



Shakespeare's Language: New Perspectives via Corpus-based Approaches

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Why approach Shakespeare from linguistics and why now?

Jack Cade:

"It will be proved to thy face that thou hast men about thee that usually talk of a noun and a verb, and such abominable words as no Christian ear can endure to hear." 2H6 IV.vii

- Linguistics has moved on (it's more applied than ever).
- Linguistics has new technologies by which it can be pursued (e.g. the computer).
- Linguistics is increasingly combined with other disciplines, as it is in this project (+ literary studies, computer science, history, etc.)
- Relatively little has been written on Shakespeare's language by linguists.

What will the project produce?

The key output: The encyclopedia

Two volumes:

- (1) a kind of dictionary, and
- (2) a compendium of word patterns relating to characters, character groups, plays, play-genres, themes, etc..

To be published by Bloomsbury in paper and electronically.

Shakespeare's neologisms?

What can we 'learn' from the internet?

- “Shakespeare coined more words than other writers, around 1700 words ...”
- “The English language owes a great debt to Shakespeare. He invented over 1700 of our common words ...”
- “Shakespeare introduced nearly 3,000 words ...”
- “Shakespeare is credited by the Oxford English Dictionary with the introduction of nearly 3,000 words into the language”
- “Shakespeare invented a quarter of our language”
- “Shakespeare invented half the words in the English language”
- “Shakespeare *is* our language”

Shakespeare's neologisms?

Work on neologisms:

- 1,502 words recorded in the Oxford English Dictionary as first citations in Shakespeare
- We are checking these in *Early English Books Online* (EEBO-TCP): 125,000 titles of printed material, 1473-1700. About 1.2 billion words.

Preliminary findings:

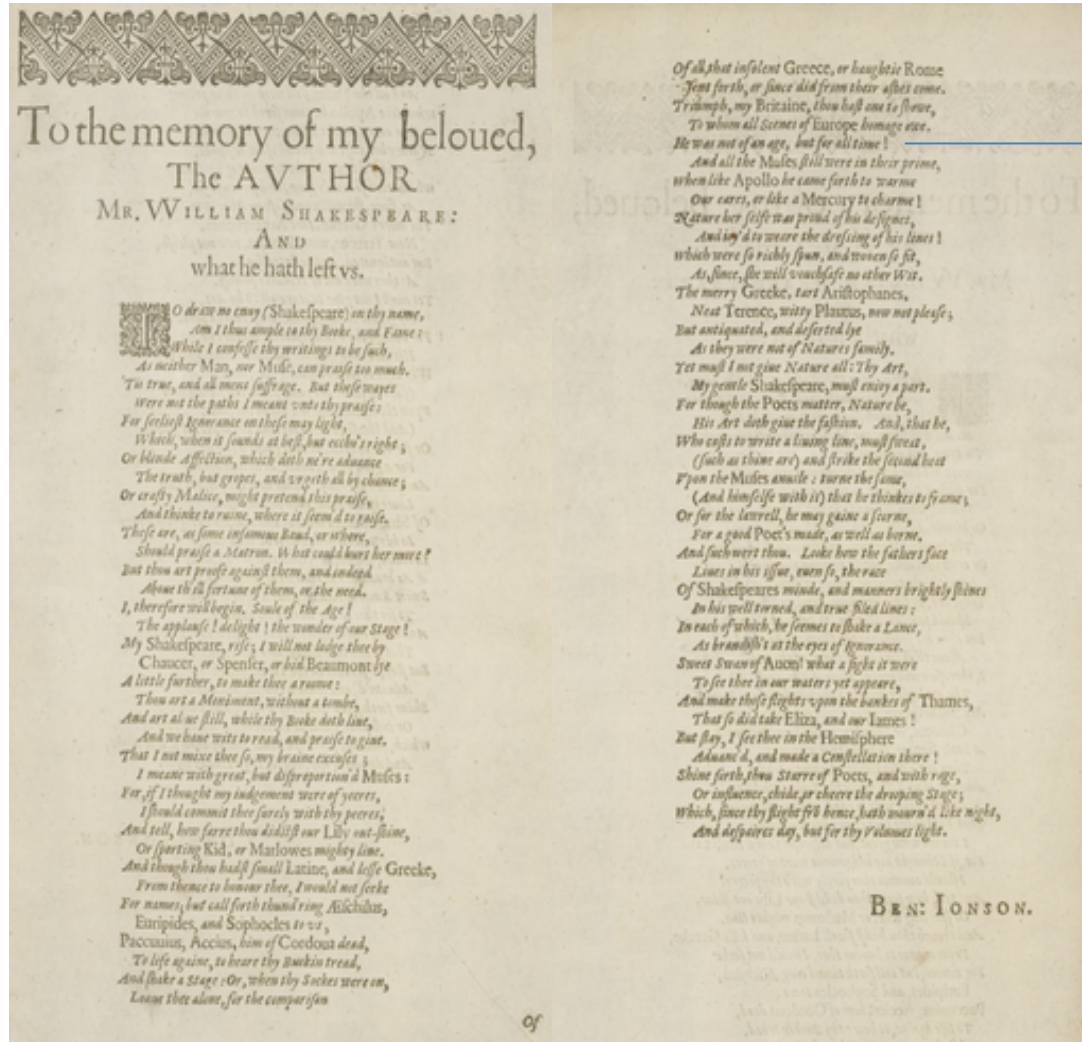
- If the current pattern continues, less than a quarter of those 1,502 words can reasonably be attributed to Shakespeare.

