

Activity 16.2 - National dialects in Shakespeare's *Henry V*

The facsimile of Text 114 in *From Old English to Standard English* is from the Fourth Folio of 1685, and therefore shows differences of spelling introduced by the typesetters when compared with earlier Folios. Most final redundant <e> letters have been left out, letter <u> is now reserved for the vowel [u] and <v> for the consonant [v], with letter <j> used for [dʒ] instead of <i>. This is evidence for the growing standardisation of the spelling system during the 17th century. Long <ʃ> is still used (but not reproduced below) and continued into the 18th century.

Notice also the perennial problem of indicating pronunciation using the Roman alphabet - what Shakespeare intended us to hear is often not clear.

The Englishman - Gower

Characters in novels and plays today who speak Standard English are generally assumed to speak in a version of Received Pronunciation, because standard spellings are used for their speech. So we find that the speech of the English captain Gower in *Henry V* has no dialectal features of pronunciation, lexis or syntax, except for *Here a comes* for *Here he comes*, with the reduced form of *he* obviously reflecting the pronunciation in ordinary speech.

- Captaine *Fluellen*, you must come presently to the Mines; the Duke of Gloucester would speak with you.
- The Duke of *Gloucester*, to whom the Order of the Siege is given, is altogether directed by an Irish man, a very valiant Gentleman i'faith.
- I think it be.
- Here a comes, and the *Scots* Captain, Captain Jamy, with him.
- How now, Captaine *Makmorrice*, have you quit the Mines? have the Pioners giuen o're?

The Welshman - Fluellen

National dialects are still credited with certain characteristic phrases which may or may not correspond to normal usage. Fluellen's *looke you* marks his speech as Welsh. We have to assume that the other nonstandard features represent Shakespeare's perceptions of the dialect as popularly recognised. The repetition of a few dialectal features helps to maintain the impression.

- To the Mines? Tell you the Duke, it is not so good to come to the Mines: for look you, the Mines is not according to the Disciplines of War; the Concauities of it is not sufficient: for look you, th'athuersary, you may discuss unto the Duke, look you, is digt himselfe, four yards under the Countermines: by *Cheshu*, I thinke a will plow up all, if there be not better directions.

Tell you the Duke - the imperative (*you tell*) with inversion of subject and verb.

the Mines is not - plural subject with *is*.

disciplines - usually a non-count noun having no plural form.

The evidence of *disciplines*, *the Concauities of it is not* suggest that either *Concauities* is a singular noun with a redundant <-s> suffix, or pronoun and verb show nonstandard usage for *them* and *are*.

th'athuersary - for *th'adversary*.

is digt - perfective with *be* rather *have* not usual with a transitive verb; unvoiced final consonant of *digt* for *digged* a dialectal marker.

Cheshu for *Jesu* and *plow* for *blow* - devoiced initial consonants

- It is Captaine *Makmorrice*, is it not?
- By *Chesbu* he is an Ass, as in the World, I will verifie as much as in his Beard: he ha's no more directions in the true disciplines of the Wars, look you, of the *Roman* disciplines, than is a Puppy-dog.

than is a Puppy-dog - is for has.

- Captain *Jamy* is a marvellous valorous Gentleman, that is certain, and of great expedition and knowledge in th'aunchiant Wars, vpon my particular knowledge of his directions; by *Chesbu* he will maintain his Argument as well as any Militarie man in the World, in the Disciplines of the pristine Wars of the *Romans*.

th'aunchiant Wars - the spelling of *auncient* was traditional, and originally pronounced [aʊnsɪənt]. The spelling *aunchiant* presumably suggests [aʊntʃɪənt] or [aʊnʃɪənt] (?).

- Godden to your Worship, good Captain *James*.

Godden - one of the abbreviations for the greeting *good even*.

- Captaine *Makmorrice*, I beseech you now, will you vouchase me, look you, a few disputations with you, as partly touching or concerning the disciplines of the War, the *Roman Wars*, in the way of Argument, look you, and friendly communication: partly to satisfie my Opinion, and partly for the satisfaction, look you, of my Mind, as touching the direction of the Military discipline, that is the Point.

vouchase - for *vouchsafe*.

The Scotsman - Jamy

- I say gudday, Captain *Fluellen*.
- It sall be vary gud, gud feith, gud captens bath, and I sall quit you with gud leve, as I may pick occasion: that sall I marry.

gudday and *gud* - the spelling suggests the Scots pronunciation [gʊd] spelt *guid*.

sall - [ʃ] of *shall* advanced to [s].

captens - pronunciation [kæptenz] with half close mid-front vowel (?)

bath - probably [beθ] as in modern Scots, spelt *baith*.

- By the Mes, ere theise eyes of mine take themselves to slomber, ayle de gud service, or Ile ligge i'th'grund for it; ay, or go to death; and Ile pay't as valorously as I may, that sal I surely do, the breff and the long: marry, I wad full fain heard some question 'tween you tway ...

