

A computational analysis of the origins of Shakespearean words



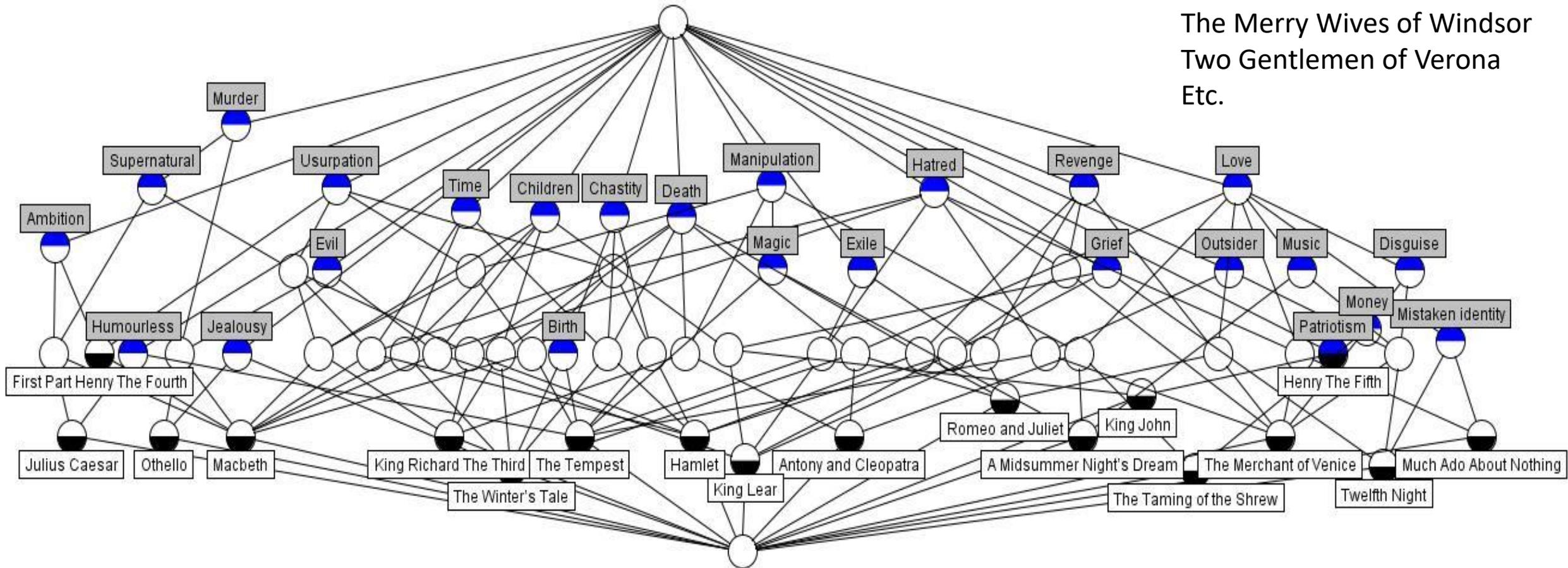
1564 - 1616

Tragedies, Histories and topics

– not much about gardening

The COMEDIES are MISSING

Love's Labour's Lost
All's Well that Ends Well
A Comedy of Errors
Measure for Measure
As You Like It
The Merry Wives of Windsor
Two Gentlemen of Verona
Etc.



Note Vocabulary always Changes

- **Dated**, archaic, out of fashion e.g., forsooth = indeed (a stereotypical Shakespearian term;) Also lost senses e.g., *audition* Nn = the power of hearing, versus fashionable and new e.g., *LOL*, (*hundo p, suh*).
- **Obsolete** = the object or process they refer to no longer exists e.g., buckler, *audio cassette*, peasantry; versus terms coined (neologisms) for new technology and science etc. => *handy, mobile, cell; to Google*
- **Replaced**
 - fiancée => partner
 - fortnight => two weeks
 - dinner, supper, tea => (its complicated...)

