

The Use of Shakespeare's Idioms in Present-Day English

Krasnić, Anton

Master's thesis / Diplomski rad

2021

Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj: **University of Zagreb, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences / Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Filozofski fakultet**

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: <https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:131:099578>

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Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2024-10-15**



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University of Zagreb

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Department of English language and literature

Academic Year 2020/2021

The Use of Shakespeare's Idioms in Present-Day English

(Master's Thesis)

Student: Anton Krasnić

Supervisor: Milan Stanojević Mateusz, PhD

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	1
INTRODUCTION	2
THEORETICAL BACKGROUND.....	4
THE MOST IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS OF SHAKESPEAREAN VOCABULARY	4
SIZE	4
NEOLOGISMS.....	6
WORD FORMATIONS	8
OTHER IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF SHAKESPEARE’S LANGUAGE	11
BRITISH ENGLISH AND AMERICAN ENGLISH	14
THE BNC AND COCA.....	16
ROSAMUND MOON’S WAY OF CLASSIFYING FIXED EXPRESSIONS AND IDIOMS	18
METHODOLOGY	20
RESULTS	23
GENERAL RESULTS.....	23
DETAILED COMPARISONS OF SHAKESPEAREAN IDIOMS	25
IDIOMS THAT CONTAIN ARCHAIC WORDS OR MEANINGS THAT WOULD OTHERWISE BE CONSIDERED MODERN	26
TO BE HOIST/HOISTED WITH/BY ONE’S OWN PETARD	26
TO SHUFFLE OFF THIS MORTAL COIL.....	28
STAR-CROSSED LOVERS.....	30
ONCE MORE UNTO THE BREACH	31
THE GAME IS AFOOT	32
A HUE AND CRY.....	33
BY MY TROTH	35
THE QUALITY OF MERCY IS NOT STRAINED	36
IDIOMS THAT CONTAIN MODERN WORDS	37
TO CARRY COALS	37
THERE IS THE RUB	38
BY THE BOOK.....	39
A WILD GOOSE CHASE.....	40
BREVITY IS THE SOUL OF WIT	40
EVERY DOG WILL HAVE HIS DAY	41
A HEART OF GOLD	42
A BAND OF BROTHERS	43

A POUND OF FLESH.....	44
ALL THAT GLITTERS IS NOT GOLD	45
EAT SOMEONE OUT OF HOUSE AND HOME.....	47
AS DEAD AS A DOORNAIL.....	47
TO GIVE THE DEVIL HIS DUE	48
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....	50
WORKS CITED	53

ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with how William Shakespeare coined his words and idioms, the size of his vocabulary and some basic facts about Early Modern English, British English and American English. It also presents an analysis of several phrases and idioms from six plays penned by Shakespeare. Those idioms are split into groups according to whether or not they contain archaic vocabulary or collocates. The British National Corpus and the Corpus of Contemporary American English are used so as to determine the frequency of those idioms in the two varieties of English and to ascertain to what extent they have been incorporated into each variety. All in all, the ultimate goal of this analysis is to determine to what extent these idioms are present in Present-Day English as well as whether they appear more frequently in American or British English.

Key Words: William Shakespeare, idioms, phrases, corpora, frequency, Early Modern English, Present-Day English, British English, American English, the BNC, the COCA.

INTRODUCTION

When one takes a look at a sample of text that was written by Shakespeare many a century ago, they cannot fail to notice that the syntax, semantics, word order and vocabulary of his English are to some extent different than the ones that are in use today. However, by having written his plays and sonnets, William Shakespeare has made a tremendous impact on Present-Day English, especially on its vocabulary. Naturally, even though not all the words that can be found in his work are in use today, some of them have been naturalized into the language, without people even being aware that they were either produced or recorded by arguably the most famous English playwright. On the other hand, there are some phrases and idioms which people can still ascribe to him even though they are not likely to either utter them in day-to-day speech or write them in a private message, unless they want to quote Shakespeare to prove some point by using “old language” or simply to show off. The rest of these phrases have faded into oblivion and can only be found on the pages of his plays or heard in either a movie adaptation or live on stage at various theatres.

Deciding which ones of many Shakespearean idioms belong to which category is not at all simple, because many factors have to be taken into consideration, such as how they ought to be grouped, classified, sampled, analysed etc. Due to the significance of these phrases and idioms, the aim of this research will be to find out how often certain Shakespearean idioms and phrases are used in Present-Day English and various contexts in which they appear. Due to the fact that Shakespeare was famous for his insults, exclamations and metaphorical idioms, those groups of idioms ought to be taken into consideration. However, because of the fact that all languages change overtime and the fact that four-hundred-year-old texts are the ones under close scrutiny, it ought to be safe to assume that many of those verbal insults, exclamations as well as some metaphorical idioms penned by Shakespeare are no longer used in Present-Day English. Hence, most of the phrases and idioms that are going to be considered for this analysis fall into the category of famous Shakespearean multi-word idioms, while there are also some idioms that may not be thought to be Shakespearean but that are nevertheless found in his works. Naturally, some of the idioms in question contain a couple of archaic words, while some are only comprised of words that can be heard and used on a daily basis, which is why these two linguistic traits are to be selected as the most important criteria when grouping these idioms. Even though many of

