.46) claims it was the Late West Saxon variety which seemed to have achieved the standardised status in written English prior to the Norman Conquest, despite several different varieties being recorded. OE is the source of a lot of the core vocabulary of PDE. The OE form *scæde* for example is not too dis-similar from the present day's *shade*.

Due to English being derived from the Latin alphabet, the majority of OE letters are the same as those used in PDE, with the exception of OE having a few extra letters such as 'edh' (ð), 'thorn' (þ) or the vowel 'ash' (æ) which found in the OE form *scæde* (Smith, 2005, p.47). These disappear early in the ME period, edh and thorn being replaced by 'th', while ash was replaced with either an 'a' or 'e'. This is exemplified in the case of *scæde* as it evolved to *scade*.

The Norman Conquest was a pivotal event in the history of the English Language, as French became a big influence. English became a 'debased vernacular, without any national standing' upon the arrival of the new French-speaking aristocracy (Smith, 1996). At this time words from the French language were borrowed and became a normality within English.

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During the ME period there was also still a great variation of spelling within English. The OED and MED provide a range of various spellings *shade* took the form of in ME, such as *schade* and *ssade*. Both the OED and DOST provide the Scottish form, *schad*, which is used nearing the end of the ME period, before the spelling is standardised to *shade*.

It's not until we near the end of the ME period, with the introduction of the printing press, that there rises an enforcement of a standard for the English Language. Whilst the written mode of language in PDE is very distinct from that of spontaneous spoken language, due to speakers in the ME period lacking a standard model of English, speakers wrote down what they said, and how they said it. Prior to the 1700's, there had been no influential dictionaries published, which was an obvious hinderance with regards to the standardisation of spelling in English. Despite Johnson's dictionary not being the first published, it was the most socially influential as he was trustworthy in the eyes of the public. According to the quotations provided in the OED and MED, by the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, *shade* had standardised to the form it is found in English today. During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries, English was recovering from the dominance of the French influence, and the idea of the 'fixing' or 'ascertaining' of English arose as a matter of great concern to many scholars and writers (Upward and Davidson, 2011, p.298). This resulted in English finally gaining prestige.

Whilst the orthography of *shade* is not too contrasting to its original OE form, the pronunciation will have differed. In order to reconstruct the pronunciation of the word, we can use the articulation of PDE *shade*, [ʃeɪd], as a starting point.

There is still much 'scholarly dispute' surrounding the details of the pronunciation of OE. Our knowledge of the usage of OE derives from the analysis of the spelling, alongside forming comparative and reconstructive work with later periods of English, and other related languages. (Smith 2005 p.48). Smith (2005) claims that most scholars agree that there were no silent vowels, and therefore, generally, all vowels should be pronounced. Known

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exceptions of this rule are spellings of words such as *schade* and *ssade* where the 'e' seems to be a diacritic, indicating the quality of the preceding consonant cluster.

In OE, monophthongal vowels such as the 'a', 'æ', and 'u' found in *sceadu* and *scæde*, could all be pronounced either long or short. The vowel system distinguished between long and short vowels through the use of a macron ( ¯ ) which is positioned above all long vowels in OE words (Smith 2005 p.49). In the MED the headword *shade* is found written as *shǣde*, indicating that the 'a' vowel was pronounced lengthened in ME, as it is in PDE. Further evidence suggesting the vowel was a lengthened 'a' is in written in the form of *scæde*, Smith (2005, p.47) states that the letter ash (æ) seems to have been 'an open, unrounded front vowel'. Vowels within unstressed syllables were generally more distinctively pronounced than they are in PDE – meaning endings like '-an', '-en', '-on' were all distinguished.

All consonants must be pronounced in OE, the majority are pronounced in the same way as PDE (Smith 2005 p.49). An exception of this however is the combination of the consonants 's' and 'c', e.g. *sceadu*. This is usually pronounced as a [ʃ] sound, meaning the first phoneme of *shade* will have been pronounced the same in OE through to PDE. The systematic shift from 'sc' spellings to 'sh' is a pattern we can see across the English language at this time.

With regards to the semantics of *shade*, the entry in Beard's Trove will serve as a starting point in analysing word's different meanings. The semantic information provided by the OED, DOST, MED will be examined and compared to gain a comprehensive understanding of the noun in the particular sense of a fashionable garment worn by women.

Beard's entry describes *shade* as a scarf made from lace, which is worn by women. The quotations used to support and exemplify Beard's definition range from 1706 to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, 1818 (Beard's Trove, 2019). The MED provides numerous senses for *shade*, although it doesn't include a sense defining *shade* as a fashion garment.

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This is most likely because this item may not have existed or been referred to as a *shade* during the ME period. Through the information provided by the dictionaries, the first use of *shade* found in this sense is recorded in Phillip's *New World of Words* (new ed.) in 1706. This suggests that *shade* was a fairly modern fashionable item at this time.