Shakespeare's Words - data-source

- **A Shakespeare Thesaurus (1993)** – *Marvin Spevack, 1927-2013*, Professor of English Philology, English Department, University of Muenster [the Shakespeare database; the Harvard Concordance – 9 volumes]
- Every Shakespeare word, but no link to the plays (i.e., no contexts)
- Classified into 32 categories (*food, clothing, ... time, space, people etc.*) and 897 sub-categories (*eat, drink, ... meat, beer-wine, ...*)
- Coded with **Part-of-speech** and **Language**

The thing about Lexicons -- lemmas

- Be but not: *is, am, are, was, wasn't, were, will be*, etc.
- Black but not *blacker, blackest*
- Thesaurus but not *thesauri* or *thesauruses*
- This affects the numbers: 28,000 word-POS entries => about 17,000 strings
- 11,438 are still used -- 5,598 are archaic, obsolete or unknown
- [Shakespeare's publications 1589-1616]
- **OTHER DATA SOURCES**
- 59,000 strings [1853-1911) Roget's Thesaurus
- 114,000 strings 1963 Roget's Thesaurus
- A personal etymological database with 1,200 roots (mostly Indo-European) and 26,000 English word strings

LANGUAGE COUNT in Shakespeare's Vocabulary (Spevack)

language	Count
English	16580
French	261 [Royal Court]
Latin	246 [Church, Law, Science]
Italian	41
pseudo foreign (Spevack)	37*
Spanish	1

* 14 Corsican (Othello <= the tragedy of Sampiero Corso)

French origin but English words

- French words that are now English words **crown, castle, court, parliament, army, mansion, gown, beauty, banquet, art, poet, romance, duke, servant, peasant, traitor and governor...**
- Names for farm animals are of English origin **ox, calf, sheep, swine, deer, hen** but the words for the meat are French **beef, veal, mutton, pork, bacon, venison, poultry.**
- During the 15th century, English became the main spoken language again, but “Latin and French continued to be exclusively used in official legal documents until the beginning of the 18th century.”
Wikipedia: *Anglo-Norman language*

Shakespeare's Neologisms

- Shakespeare has the reputation for having the largest vocabulary of any English writer. Also for inventing the most Modern English words: estimates range from 1,500 to 2,500
- Many are **functional shifts** e.g., *partner* (Noun) => *to partner* (Verb)
- Many of his words can't be found in modern lexicons simply because they are archaic or obsolete e.g., *twiggen*, *unshrubbed*, *scroyle*, *drumble*
- Oxford English Dictionary (OED) notes the **earliest recorded** instance of each word, and Shakespeare is a common reference. Some say that is why he is credited with so many new words
 - Ammon Shea, *A History of Linguistic Aggravation and Reading the OED*

100 common words invented by Shakespeare

- arouse, assassination, bandit (<= *bandetto*, 1593, *EWHS*), **bedroom**, beached, besmirch, birthplace, blanket, bloodstained, barefaced, blushing, bet, bump, buzzer, caked, cater, champion, circumstantial, cold-blooded, compromise, courtship, countless, critic, dauntless, dawn, deafening, discontent, dishearten, droplet, drugged, dwindle, epileptic, equivocal, elbow, excitement, exposure, **eye-ball (eyeball)**, fashionable, fixture, flawed, frugal, generous, gloomy, gossip, gnarled, grovel, green-eyed, gust, hint, hobnob, hurried, impede, impartial, inaudible, invulnerable, jaded, label, lacklustre, laughable, lonely, lower, luggage, lustrous, madcap, majestic, marketable, mimic, monumental, moonbeam, mountaineer, negotiate, noiseless, obscene, ode, Olympian, outbreak, panders, pedant, premeditated, puking, radiance, rant, remorseless, savagery, scuffle, secure, **skim-milk (skim milk)**, submerge, summit, swagger, torture, tranquil, undress, unreal, varied, vaulting, well-bred, worthless, zany

Compound Neologisms -- flowerpot, flower-pot, flower pot

- About 4,300 (25%) of Shakespeare's words are compounds
- 3,000 appear not to occur elsewhere. A few hyphenated examples:
- ale-washed, *bloody-minded*, bunch-backed, burly-boned, candle-waster, crook-kneed, dew-lapped, dizzy-eyed, empty-hearted, *even-handed*, fleet-winged, foul-faced, garlic-eater, great-bellied, honest-hearted, iron-witted, mouse-eaten, oath-breaking, open-arse, pitiful-hearted, *plain-dealing*, pleasant-spirited, **quatch**-buttock, raw-boned, rose-cheeked, rose-lipped, rug-headed, *sad-hearted*, scarce-bearded, sharp-looking, sharp-quilled, shrill-shrieking, smooth-tongue, *soft-hearted*, *sour-faced*, stretch-mouthed, swag-bellied, swift-footed, waspish-headed, *well-respected*
- *Chambers's Twentieth Century Dictionary* adj **Quatch** *kwoch* (*Shak.*) squat, flat.
- *Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia* **quatch** To tell on; be a telltale

Just the head and face...