Shakespeare's famous idioms should be quite frequent in Present-Day English, this can and should be checked through corpus research. Moreover, it should be noted if they are more present in one variety of English than the other. This is why the two most important varieties of English have been selected for this research: British and American English. Hence, the aim of this paper is to find out how Shakespearean idioms are used in Present-Day English. This will be done by checking whether Shakespearean idioms are more frequent in British or in American English, and by checking whether people use such idioms only when they want to quote Shakespeare or in other, more natural, situations as well. Based on this, the hypothesis is that they will be more frequent in British English because of the fact that Shakespeare was an English playwright who was born and bred in Stratford-upon-Avon and the assumption that the British would be keen on preserving his legacy by using his idioms in day-to-day speech. The second hypothesis is that people will either utter or write such idioms more often when they want to quote Shakespeare rather than use them in day-to-day speech which, in turn, should imply that they have been successfully incorporated into the language that is used nowadays. In order to establish whether this is true or false, it will be determined how often Shakespeare is credited as the person who either coined or used a certain idiom as well as to see in what ways these idioms appear in sentences that are not considered to be quotes or if they appear in such sentences at all. This will be done by establishing in what contexts they appear as well as by taking a closer look at selected concordances in order to find out whether it is just a quote or something more than that. Also, some other academic works are going to be consulted in order to try to elaborate on why some idioms might be more frequent in one variety than the other as well as how the BNC and the COCA are to be used when determining such kind of frequency.

But, before tackling all these issues, there are a few topics that need to be discussed in order to shed light on the language in the Elizabethan era and its characteristics, on what Shakespeare was obliged to do in order to succeed as a playwright, why he coined new words, how many of them he came up with and if he came up with them at all. All in all, all these points need to be addressed so as to describe how and why it is possible for some phrases to have survived in English until this very day and why some of them can only be found in Shakespeare's works or some other works belonging to the Elizabethan period.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

THE MOST IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS OF SHAKESPEAREAN VOCABULARY

SIZE

Back in the 16th century, if one wanted to succeed as a playwright, not only did they have to write plays that were going to appeal to both the highborn and the lowborn, but they also had to write them on various topics. Even nowadays, that implies that one has to be well versed in topics such as history, politics, law, warfare, religion and culture as well as the daily life of the community and country in which they live. Thus, it is only logical to assume that their vocabulary is vast and due to the fact that Shakespeare wrote plays on all of these topics it may be said that he was indeed such a person. However, David Crystal claims that this is exactly what makes people believe that Shakespeare wrote “a quarter, a third, a half...of all the words in the English language” (Crystal, 2008, p. 8). Unlike some authors who invented most if not all the words in languages for their fantasy worlds, this is, of course, not the case with Shakespeare, because the English language had existed for ages prior to the year of his birth, which means he simply used the version of the language that was spoken at the time and which is now known today as Early Modern English. And even though that was the period when a myriad of words had started entering the vocabulary of the English Language, it is simply inconceivable that half of the entire vocabulary could have been invented by only one man. But how many words he invented is a bit tricky to answer, because that depends on whom you ask and what criteria are used when evaluating that.

For instance, in his book *Think on my words*, David Crystal claims that most experts state the size of Shakespeare’s vocabulary is about 20 000 different words, while there are also some who estimate that there are 30 000 words (Crystal, 2008, pp. 3-4). To make things even more complicated, Hugh Craig points out the number given by Stephan Greenblatt in his introduction to *The Norton Shakespeare*, claiming that Shakespeare came up with an “immense word hoard” which amounts to 25 000 different words, thus making himself the greatest wordsmith of his period (Greenblatt as cited in Craig, 2011, p. 54). As to why there are different word counts, it should suffice it to say that a couple of different methods have been applied when determining

that so far. Crystal elaborates on this issue by pointing out that adjectives such as *different* may refer to the same entry in the dictionary, but not to the same form or meaning. He explains it still further by pointing out that words such as *cat*, *dog*, *ask*, and *bear* have multiple meanings, meaning that they are different for their dictionary meaning is not one and the same (Crystal, 2008, p. 4). However, these words may have different forms as nouns, adjectives, verbs or whatever they are classified as, but due to the fact they are just different forms of the same noun, adjective or verb their dictionary meaning does not change and thus they ought to be counted as one single unit (Crystal, 2008, p. 4). Moreover, he stipulates that this is the method that must have been used whenever it is said that Shakespeare used “20 000 different words in his work” (Crystal, 2008, p. 4). He also adds that “if you count all of these forms separately, obviously you will get a much higher total than if you do not” (Crystal, 2008, p. 4). That is exactly what some of those experts who decided to undertake that difficult task did. One such expert is Craig, who says that in his analysis he treats “each form of a lexical word as a separate item, so that *light* is regarded as “a single form”, whether used as adjective, noun or verb, while *run*, *ran*, *week*, and *weeks* are all distinct words” (Craig, 2011, p. 58). However, he lets the reader know that one Alfred Hart combined all the different word forms that he could find in Shakespeare’s works into dictionary-type headwords, which is, naturally, different than the method he uses (Hart as cited in Craig, 2011, p. 59). Nevertheless, this method can also be very helpful for it combines several manners of word counting into one. Craig also admires Hart for his persistence, because he counted all those words by hand and then grouped them together afterwards (Hart as cited in Craig, 2011, p. 59). And if Crystal is to be believed this was a humungous task, because all of Shakespeare’s words contained 884,647 words in total, which is more words than can be found in the 1611 King James Bible (800 000 words) (Crystal, 2008, p. 6). Besides that, when grouping these words he had to decide whether to classify some words as compound nouns or not, whether he should include proper names, foreign words, malapropisms and so on. Be that as it may, one thing is certain: “It is not so much the number of words we have as what we do with those words that make the difference between an ordinary and a brilliant use of language” (Crystal, 2008, p. 3). Shakespeare did just that and in case he needed new words to express his thoughts, he simply invented new ones. As to how he invented them, that is to be discussed in the next part of this section.