Shakespeare's neologisms?

Issues

- How do we know that Shakespeare coined it as opposed to recorded it? Cf. *down staires* vs. *incarna[r]dine* (v.)
- Is it actually just a nonce word rather than neologism? Cf. *dropsied* vs. *domineering*

Shakespeare's language transcends time and space?



Of all that in silent Greece, or haughty Rome
Jest forth, or since did from their ashes come.
Triumph, my Britaine, thou hast one to showe,
To whom all Scenes of Europe homage owe.
He was not of an age, but for all time!
And all the Males still were in their prime,
when like Apollo he came forth to warne
Our eares, or like a Mercury to charme!
Nature her self was proud of his defence,
And boy'd to weare the dressing of his lines!
which were so richly spun, and woven so fit,
As since, she will vouchsafe no other Wit.
The merry Greeke, tart Aristophanes,
Next Terence, witty Plautus, now not please,
But antiquated, and deserted Iye
As they were not of Natures family.
Yet must I not giue Nature all: Thy Art,
My gentle Shakespeare, must eniue a part.
For though the Poets matter, Nature be,
His Art doth giue the fashion. And, that he,
Who costs to write a lining line, must sweat,
(such as thou art) and strike the second heat
Upon the Muses anile: turne the same,
(And himselfe with it) that he thinks to frame,
Or for the leurell, he may gaine a faine,
For a good Poet's made, as well as borne.
And such wert thou. Look how the fathers face
Lines in his iſſue, euen so, the race
Of Shakespeares minde, and manners brightly shines
In his well turned, and true filed lines:
In each of which, he seems to shake a Lance,
As brandish't at the eyes of Ignorance.
Sweet Swan of Aſton! what a sight it were
To see thee in our waters yet appeare,
And make those flights vpon the banks of Thames,
That so did take Eliza, and our Iames!
But stay, I see thee in the Hemisphere
Admired, and made a Constellation there!
Shine forth, thou Starre of Poets, and with rage,
Or influence, chide, or cheere the drooping Stage;
Which, since thy flight, hath hence, hath mourn'd like night,
And despaires day, but for thy Palms light.

BEN: IONSON.

He was not of an age, but for all time!

Shakespeare's language transcends time and space?

- Universal characters, emotions, themes language??

“Shakespeare has given us a universal language medium in which are crystalized the battle hymns, the intellectual conceptions and the spiritual aspirations of the Anglo-Saxons.”

(Rutherford, N.J. and Bennett, E.H., 1918-1922, *English Speaking World*, Vol.2
(8): 14)

- No Shakespearean dictionary has treated Shakespeare's language as relative, i.e. put Shakespeare's usage in the context of that of his contemporaries.