Mes - pronunciation [mes] for *Mass*.

theise - ?

slomber - for *slumber*.

ayle de gud service - It isn't clear to me whether *ayle* represents [eɪ] or [aɪl] for *I'll* (notice the following *Ile*). *De* [de] for *do* is modern Scots *dae*.

ligge - modern Scots *lig* originally from Northern ME *lig* from ON *liggia*. StE *lie* is from OE *licgan*.

grund - Northern *grund* from OE *grund* did not undergo the lengthening and subsequent diphthongisation of *ground*. Modern Scots *grund* [grund].

ay, or go to death - earlier printings have *ay ow got a death = I owe God a death*, which is an interesting example of how texts can be modified by misreadings.

surely - earlier printings had *sueryly* which probably represented a pronunciation with initial [s].

breff - for *brief*.

wad - for *would*.

heard - ?

tway - pronunciation [twe] for *two*.

The Irishman - Makmorrice

Mackmorrice uses the singular *is* for standard *are* throughout..

- By Chrish, Law, tish ill done: the Work ish give over, the Trompet sound the Retreat. By my Hand I swear, and my fathers Soul, The Work ish ill done: it ish give over: I would have blowed up the Town, so Chrish save me, law, in an hour. O tish ill done, tish ill done: by my Hand tish ill done.

Chrish, tish, ish etc - for *Christ, 'tis, is*, a regular pronunciation of <s> with [ʃ].

law - an exclamation, *Lord!*.

give over - for *given*.

blowed - for *blown*

- It is no time to discourse, so Crish save me: The day is hot, and the Weather, and the Wars, and the King, and the Dukes: it is not time to discourse, the Town is beseech'd: and the Trumpet call us to the Breach, and we talk, and by Crish do nothing, 'tis shame for us all: so God sa'me 'tis shame to stand still, it is shame by my hand: and there is Throats to be cut, and Works to be done, and there ish nothing done, so Christ sa'me law.

beseech'd - for *besieged*, devoicing of the medial [dʒ] to [tʃ].

sa'me - reduced form of *save me*.

Earlier Folio printing:

GOWER Captaine Fluellen, you must come presently to the Mynes; the Duke of Gloucester would speake with you.

FLUELLEN To the Mynes? Tell you the Duke, it is not so good to come to the Mynes: for looke you, the Mynes is not according to the disciplines of the Warre; the concauties of it is not sufficient: for looke you, th'aduersarie, you may discuss vnto the Duke, looke you, is digt himselfe, foure yarde vnder, the Countermines: by *Cheshu*, I thinke a will plowe vp all, if there is not better directions.

GOWER The Duke of Gloucester, to whom the Order of the Siege is giuen, is altogether directed by an Irish man, a very valiant Gentleman yfaith.

FLUELLEN It is Captaine *Makmorrice*, is it not?

GOWER I think it be.

FLUELLEN By *Cheshu* he is an Asse, as in the World, I will verifie as much as in his Beard: he ha's no more directions in the true disciplines of the Warres, looke you, of the Roman discipline, then is a Puppy-dog.

Enter Captaine Makmorrice, and Captaine Iamy

GOWER Here a comes, and the Scots Captaine, Captaine Iamy, with him.

FLUELLEN Captaine *Iamy* is a maruellous falorous Gentleman, that is certain, and of great expedition and knowledge in th'aunchiant Warres, vpon my particular knowledge of his directions: by *Cheshu* he will maintaine his Argument as well as any Militarie man in the World, in the disciplines of the Pristine Warres of the Romans.

IAMY I say gudday, Captaine *Fluellen*.

FLUELLEN Godden to you Worship, good Captaine *Iames*.

GOWER How now Captaine *Mackmorrice*, haue you quit the Mynes? haue the Pioners giuen o're?

MACKMORRICE By Chrish Law tish ill done: the Worke ish giue ouer, the Trompet sound the Retreat. By my Hand I sweare, and my fathers Soule, the Worke ish ill done: it ish giue ouer: I would haue blowed vp the Towne, so Chrish saue me law, in an houre. O tish ill done, tish ill done: by my Hand tish ill done.

FLUELLEN Captaine *Mackmorrice*, I beseech you now, will you voutsafe me, looke you, a few disputations with you, as partly touching or concerning the disciplines of the Warre, the Roman Warres, in the way of Argument, looke you, and friendly communication: partly to satisfie my Opinion, and partly for the satisfaction, looke you, of my Mind: as touching the direction of the Militarie discipline, that is the Point.

IAMY It sall be vary gud, gud feith, gud captens bath, and I sall quit you with gud leue, as I may pick occasion: that sall I mary.

MACKMORRICE It is no time to discourse, so Crish saue me: the day is hot, and the Weather, and the Warres, and the King, and the Dukes: it is no time to discourse, the Town is beseech'd: and the Trumpet call vs to the breech, and we talke, and be Crish do nothing, tis shame for vs all: so God sa'me tis shame to stand still, it is shame by my hand: and there is Throats to be cut, and Workes to be done, and there ish nothing done, so Christ sa'me law.

IAMY By the Mes, ere these eyes of mine take themselues to slomber, ayle de gud seruice, or Ile ligge i'th'grund for it; ay ow got a death: and Ile pay't as valorously as I may, that sal I suerly do, that is the breff and the long: mary, I wad full faine heard some question tween you tway ...