- rug-headed, *pale-faced*, paper-faced, periwig-pated, *white-faced*, fair-faced, curled-pate, sour-faced, waspish-headed, whey-face, cream-faced, *bare-headed*, tallow-face, false-faced, idle-headed, bald-pate, half-faced, foul-faced, glass-faced, *brazen-faced*, crooked-pated, beetle-headed, bloody-faced, ill-faced, good-faced, *sweet-faced*, puppy-headed, hoary-headed, sleek-headed, ill-headed, smoothy-pate, russet-pated, mad-headed, two-headed, knotty-pated, knot-pated, jolt head, *freckle-faced*, cittern-head, face royal, rowel-head, ox-head, half-face, head-lugged, heavy-headed, fool's head

Swear words – curse words

- afore Godbe God's sonties, before God, be-gar, bodikins, by all that's holy, by all the saints in heaven, by Christ's dear blood, by Cock, by Cock and pie, by Gadslugs, by Gar, by Gis, by God, by God's grace, by God's holy mother, by God's lid, by God's liggens, by God's mother, by God's will, by Gogs-wouns, by holy Mary, by holy Paul, by Jesu, by mass, by my holidam, by my holidame, by my holy order, by St. Anne, by St. Charity, by St. George, by St. Jamy, by St. Patrick, by St. Paul, by th' mass, by th' rood, by the apostle Paul, by the eternal God, by the grace of God, by the holy mother of our Lord, by the holy rood, by the Lord, by the mass, by the mess, by the rood, by'r lady, by'r lakin, Cock's passion, Cox my passion, darkness and devils, divinity of hell, for God's love, for God's sake, for the love of God, 'fore God, forswear, God, God almighty, God damn me, gods and devils, God's blest mother, God's bodkin, God's body, God's bread, God's lady, God's lid, God's light, good Lord, Got's lords and His ladies, heart, holy St. Francis, i' th' name of Belzebub, in God's name, in th' other devil's name, in the devil's name, in the name of Jesu Christ, Jesu, Jesu Maria, jurement, Lady, Lord, marry, mass, mort Dieu, mort du vinaigre, o all the devils, o bon Dieu, o Dieu vivant, o God, o God's lady dear, o heavenly God, o hell, o Jesu, o Lord, o Seigneur Dieu, o the Lord, 'od's heartlings, 'od's lifelings, 'od's nouns, 'od's pittikins, 'od's plessed will, outswear, perdie, perdy, py'r lady, 'sblood, 'sblud, 'sdeath, 'sfoot, 'slid, 'slicht, St. Jeronimy, swear, swearer, swearing, 'swounds, 'ud's pity, unswear, unsworn, zounds

So what does ORIGIN mean

- **Ancient language** such as Indo-European (I.E.) or non-IE e.g., Semitic (=> Egyptian, Arabic, Hebrew, Berber) – most English words are I.E.
- **Source language** (IE languages: Germanic, *Celtic*, Slavic, Roman Latin, ancient Greek, Sanskrit, Persian, Old Norse, Middle English, Germanic etc.) – most English words are Germanic
- **modern language** loan words from Latin, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, *Gaelic, Welsh, Cornish, Gaulish, British/Brythonic*, Scots, German, Dutch, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, Russian ...