Lexical items: *Scottish, Irish and Welsh* (and contemporary attitudes towards the Scottish, Irish and Welsh)

Henry V : Fluellen, Macmorris and Jamy



Globe Education

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

Lexical items: *Scottish, Irish and Welsh* (and contemporary attitudes towards the *Scottish, Irish and Welsh*)



Lexical items: *Scottish, Irish and Welsh*

Focus: words that frequently co-occur with Scottish, Irish or Welsh, i.e. collocates

- **Data:** *Early English Books Online* – approx. 1.2 billion words (?)
- **Period:** 1580-1599 – 82,180,304 words (around *Henry V*)
- **Tool:** CQPweb (Andrew Hardie)
- **Settings:** 5 words left and right of target item (within sentence boundaries). Mutual information. Minimum frequency is 10.

Lexical items: Frequencies

How often do they occur?

Scots/Scottish: **5,407** instances in 282 texts

Irish: **1,160** instances in 144 texts

Welsh: **802** instances in 115 texts

Lexical items: *Scots/Scottish*

Thematic groups (amongst the top 50 collocates)

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

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

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

Scottish histories: *chronicles, writers, yere*

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

Religion: *communion, supper*, etc.

Lexical item: *Irish*

Strongest collocate: *Irish rug*

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

Lexical item: *Irish*

Thematic groups (top 50 collocates)

Negative connotations:

Uncivilised: *savage, wild*

Hostile: *wars, enemies, against*

Ungovernable: *rebels*

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

Associated groups: *Scottish, Scots, English [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?”]

Lexical item: *Welsh*

Thematic groups (top 50 collocates)

Associated groups (collaborators): *Englishmen*

Suppressed: *number, against, king, Danes*

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

William Allen, *A Conference About the Next Succession* (1595)

“... in the **welsh** also towards the English, who are a different people and of different language, and yet are they governed peaceably by the English, & the English again do account them for their country men ...”

Character profiles: *Romeo and Juliet*



Lily James
and Richard
Madden.

(Photo: Johan Perrson)

- What language characterizes Romeo and what language, Juliet?
- What are their linguistic styles, their style markers, their keywords?

Character profiles: *Romeo and Juliet*

Rank-ordered keywords for Romeo and Juliet (raw frequencies in brackets)

Romeo	Juliet
<p>beauty (10), love (46), blessed (5), eyes (14), more (26), mine (14), dear (13), rich (7), me (73), yonder (5), farewell (11), sick (6), lips (9), stars (5), fair (15), hand (11), thine (7), banished (9), goose (5), that (84)</p>	<p>if (31), be (59), or (25), I (138), sweet (16), my (92), news (9), thou (71), night (27), would (20), yet (18), that (82), nurse (20), name (11), words (5), Tybalt's (6), send (7), husband (7), swear (5), where (16), again (10)</p>

Character profiles: *Romeo and Juliet*

Romeo:

- She hath, and in that sparing makes huge waste; For beauty, starv'd with her severity, Cuts beauty off from all posterity. She is too fair, too wise, wisely too fair, To merit bliss by making me despair: She hath forsworn to love, and in that vow Do I live dead that live to tell it now. (I.i)
- If I profane with our unworthiest hand This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this; Our lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss. (I.v)

Character profiles: *Romeo and Juliet*

Juliet:

- If he be married, / Our grave is like to **be our** wedding-bed (I.v.)
- If they do see thee, they will murder thee (II.ii.)
- But if thou meanest not well (II.ii.)
- Is thy news good, or bad? answer to that; Say either, and I'll stay the circumstance: Let me be satisfied, is 't good or bad? (II.ii)
- 'Tis almost morning; I would have thee gone; And yet no further than a wanton's bird [...] (II.ii.)

Concluding thought

Corpus analyses are not automatic or free from humans.

A human must decide on the data to be used and the kind of analysis to be performed. Moreover, they must interpret the results.

(More information about the project can be found here:
<http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/shakespearelang>)