NEOLOGISMS

When it comes to creating new words, one must be aware that it is rather difficult to ascribe the authorship of any particular word to one single man or woman and stake one's own reputation on it by claiming that they are the ones who invented them. For instance, when someone utters or writes down some word that has never been heard or read before, it is rather difficult to say with complete certainty that they were the ones who came up with it at some point in time. They might have heard it from someone else. So even today, with the internet and many electronic devices at our disposal, we cannot know that for sure, let alone during the Elizabethan era when people could not be bothered about recording who said something first. But this is where Crystal comes in and says that by using surviving texts in which particular phrases or words appear as evidence is the only way we can at least point out who was "the first recorded user" of a particular phrase or word (Crystal, 2008, p. 8). Besides, even the honour of being the first recorded inventor is not set in stone, because one may always find an older text where the word in question was recorded as well (Crystal, 2008, pp. 8-9). And since languages keep changing, adding new words as well as forsaking some old ones, it could very well be that the first person to have used some word or phrase was not the one who really invented it.

If Keith Johnson is to be believed, the Elizabethan period was one of those periods in the history of the English language when new words started cropping up left and right (Johnson, 2019, p. 74). Up until that period, English had not been famous for being a florid or bombastic language when it came to its expressions, so some attempts were made to make it sound more so "by borrowing, and by the creation of new words based on "native linguistic resources" (Johnson, 2019, p. 74). What's more, he hastens to add that that period was "one of the most lexically inventive periods in the history of the language" because more than 6000 different words were coined, while Crystal also assumes that the total number of English words jumped to a figure of 150 000 by the end of the 16th century (Johnson, 2019, p. 75, Crystal, 2008, p. 3). Since Shakespeare happened to be a playwright at the time, he recorded a great many of them. In fact, he is quoted as the first recorded user of 2200 of these words, which, according to Crystal, can be found in the OED (Crystal, 2008, p. 9). But, of course, it would be foolhardy to suggest that he invented them all just because he was the first one to record them. However, there is one thing which can be assumed regarding his coining and recording of words and that is frequency. Let's

take an expletive from that time as an example. The common oath *'sblood* (i.e. *'God's blood'*) is used when Falstaff uses it in *Act I Scene 2* of *Henry IV Part I* and this is the earliest OED citation for it. But that is not the only time the phrase is used, what is more this is not even the only play in which it is used. And due to the fact that it is a swear word as well as that people use them very often to express their frustration, it could very well be that this expression was in use before 1596. But, unfortunately we will never know. In this case, frequency is just a tool that can make our assumptions more plausible, but without any firm evidence that someone else might have used it first, none of us can be any wiser.

On the other hand, the verb *to rant* only appears once in *Act V, Scene 1* of *Hamlet* when the Danish prince confronts Laertes after the death of Ophelia and promises that if "thou'lt (Laerters) mouth, / I'll rant as well as thou". And if *Coined by Shakespeare* by Malless and McQuain is to be viewed as a reliable source, the only other form in the verbal noun "ranting" is in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Malless, McQuain, 1998, p. 193). Also it is stated in the OED that this phrase was first recorded at the end of the 16th century. This coupled with the fact that Shakespeare only used it twice can be considered a strong indication that he did not just write it down after having heard it at some inn, but rather that he actually did coin the term himself. And according to Crystal and the OED there are about 1700 words which can be found in no other source that predates Shakespeare's works (Crystal, 2008, p. 9). Or, as Johnson would have it, at least it could not until 2019, after Goodland had conducted his research by using online sources such as LION and EBBO and established that some words such as *precurse* and *practisant* had not been recorded in *Hamlet* and *Henry VI* respectively, but rather in *A Treatise concerning Statutes form 1591* and a 1550 translation of *Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian War* (Johnson, 2019, p. 78). That implies that every now and then a couple of antedatings may appear. However, when we talk about Shakespeare, coning words as such is not what he was really about. Namely, Johnson claims that "Shakespeare was using language to create effects, and one of the processes involved would, in certain circumstances, entail the creation of new words" (Johnson, 2019, p. 78). Therefore, we should not think only about Shakespeare's invented words when his impact on the language is brought to the fore, for there is a difference between "inventing a word" and "introducing a word into the language" (Crystal, 2008, p. 9). Crystal also adds: "Namely, many words and phrases which were not invented by a particular author entered the language because he or she used them" (Crystal, 2008, p. 10). So, whether he really did coin some of them or not

does not really matter in the long run. It is important that Shakespeare introduced them and that they got incorporated into the English language. But nevertheless, it is still important to address the process of how Shakespeare and his contemporaries formed words in the period of the Early Modern English so this will be in focus of the following part of this section.

