



# Contemporary understandings of Welsh, Scottish and Irish identities: Celtic characters in Shakespeare

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# Celtic characters in *Henry V* (1599?): Different dialects; different characters

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## Captain Fluellen

- Pronunciation: unvoicing of initial /b/ and /v/, e.g. *pig* for 'big', *falorous* for 'valorous'
- Grammar: lack of subject-verb concord, e.g. *if there is not better directions* (III.ii.60)
- Vocabulary: Expression associated with Welsh speakers, *look you*

## Captain Macmorris

- Pronunciation: use of /ʃ/ for /s/ or /z/ (e.g. *Chrish* for 'Christ', *ish* for 'is'),
- Grammar: unusual past participles, e.g. *I would have blowed up the town* (III.ii.85-60)

## Captain Jamy

- Grammar: lack of auxiliary 'have' in *I wad full fain heard some question* (III.ii.112-3)

# Celtic characters in *Henry V*: Different dialects; different characters

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- Limited accuracy in representing the actual specific dialects of the time. (Grammatical features are not particular to these dialects).
- But features are generally distinct with respect to the London dialects, i.e. they would struck the London audience.
- Provide prompts for the actors to ham up their speech and launch into ‘stage dialect’.
- Provide cues for the relevant social stereotypes that the audience had in their heads.

# Celtic characters in *Henry V*: Different characters; one nation or many?

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- Tapping into contemporary debates about the nationhood.

Fluellen: Captain MacMorris, I think, look you, there is not many of your nation –

MacMorris: Of my nation? What ish my nation? Ish a villain and a bastard and a knave and a rascal? What ish my nation? Who talks of my nation?

(III.iii.58-62)

# Contemporary attitudes towards the Scottish, Irish and Welsh



*Globe Education*

- How did contemporaries of Shakespeare view the Scots, Welsh and Irish?
- How did people write about them at the time?

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## Approach

- Usage and context of the words “Scottish/Scots”, “Irish”, and “Welsh”
- Frequency patterns on a grand scale
- Similar to, for example, Paul Baker et al.’s (2013) present-day work on Muslims and their representation in British newspapers

## Data and analytical tool

- *Early English Books Online* – approx. 1.2 billion words
- 1580-1599 – 82,180,304 words
- cqpweb (Andrew Hardie)

## Spelling variants

**Scottish/Scots:** (skottysh\* | scottish\* | skottish\* | scotish\* | schotish\* | scotesh\* | scotisch\* | scottesh\* | scottisch\* | scottysh\* | shotish\* | scottes\* | scotes\* | skottes\* | schotes\* | schottes\* | schoyttis\* | scoitis\* | scoittis\* | scotes\* | scotis\* | scottes\* | scottis\* | scottys\* | skotis\* | skottes\* | skottis\* | scotts\* | scots\* | scoats\* | skots\* | skotts\*)

**Irish:** (irish\* | iresh\* | yressh\* | yrish\* | ireish\* | yerish\* | irich\* | iriesch\* | iriesh\* | irisch\* | irrisch\* | irysch\* | iyrish\* | yrisch\* | yrish\* | yrysch\* | iersch\*)

**Welsh:** (welsh\* | walsh\* | wealch\* | welse\* | vellchie\* | welch\* | welsch\* | velsh\* | walyssh\* | walch\* | vvelsh\* | vvalsh\* | vvealch\* | vvelse\* | vvelch\* | vvelsch\* | vvalyssh\* | vvalch\*)

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## Collocations

- Span: 5 words left and right of target item (within sentence boundaries).
- Statistic: Mutual Information (also checked LogRatio)
- Floor: Minimum of 10