The OED provides many different senses to the word *shade*, perhaps the most popular sense being 'comparative darkness; absences of complete illumination' (Shade, *n.* 1.a.). This sense is also recorded within the MED and the DOST. Unlike the MED and DOST, the OED also provides the sense of *shade* as a fashion garment. If we compare Beard's entry to this same sense found in the OED, the definitions are mirrored. However, the OED does have the addition of one quotation which is dated later than 1818 (Beard's latest quotation). The OED quotes Stone Edge by F. P. Verney (1868), as she writes 'her black 'shade' (a sort of mantle) and hood.' (Shade, *n.* 11.b.). The explanation of what 'shade' is here indicates that during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, *shade* is a term which may be already going out of fashion. To illustrate the referent of *shade*, the writer uses the term 'mantle', which the OED defines as 'a protective garment or blanket' (OED, mantle, *n.*). This suggests that at this time, *shade* is becoming a more old-fashioned term, and perhaps the physical referent itself is going out of fashion as the 19<sup>th</sup> Century progresses.

All of Beard's quotations are included within the OED apart from his last - *The Heart of Midlothian* by Sir Walter Scott. In this text Beard describes the use of *shade* being used to refer to 'the folded, forward edge of the curch over the forehead' (Beards Trove, Shade) – '[t]he projecting shade of a curch, or coif'. The OED defines 'coif' as 'a close-fitting cap', a 'night-cap' worn by 'both sexes' (OED, Coif, *n.*). Similarly, the OED defines 'curch' as a Scottish word referring to 'a square piece of linen used in former times by women' (OED, curch, *n.*). More specifically, the DOST defines *curch* as being 'a covering for the head, a kerchief' (DOST, curch, *n.*). I think it's particularly interesting that there seemed to be several

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terms used to refer to similar garments. Perhaps during the Early Modern English period, competition in the sense of semantic dominance arose between these words.

To conclude, the sense of *shade* found in Beard's dictionary died out during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Beard had pin-pointed the period in history when this sense of *shade* was at the height of its popularity.

The word *shade* has also gone through a more recent semantic shift – one which is not listed within dictionaries previously discussed. According to multiple entries submitted to the website *Urban Dictionary* (2019) the word *shade* can now also be used as an abstract noun, often paired with the verb *throw*, to describe the act of a person casting aspersions, and insulting another person, often in a rather blunt manner. One of the entries on the website describes the term *to throw shade* as pointing out a person's 'flaws or faults' (Urban Dictionary, 2019), which is particularly interesting with regard to the OED's definition of *shade* as a verb, "In occasional figurative uses – to throw a veil over (faults)" (Shade v. 5.c.). Semantically, I think a link can be drawn here, as the modern definitions contrast that of the OED's. While in some figurative senses *shade* may have been used to describe hiding or concealing faults, it can now be used to describe highlighting faults, usually in the context of criticising another person. This process of the language change is known as pejoration. Pejoration is a process which describes the depreciation of a word's meaning. The originally positive, rather ordinary word has evolved within particular communities and developed a more negative sense. Despite sources such as the *Urban Dictionary* being less reliable within a scholarly context, they do offer an interesting insight into the modern interpretations and definitions of the word, and the context in which it is used today.

Many terms that are typically known as LGBT slang, such as *shade*, can often be traced back to originating from African American Vernacular English (AAVE). Multiple sources have claimed that 'throwing *shade*' was first introduced to a wider audience in the documentary

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film *Paris Is Burning* (1990), which is based on the Manhattan drag scene during the 1980's. During this time of course the term would not have been picked up and used by the wider society due to the status of the LGBT community.

During the 1980s, and prior, society in general were not as accepting of LGBT individuals. As the charity *Stonewall* exemplifies, 'the solicitation of the same-sex relations was illegal in New York City', during the 1960s (2019). Due to this kind of discrimination LGBT members were left feeling marginalised and outcast. The uprising of the Stonewall Riots played a role within a much broader civil rights movement. The Stonewall Riots, also referred to as the Stonewall Uprising or Rebellion, were a catalyst for the gay rights movement in the United States and around the world. The riots were a series of spontaneous, violent demonstrations acted out by members of the LGBT community, who were fighting against the inequitable treatment of their community (Stonewall, 2019). This rebellion arose as a reaction to a police raid in the early morning hours of 28<sup>th</sup> June 1969 at the Stonewall Inn, which consequentially lead to six days of protesting and violent clashes with the law enforcement. The Stonewall charity (2019) states that The Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention in 1970 was a "key moment" where activists from black power, feminists, and gay liberation movements came together.

Today however, *shade* in this sense, and other forms of LGBT slang, is more commonly known by the wider community due to the popularity of reality television shows such as *Ru Paul's Drag Race* and *Queer Eye*. This influence is exemplified within the language used by younger generations.

In the context of fashion, it is Beard's Trove which provided the most information concerning *shade*. Beard's entry and choice of quotations didn't just capture the definition, but he captured the period of when *shade* was a fashionable item. While the MED and DOST provide no account for *shade* in this sense, the OED embellishes upon Beard's work and

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helps to create a detailed picture of the history of shade through its use of etymology, giving us a further insight into the time frame in which *shade* was used.

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