WORD FORMATIONS

As David Crystal puts it, another reason as to why Shakespeare might be difficult to read is that “many of Shakespeare's unfamiliar words are there simply because they reflect the culture of the time, such as the ones that had to do with clothing (e.g. *doublet*), body-armour (e.g. *gauntlet*), weapons (e.g. *halberd*), and sailing ships (e.g. *topgallant*)” (Crystal, 2016, pp.74-75). Then, Sean McEvoy points out that the English language has changed over the last 400 years, for while grammar changes slowly over time, vocabulary keeps changing on a far more regular basis. (McEvoy, 2001, pp. 14-15). Moreover, he claims that “the vocabulary of English grew at a faster rate than at any time before or since” and adds that “the language grew and developed so quickly that by the early 1600s it was as different from the English spoken in 1500 as it is from the English spoken in Britain today” (McEvoy, 2001, p. 16). This implies that some words from the 1500s had fallen out of use over time, while new ones were in the process of being coined by nobles, commoners and authors such as Shakespeare. As to how some of these neologisms might have been formed by Shakespeare, there were a couple of ways that he utilised to accomplish that and some of them are still relevant today.

Keith Johnson points out some words coined by Shakespeare focus on Latinate words (Johnson, 2019, p. 79). He then adds that quite a number of studies have been conducted on that particular matter and that many of them can be found in a collection of studies conducted and compiled by Salmon and Burness in 1987 (Johnson, 2019, p. 79). He then claims that Garner argues in one of his chapters that there are many words that can be regarded as hybrid in a manner that they combine “Anglo-Saxon roots with Latinate or Gallic prefixes or suffixes” (Johnson, 2019, p. 79). He then explains that “one of Garner’s examples is the word *blastment* (i.e. *blight*), used in *Act I, Scene 3* of *Hamlet*. The root ‘*blast*’ is Germanic, while the suffix *-ment* is Latinate” (Johnson, 2019, p. 79). He also explains that there are no rules of Latin word formation that are followed, which is evident in the term *disquantity* (*King Lear, Act I, Scene 4*), for the Latinate prefix *dis-* together with the noun (*quantity*) is used to form a verb, a combination which did not occur in

Latin (Johnson, 2019, p. 79). Be that as it may, this is not the only manner in which Shakespeare coined his words and expressions.

As for some other ways that Shakespeare utilised when inventing his words, many linguists have analysed quite a number of his strategies and thus put together plenty of works tackling that particular matter. Johnson mentions that one of them is Nevalainen, who focuses just on these strategies in her *Cambridge History of the English Language*. Namely, she points out that one of Shakespeare's preferred strategies to form words was to merge two words into one, thus effectively creating compounds (Nevalainen as cited in Johnson, 2019 p. 80). He usually created them by merging a noun with either a present or past participle of a certain verb (Nevalainen as cited in Johnson, 2019 p. 80). She then elaborates on that manner of wordsmithing still further by pointing out that such types of words concisely summarize ideas that would otherwise have to be expressed in quite a wordy and roundabout way. (Nevalainen as cited in Johnson, 2019 p. 80) She then adds some examples such as *star-crossed lovers* (*Romeo and Juliet, Act I, Prologue*) and *child-changed father* (*King Lear, Act IV, Scene 7*), explaining that the former economically expresses the idea about Romeo and Juliet being "thwarted by astrological incompatibility," while the latter is a bit ambiguous, because it can either mean "father changed into a child," or "father changed by his children" (Nevalainen as cited in Johnson, 2019 p. 80). But, due to Shakespeare's proclivity for puns it could be both.

Another strategy that Nevalainen mentions is affixation, which, as she points out, was very common in the Elizabethan period (Nevalainen as cited in Johnson, 2019 p. 80). Shakespeare preferred using negative prefixes when creating new words, such as *un-* (e.g. *unseminared* (i.e. deprived of masculinity)), *in/im-* (e.g. *immoment* (i.e. unimportant)) *dis-* (e.g. *discandy* (i.e. dissolve)), especially the first one because this one can be used most productively (Nevalainen as cited in Johnson, 2019 p. 80). Shakespeare was also very fond of suffixes which he used to create words such as *insultment*, (*Cymbeline, Act III, Scene 5*) while the language of that period offered many other options such as *insult, insultation or insultance*. (Nevalainen as cited in Johnson, 2019 p. 80) This begs the question as to why he opted for creating a new one, when he had a perfectly good array of other words. The answer to that question can lie at the very beginning of *Henry V*:

Can this cock-pit hold

The vasty fields of France? Or may we cram

Within this wooden O the very casques

That did affright the air at Agincourt?

(*The Norton Shakespeare, Henry V, Prologue*, p. 1455)

In this passage, as Crystal points out, Shakespeare created two new words, by giving the noun *cockpit* another meaning, i.e. *theatre pit*, and adding the adjectival suffix *-y* to *vast*, thus creating the adjective *vasty* (Crystal, 2016, p. 75). Even though *vast* is a perfectly fine adjective, Crystal says that Shakespeare, who used *vast* as well on more than one occasion, opted for adding the suffix *-y* in this case because the adjective *vasty* perfectly suits “the rhythm of the poetic line (the metre)” due to that extra syllable added by the aforementioned suffix (Crystal, 2016, p. 75). Namely, the adjective *vast* consists only of a single syllable and using it just would not do, for lines written in iambic pentameter usually contain ten syllables, which is why he had to come up with the word that would describe “the fields of France”, in the right manner and that would consist of two syllables (Crystal, 2016, p. 75). Also, this is not the only time the adjective *vasty* appears in Shakespeare’s works, in fact, there is evidence that he used the very same suffix if some other adjectives were found wanting in the department of syllables (e.g. *plumpy* and *brisky*) (Crystal, 2016, p. 75). One explanation as to why so many variations on one particular word were present may be the one offered by Deiter Kastovsky, who states that at the beginning of the Elizabethan period, no orthography that was to be followed to the letter was firmly established then and thus patterns of word formations were not tightly regulated (Kastovsky, 2006, p. 256). This is why rivalling forms such as *frequency/frequentness*, *immaturity/immatureness* or *disthronize/disthronedethrone/unthronedethronize* were present at that time (Kastovsky, 2006, p. 256). Therefore, not only may one find them in Shakespeare’s works but also in works of his contemporaries, which means that it is no wonder Shakespeare coined some of his own words in that particular manner, since this was quite a common way to do it in 16th century England.