# Contemporary understandings: *Scottish/Scots*

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## Top-50 collocates

Pichtes, Thomistes, Pictish, Picts, Irishmen, Balioll, Ferguse, horssemen, Thomists, iuadeth, Quene, capteins, Pictes, Kenneth, Piers, Englishmen, Britains, Donald, Frenchmen, ioine, chronicles, Britons, Eugenius, Galled, discomfited, Boethius, yere, Danes, Cumberland, borders, Northumberland, Bruce, Marie, 60, invade, homage, Scottish, betwene, Scots, Henrie, Saxons, aid, Irish, writers, invaded, encamped, chased, confederates, bene

# Contemporary understandings: *Scottish/Scots*

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## Thematic groups

**Associated groups** (*confederates, ioine*): *Picts, Irish, Britains, Frenchmen, Danes, etc.*

**Scottish kings/queens and nobles**: *Malcolm, Ferguse, Kenneth, Donald, Bruce, Galled, etc.*

**Hostile**: *iuadeth/invaded, discomfited, borders, chased*

**Scottish histories**: *chronicles, writers, yere*

Results for *scottish* alone overlap with the above, but have greater emphasis on:

**Political power**: *nation, nobility, ambassadors, etc.*

**Religion**: *Thomistes/Thomists, communion, supper, etc.*

# Contemporary understandings: *Irish*

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## Top-50 collocates

Karne\*, rug, slue, Mac\*, Irish, Englishmen, Scottish, Scots, savage, wild, rebels, Ireland, seas, diverse, English, borne, wars, mere\*, language\*, history, slain, nation, tongue, sea, hundred, lords, enemies, town\*, an, land, among, country, took, certain, people, sent, manner, speak, came, called, were, whom, taken, where, against, man, like, part

# Contemporary understandings: *Irish*

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Second position: *Irish rug*

“Show me a fair scarlet, a vvelch frise, a good Irish rug” (Eliot, 1595)

# Contemporary understandings: *Irish*

## Thematic groups

### 'Negative prosody'

**Uncivilised:** *savage, wild*

**Hostile:** *wars, enemies, against*

**Ungovernable:** *rebels*

[**Insignificant????:** *mere\** (Holinshed)]

**Associated groups:** *Scottish, Scots, English [+ e.g. rebels]*

**Suppressed:** *slue, hundred*

**Political power:** *nation, lords*

**Language:** *tongue, language, speak, called*

[MacMorris: "What ish my nation? Ish a villain and a bastard and a knave and a rascal?"]

# Contemporary understandings: More on *mere*

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**OED.** 1. c. Of a people or their language: pure, unmixed. Latterly only in *mere Irish* and related expressions, in which *mere* is sometimes interpreted as belonging to sense 5.

First citation = 1561

1577 R. Stanyhurst *Treat. Descr. Irelande* viii. f. 27/2, (*heading*) in R. Holinshed

*Chron. I The disposition and maners of the meere Irish, commonly called the wyld Irishe.*

13 illustrative quotations; 6 involve Irish

# Contemporary understandings: More on *mere*

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**OED.** 5. a. Having no greater extent, range, value, power, or importance than the designation implies; that is barely or only what it is said to be.

First citation = 1547

1594 T. Bowes tr. P. de la Primaudaye

*French Acad. II. 345 The throate..being onely a meere way and place of passage, through which meates and drinkes passe to and fro.*



# Contemporary understandings: *Welsh*

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## Top-50 collocates

Englishmen, Britains, Danes, Wales, English, Captain, tongue, y, speaks, master, call, page, called, number, England, against, kings, came, king, name, day, word, Though, were, a, had, where, never, at, also, the, both, or, great, your, well, who, with, being, men, other, &, an, did, their, in, which, there, made, now

## Thematic groups

**Associated groups (collaborators):** *Englishmen*

**Suppressed:** *number, against, king, Danes*

**Welsh language:** *English, tongue, y, speaks, call, called, word*

# Contemporary understandings: *Welsh*

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Where shall we finde, such dealing now adaies?  
Where is such chéere, so cheape and chaunge of fare?  
Ride North and South, and search all beaten waies,  
From *Barwick* bounds, to *Venice* if you dare,  
And finde the like, that I in *Wales* haue found,  
And I shall be, your slaue and bondman bound.  
If *Wales* be thus, as tryall well shall proue,  
Take *Wales* goodwill, and giue them neighbours loue.