A taste of some Shakespearean origins

- **ripen** Normally, the process of fruit becoming edible, but also to age beef or game; to mature cheese. As creative **metaphor**:
 - *Romeo and Juliet* “...we may think her ripe to be a bride.”
- **Forsooth** (*archaic*) = “indeed” Defining term for the tragedies or an affectation?
- **bedlam** = chaos, mayhem <= Bethlehem <= St Mary of Bethlehem in London (the lunatic asylum)
- **admiral** = Commander of ... <= Arabic. Amir-al ... 'amīr-al-'umarā “ruler of rulers” [but admire comes from IE root smei- to laugh, smile]
- **academe** (*Poetic.*) From the name of the former owner (the Attic hero Akademos) of the estate outside of Athens where Plato taught his students. (Socrates => Plato => Aristotle => Alexander the Great)

Difficult Origins

- **O.K. or okay** example (not a Shakespearian word): Origin unknown. German alles korrekt or Chocktaw okeh or Scots och aye or from trendy American “all Korrekt” ...
- **Sack** (from the Latin “siccus” meaning dry) a very common Shakespearean word, is now obsolete, referring to a wine from Spain (later termed *sherry*, because it came from Jerez). German **Sekt** developed through the Spanish “seco” and English “sack” into the German term “Seck” around 1640 (Sparkling wine Lexicon <https://www.hubertsekt.sk/en/terminology/>)
- Sack meaning “large bag” derives from *saq* (Semitic) and goes back to the Bible
- **Un-friend** To remove a person from a list of friends or contacts on a social networking website’, though in its earliest use as a noun dates as a verb from 1659 when T Fuller wrote, ‘I Hope, Sir, that we are not mutually un-friended by this difference which hath happened betwixt us.’

Gamut and *ut* – the whole spectrum

- “The Greek letter Γ (**gamma**) was used for bass G, with **ut** indicating that it was the first note in the lowest of the hexachords”
- Ut was from the first line of the Hymn to St John, and was later replaced in English with Do. So that the initial letters could be used without repetition, Si was replaced by Ti => d-r-m-f-s-l-t
 - DO - "Ut" queant laxis
 - re - resonare fibris
 - mi - Mira gestorum
 - fa - famuli tuorum
 - so - Solve polluti
 - la - Labi reatum
 - TI - (Si) - "S"ancte "I"ohannes

Trumpery – an outdated word ready for reuse

- mass **noun** Archaic
- 1 Attractive articles of little value or use.
- 1.1 Practices or beliefs that are superficially or visually appealing but have little real value or worth.
- **adjective** Archaic
- 1 Showy but worthless.
- 1.1 Delusive or shallow.
- **Origin:** Late Middle English (denoting trickery): from Old French tromperie, from tromper ‘deceive’.

Language sources which contribute at least 10 words to Modern English*

German	252
French	145
Latin	119
Sanskrit	72
Greek	29
Gaelic	26
Italian	21
Spanish	21
Arabic	13
Dutch	13
Celtic	12
Scots	10

- Etymological database

Just Shakespeare's English words (excluding words coded as foreign by Spevack)

lang	langcnt
English	7803
Latin	8
French	6
Celtic	5
Greek	4
German	3
Scots	3
Anglian	2

lang	langcnt
Germanic	2
Spanish	1
Italian	1
Persian	1
Dutch	1
Skt/Pers	1
Arabic	1
Hebrew	1

imperator	L	gull	Celtic	ken	Scots
vulgar	L	cradle	Celtic	bonny	Scots
imprimis	L	rogue	Celtic	bairn	Scots
cormorant	L	bag	Celtic	wold	Anglian
violet	L	basket	Celtic	weald	Anglian
turnip	L	diet	Gk	yare	Gmc
magnifico	L	trifle	Gk	halberd	Gmc
pax	L	copper	Gk	admiral	Arab
nonpareil	Fr	drachma	Gk	younker	Du
gout	Fr	bowsprit	G	orange	Skt/Per
fleur-de-lis	Fr	bulwark	G	signor	It
mot	Fr	burgher	G	turban	Persian
perdu	Fr			Mary	Hebrew
demoiselle	Fr				

Conclusion

- Shakespeare wrote in English using English words, supplemented by the use of contemporary foreign words for effect
- If Shakespeare needed a word that didn't exist, he made it up from existing English words. Many of those neologisms are now in common daily English use
- As a rule, he didn't import, or second, foreign words to fill a void
- Even without neologisms, Shakespeare's language was creative and inventive (e.g., functional shifts). The origins of his vocabulary were plain English, but the ideas were often novel

END

References (brief)

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