One more strategy that should be brought to the fore is conversion, which implies that “a word is allowed to become a new part of speech” (Nevalainen as cited in Johnson, 2019, p. 80). In some instances Shakespeare used some nouns and adjectives as verbs like in *Measure for Measure* (e.g. the noun *duke* is used as a verb “Lord Angelo dukes it well in his absence.” (*Act III, Scene 2*)), *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (e.g. the noun *urn* is used as a verb “He will not suffer us to burn

their bones,/ To urn their ashes.”(*Act I, Scene 1*)) and *Anthony and Cleopatra* (e.g. the adjective *safe* is used as a verb “I tell you true: best you safed the bringer/ Out of the host.” (*Act IV, Scene 6*)), thus creating new words in the process. Nevalainen points out that this way of inventing new words and meanings was very economical and effective, for shifting those words from one part of speech to another actually renders them quite conspicuous and thus easier to notice (Nevalainen as cited in Johnson, 2019, pp. 81-82). One might regard this as Shakespeare breaking the rules of the language, but Johnson adds that this is not surprising, because he was not “an academic classicist, and academic grammarians, of Latin or any other language, were not going to be consulted before new formations were introduced” (Johnson, 2019, p. 79). Nevertheless, his not following the rules to the letter might have been one of many reasons why Early Modern English abounded in many various words and phrases, as well as Present-Day English does today.

OTHER IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF SHAKESPEARE’S LANGUAGE

As it is very well known, not only is Shakespeare notable for coining new words, but he is also very famous for how he uses them. One of the most prominent characteristics of his language is his tendency to use puns, so it does not come as a surprise that they can be found all over his plays. For example, Lucy Munro (2015) sheds some light on how Shakespeare uses *antique* and *antic*. She explains that while “old words might be *antique* – in the sense of old, ancient and time-worn (OED *antique*, a. 1–2) – both old and new words could be *antic*, that is, grotesque, disorderly and foolish (OED *antic*, a. 2).” (Munro, 2015, p. 78) The reason why there is a possibility for a pun here is because the two words sound similar, plus there is an alternative spelling that can be used for both *antique* and *antic* and that is *anticke*. In some cases Shakespeare uses these adjectives in an overt manner, like he uses it in *Hamlet*, when “Horatio declares that he is ‘more an Antikce Roman then a Dane’ (*Act V, Scene 2*)”, for his behaviour is somewhat similar to that of Romans, which is not exactly Christian-like or in *Othello* where Othello gives to Desdemona his handkerchief which is described as “an Antique Token / My Father gave my Mother (*Act V, Scene 2*)” (Munro, 2015, pp. 80-82). In other cases Munro argues that various meanings of these two adjectives are more or less intertwined and thus are difficult to separate. (Munro, 2015, p. 81) That predicament is quite obvious in the following passage of *Hamlet*:

Striking too short at Greekes.

His anticke Sword,

Rebellious to his Arme, lyes where it falles

Repugnant to command

(The Norton Shakespeare: Hamlet, Act 2, Scene 2, p. 1701)

She points out that there is a great possibility that Priam's sword is as old as his owner, but it does not serve him properly, which implies that the sword is both grotesque and disorderly. (Munro, 2015, p. 81) Therefore, it is safe to assume that Shakespeare played on words here, so in this case, this adjective may have both meanings. Another example of utilising puns is a bit simpler and that is when one word form has multiple meanings. If we take a look at the following dialogue from *Romeo and Juliet*, we can see a textbook example of that sort of pun:

TYBALT

Mercutio, thou consort'st with Romeo.

MERCUTIO

Consort? What, dost thou make us minstrels?

An thou make minstrels of us, look to hear nothing

but discords. Here's my fiddlestick. Here's that

shall make you dance. Zounds, "consort"!

(The Norton Shakespeare: Romeo and Juliet, Act III, Scene 1, p. 905)

Here, Tybalt uses the verb *to consort*, trying to convey that Mercutio hangs out with Romeo, while Mercutio utilises another meaning of that verb (i.e. to play instruments) by sardonically responding that if Tybalt thinks them to be a pair of minstrels that he is sorely mistaken, for Mercutio's weapon is bound to prove him otherwise.