Thomas Churchyard, *The Worthiness of Wales* (1587)

# Commonalities amongst the groups?

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Shared top-50 collocates?

**Scottish + Irish + Welsh** = Englishmen

**Scottish + Irish** = Irish/Irishmen, Scottish/Scots

**Scottish + Welsh** = Capteins/Captain, Britains/Britons, Danes

**Irish + Welsh** = English, tongue, speak/speaks, call/called, came, an

# And the English?

## Spelling variants

(englis\* | englysh\* | inglish\* | anglysh\* | engglysh\* | englush\* | englyss\* |  
englech\* | ynglych\* | ynglyss\* | inglys\* | anglis\* | angllis\* | einglis\* |  
inggles\* | ingleis\* | ingleisch\* | ingles\* | inglich\* | inglis\* | ynglis\* |  
ynglys\*)

14,914 instances in 1,072 texts

## Top-50 collocates

Bezites, Madrigalls, Hexameters, Normanens, capteins, Hexameter, d'argent, madrigals, horssemen, d'or, ovt, translatours, foren, flete, Bibles, slated, Seminary, meter, fugitives, Welshmen, Geneua, Seminaries, translations, Flemish, translated, Frenchmen, ioine, Flemings, Englishmen, merchants, Scottish, chronicle, Rheims, Chronicles, competitors, tong, translators, Danes, Meeter, students, Fabian, Hebrue, Normans, gules, Armada, discomfited, fugitive, Rime, bible, Latin

# Contemporary understandings: *English*

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**Literary/scholarly:** madgrigalls/madrigals, hexameters/hexameter, meter/meeter, chronicle/Chronicles, rime

**English translation:** d'argent, d'or, translatours, foren, (trans)lated, translated, translators, gules

**Religion:** Bezites, Bibles, Seminary/Seminaries, Rheims, students, Hebrue

**Associated groups:** Normanen/Normans, Scottish, Flemings, Danes

**Military:** capteins, horssemen, flete, Armada

**Commerce & merchandise:** Flemish, merchants

**Hostile to others:** Discomforted, Fugitives/fugitive

# Conclusion

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Broad summary of stereotypical contemporary understandings:

- **Scots/scottish:** Associations with suspect groups (*Irish, Frenchmen*); hostile; strong political power and royal lineage; religion
- **Irish:** Of some economic value (*rug*); strong negative attitudes (*savage, wild, rebels*); associations with suspect groups (*Scots*), suppressed, political power, distinct language
- **Welsh:** Linguistic curiosity; collaborators (*Englishmen*); suppressed
- **English:** scholarly/cultural; English translation; religion; associated groups (*Normans*); commerce; hostile to others

In *Henry V*

Tensions beneath apparent alliance reflecting English insecurities about loyalty

## Conclusion

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England, thy country betrays thee , as each other hates thee:  
The Scot incrocheth: the Frenchman gapes for a vantage:  
Wales threatens kindness: wild **Irish** lurks in ambush: Behold  
thy captains dispatched all on a sudden: And Ruin hudled up,  
when thou think lest of a mischief: Peace fostered for a time,  
shall finally prove to be fained Which breaking unawares,  
shall bring on greeuousser horror.

John Harvey, *A discoursiue probleme concerning propheties how  
far they are to be valued, or credited* (1588)



# Conclusion

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- All of our topic groupings were supported by analysis of collocating semantic tags (though little extra was added by that analysis; a number of tags were errors, e.g. *battle*)

## Limitations/further work:

- Collocation analysis needs to be repeated with (fully) regularized spelling.
- Dispersion: Most items are well-dispersed, but a few, especially in the Irish data were not. The role of Holinshed's Chronicles is an issue.
- Collocational Networks: Scots and Irish clearly share a network, but generally more precision needed.