Another aspect of Shakespeare's language is also his metaphor. It is important to address it, for Keith Johnson tells us that Johnson and Lakoff view metaphor both as a linguistic device and as an instrument of thought that is to a great extent affected by one's own culture (Johnson, 2019, p. 82). This implies that the culture and concepts of the Elizabethan era had an impact on how Shakespeare coined his very own metaphorical expressions. Johnson then adds that there are

many Shakespearean metaphorical themes, some of which are even classified in various case studies and one of those studies conducted by Thompson and Thompson includes “time metaphors in *Troilus and Cressida*, animal metaphors in *King Lear* and human body metaphors in *Hamlet*” (p. 82). Some of those metaphors follow the most common A is B formula, such as many terms that are used in place of reproductive organs in *Henry IV Part I* and *Henry IV Part II*, or such as when King Henry in *Henry V, Act V, Scene 2* literally says that French maids are walled cities while discussing possible terms of his marriage to French princess Katharine with her father (Johnson, 2019, p. 83). Also some less conventional types of metaphors are also present in *Hamlet*. For example, Miriam Jacobson argues that when Polonius tells Ophelia “to colour her loneliness” in *Act III Scene I*, he metaphorically uses the verb *to colour* in order to tell her that he wants her to conceal, hide or camouflage that she is lonely, which is something that “the King and Queen are trying to heighten” (Jacobson, 2015, p. 104). Even though there are quite a few elements that point to “the material dimension of the word”, Jacobsen argues the reason why this term works metaphorically in that statement is because “the words for specific colours were fluid and unfixed in Early Modern English due to England’s increasingly global role in mercantile trade and conquest”, as well as that “the very notion of changing colour, or colouring oneself, mirrored the semantic fluidity of Early Modern English” (Jacobson, 2015, pp. 104-106). This perfectly summarizes the logic behind the way in which people formed their thoughts during the Elizabethan era, which is probably why Shakespeare himself opted for applying the same logic to the verb *to colour* in general.

All in all, Shakespeare’s methods of coining and preserving words are to be commended, for if it had not been for them, the English language might not contain at least some part of its vast vocabulary that it is famous for today. For instance, as Sarah Grandage points out in her essay, some words such as *assassination* (*Macbeth, Act I, Scene 2*) or *watchdog* (*Tempest Act I, Scene 2*) have been incorporated in the lexicon of average native speakers of English and hence they may be heard on a daily basis (Grandage, 2019, p. 1381). On the other hand, words and phrases, such as *consanguineous* (i.e. to be related in blood, of the same family) (*Twelfth Night Act II, Scene 3*), *congreeing* (i.e. coming together in agreement) (*Henry V, Act I, Scene 2*), *dispunge* (i.e. to pour out, rain down) (*Antony and Cleopatra. Act IV, Scene 9*), or *kickshaws* (i.e. fancy dishes or trivial things) (*Henry IV Part 2, Act V, Scene 5*), that are all thought to have been coined or introduced by Shakespeare have either never been incorporated into the lexicon or fallen out of

use for many native speakers of Present-Day English and thus faded into obscurity (Grandage, 2019, p. 1381). However, this is only one explanation as to why some words or other linguistic features have not survived until this day, while others are a bit more intricate. Some answers may lie in numerous varieties of English that are spoken today. So, in order to provide the reader with some insight into what characteristics of Early Modern English might have survived till this day in Present-Day English, both the British variety and the American variety of English will be briefly discussed in the next section of this chapter.

BRITISH ENGLISH AND AMERICAN ENGLISH

Since Shakespeare's idioms and expressions are going to be analysed within the confines of these two varieties of English, it is important to shed some light on their respective courses of development since the early 1600s, for the period between the founding of Jamestown and the signing of the Declaration of Independence could be viewed as the last period when the English language could be solely associated with Britain. Namely, when a handful of brave English colonists set foot on American soil in 1607, their English was the same as the one that was spoken in Britain at that time. But, due to the fact they were faced with many new things and places in the New World, they, as Edward Finegan puts it, had to come up with "new names or invoke familiar ones" (Finegan, 2006, p. 384). In that manner, the variety of English spoken in the colonies started to grow more different from the variety spoken in Britain for many words used to have been borrowed from Native Americans and colonists speaking other European languages (Finegan, 2006, pp. 385-386). Naturally, some of these words have long fallen into disuse and would not be recognised by present-day speakers of American English, but some of them have been naturalized into American English and developed new senses (Finegan, 2006, pp. 384-386). Also, despite the fact that there are some differences in grammar, vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation between these two varieties of English, not all of them can be regarded as colonial innovations. Finegan explains that some "linguistic features of Early Modern English fell into disuse in Britain, while most colonial communities kept on using them" (Finegan, 2006, p. 386). For example, he points out that while *got* kept growing more popular in Britain, *gotten*, the more traditional form of the past participle of the verb *to get*, remained more frequent in America (Finegan, 2006, p. 386). Finegan further adds that details such as this one tell us that English in Britain was somewhat variable during the colonial period (Finegan, 2006,

p. 387). That is only natural, because as it is widely known, languages are bound to change over a certain period of time, which is why one variety of one language cannot be exactly the same as the other.

Some other aspects that need to be taken into consideration when it comes to comparing two varieties of any language are standardisation and dialect levelling, for these two features definitely can make a significant impact on the grammar, vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation of each and every language. Namely, Richard Hogg claims that the process of standardisation is exactly what is deemed to have affected some features of Standard English that is spoken in Britain today (Hogg, 2006, p. 377). For instance, Standard British English completely lost its postvocalic /r/ in words such as *arm* (/am/), while it is still present in other varieties such as American, Canadian, Irish and Scottish English. (Hogg, 2006, p. 377) However, Roger Lass points out that there are some exceptions within these two varieties of English: within Britain, most dialects in SW England and some dialects in West Lancashire are considered to be rhotic, while some dialects of the US eastern seaboard and Gulf coast are non-rhotic (Lass, 2006, p. 91). Lass then explains that this loss was gradual but complex, for it actually started in the 14th century, but it was quite sporadic, meaning that it was practically non-existent and that some of the very first meaningful changes began occurring in the 17th century, for Ben Jonson notes in his *English Grammar of 1640* “that /r/ is sounded firme in the beginning of the words, and more liquid in the middle and end” (Lass, 2006, pp. 91-92). Thus, it can be ascertained that this feature used to be characteristic of native speakers of Early Modern English in both Britain and its colonies, but while most colonists decided to preserve that particular aspect in their English at one point in history, the people of England opted to forswear it. According to this particular example, it is obvious that some features of Early Modern English are still present in Standard American English, while they are not at all present in Standard British English and vice versa. Also, due to the fact that people who brought English to America were Shakespeare’s contemporaries, they must have continued using some Shakespearean expressions in their new homeland, while the very same ones faded into oblivion in their native land. That implies that some Shakespearean idioms and expressions that are present in British English today may not be present in American English and vice versa.

THE BNC AND COCA

In order to find out what the current state of British and American English is as regards Shakespearean words, two corpora will be selected to check it: the BNC is to be used for British English as well as the COCA for American English. When talking about some basic characteristics and advantages of corpora, they provide access to data that is considered to be authentic, implying that they show how frequently some features of grammar and word patterns appear in texts that are written or transcribed in a certain language (Xu Yusu, 2014, p. 68). Furthermore, those corpora contain rather distinctive features that may help users notice various collocations that occur in these texts, stumble upon or purposefully search for some very common chunks of words and thus raise their metalinguistic awareness in general. (Xu Yusu, 2014, p. 68) The BNC and COCA contain such features, which is why they have been selected for this research. However, there are some differences that make these two corpora distinct from one another, which is why they ought to be mentioned in the very next paragraph.

As described by Neil Leech, The British National Corpus is a computer corpus that contains 100 million words of written texts and transcripts of spoken discourse of British English and it ought to be “representative of a very broad range of the English language used in speech and writing” (Leech, 1991, p. 1). The corpus was finally completed and released in 1993, containing texts from the 1970s to the early 1990s (Davies, 2010, p. 448). However, since then, there have been no significant chunks of texts added to it, although some existing texts have been corrected and polished up until today (Davies, 2009, p. 159). He adds that the reason behind this is that the BNC is a static corpus, like many other well-known corpora of English, which usually means that once it is compiled, it is highly unlikely that more texts are to be added to it (Davies, 2010, pp. 447-448). Also, one of the major disadvantages of that sort of corpus is that results are almost always the same, meaning that if a static corpus fails to provide lists containing examples of a certain query even once, it is quite likely that it always will (Sha, 2010, p. 379). But, due to the fact that this corpus is the national corpus of Great Britain, it is perfectly reasonable to select it for this research; for even though it is static, it is believed that this corpus is representative of Standard British English, meaning if there is a possibility for any trademark Shakespearean idioms and expressions to appear anywhere, they ought to appear in this corpus. Some evidence that points to the veracity of this statement is definitely its make-up. As Davies states in his

article, the BNC is comprised of approximately 10% of texts coming from spoken discourse, 16% of them coming from fiction, 15% from (popular) magazines, 10% from newspapers, and 15% from academic journals while the rest comes from other genres (Davies, 2009, p. 161). As to why its spoken data are in short supply, Leech explains that in order to computerize it and then insert it into any corpus, it needs to undergo a very laborious process that is known as transcription (Leech, 1991, p. 4). Namely, in order for any corpus to be fit for use each and every text needs to be coded in a particular standardized format and annotated (Leech, 1991, pp. 7-8). Various linguistic features need to be added and the corpus in question ought to be programmed in a grammatically-tagged form, meaning “each word in each text should be accompanied by a label or tag indicating its grammatical part of speech” and thus making a distinction between homonyms and homographs such as *wind* (noun) and *wind* (verb) (Leech, 1991, p. 8). The BNC is indeed such a corpus and its well-designed interface helps users to search for particular word forms, lemmas, collocates, chunks and idioms.

As for The Corpus of Contemporary American English, this is another online corpus that contains 1 billion words of written texts and transcripts of spoken discourse of American English. It was created in 2008 and it was composed of about 400 million words recorded in the period between 1990 and the day of its release (Davies, 2010, p. 448). This implies that about 600 million more words have been added to it since 2008, which renders it considerably larger than the BNC. The main reason for this is because these two corpora are not of the same kind. Namely, the COCA is a monitor corpus, which means that it is far more dynamic than a static one, implying that new texts keep being added to it on a regular basis (Davies, 2010, p. 447). “The goal of creating such corpora is to allow users to search the continually expanding corpus to see how the language is changing” (Davies, 2010, p. 447). At least 20 million words of text are added to it each year, so as to keep the corpus updated (Davies, 2009, p. 160). This is what makes it perfect for any kind of linguistic research, which is why it has been selected for this one. Moreover, it is even more balanced than the BNC in terms of its contents. Davies stipulates that “texts are evenly divided between spoken discourse (20%), fiction (20%), popular magazines (20%), newspapers (20%) and academic journals (20%) and that “this composition holds for the corpus overall, as well as for each year in the corpus” (Davies, 2009, p. 161). This has been made possible due to the fact that many sources are available online today, plus “there is essentially no competition with and no adverse economic impact on the copyright holder”

according to the law of the US (Davies, 2009, pp. 163-164). For example, when it comes to transcripts of spoken discourse, “sites like CNN have essentially all of their transcripts available back to at least 2000” (Davies, 2009, p. 163). All in all, the most important point of this constant updating is that the genre balance within the corpus stays more or less “the same from year to year” (Davies, 2010, p. 453). As to how the corpus is constructed, its interface is quite similar to the BNC. It contains the so-called “dictionary table” which is comprised of “part of speech, lemma, and frequency information” regarding each and every word and the “source table” which is comprised of “metadata on each of the 150,000+ texts in the corpus, and contains information on such things as genre, sub-genre, title, author, source information (e.g. magazine, issue, and pages)” (Davies, 2009, p. 165).

Taking stock of all that information, despite the fact that these two corpora are neither of the same kind or size, they may be used in a similar manner when it comes to searching for words, lemmas or idioms, plus their contents are more or less the same, even though that part is more balanced and polished in the COCA for it is updated every year. Hence, even though their respective kinds and sizes may seem to be an obstacle at first glance, these two corpora and any results that they may yield can be compared in a manner that is going to be discussed in the section that has to do with methodology. But, prior to that, something ought to be said about how fixed expressions and idioms should be analysed and classified.

ROSAMUND MOON’S WAY OF CLASSIFYING FIXED EXPRESSIONS AND IDIOMS

According to Rosamund Moon, her kind of approach is currently the best possible way of categorizing and grouping fixed expressions or idioms, because “there is no generally agreed set of categories, as well as no generally agreed set of terms” (Moon, 1996, p. 19). Furthermore, after her discussion of some major typologies and ways of classifying idioms in the field of linguistics, she adds that, when she set out “to quantify and describe fixed expressions and idioms (i.e. FEIs) in English and needed a framework or typological model to apply, none of the typologies that she found in the literature worked adequately for the range she was investigating” (Moon, 1996, p.19). Therefore she developed her own typology which was to some extent based on previous works and other typologies, but the most important aspect was to determine whether some lexical items can be regarded as holistic units by determining whether some linguistic

string or chunk is anomalous based on lexicogrammar, semantics or pragmatics (Moon, 1996, p. 19).

She grouped her idioms into the following groups: anomalous collocations, formulae, and metaphors (Moon, 1996, p. 19). Within these groups there are also subtypes which are used to classify idioms further based on their characteristics. Anomalous collocations are idioms that “cannot be decoded purely compositionally nor encoded freely”, as is the case with one of their subtypes called defective collocations, because they “cannot be decoded purely compositionally either because a component item has a meaning not found in other collocations or contexts or because one or more of the component items is semantically depleted” (e.g. *at least, a foregone conclusion, in effect, beg the question*, etc.) (Moon, 1996, pp. 20-21). One such example regarding the idioms selected for this research would be *a hue and cry*, for *hue* is one such component. As for formulae, Moon says that they “generally conform to lexicogrammatical conventions” and that “they are generally compositional semantically”, but they are also “specialized pragmatically” meaning they are used in a formulaic manner and in certain contexts like some sayings (e.g. *that's the way the cookie crumbles*) or proverbs (e.g. *every cloud has a silver lining*) (Moon, 1996, pp. 21-22). An example of the former would be *as dead as a doornail*, while an example of the latter would be *all that glitters is not gold*. Then there are also metaphors and they are “non-compositional because for their semantics and due to that are considered pure idioms” (Moon, 1996, p. 22). Furthermore, subclasses of them usually refer to how transparent they are, but that sort of classification is usually subjective. (e.g. *pack one's bags*. (transparent), *grasp the nettle means* (semi-transparent), *kick the bucket* (opaque)) (Moon, 1996, pp. 22-23). Even though this way of classifying idioms is not without its flaws, Moon points out that “this typology is simply a means to an end: a way of classifying a wide range of fixed expressions and idioms” that suits her for research (Moon, 1996, p. 20). One of the main issues of this classification, as she says, is that certain groups overlap so it is not possible to assign some idioms to only one category (Moon, 1996, p. 23). This is why all the idioms that have been selected for this research will be classified by following Moon’s advice and establishing my own typology prior to running them through the BNC and COCA.

METHODOLOGY

As explained by Moon in the section above, there are various divisions of idioms. They are made on different criteria. The criterion used in this paper is lexical, and it is based on whether an idiom contains archaic words or collocates or not. This has been decided so as to avoid some of the issues mentioned above and for the sake of simplicity. When deciding what items ought to be classified as idioms, it was imperative that they be proverbs, sayings, metaphors, anomalous collocations or simply any sort of non-literal collocates. It was also imperative that those idioms be comprised of multiple words (i.e. multi-word idioms), when selecting them. There are 21 of them and all of them can be found in the following plays: *Hamlet*, *Henry IV Part I*, *Henry IV Part II*, *Henry V*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Romeo and Juliet*. As to why those plays have been selected for this research the most important reason is the following one: These plays were popular in Shakespeare's day and they are still popular today because they abound in some of the most popular Shakespearean quotes. And seeing that most of these popular quotes are actually idioms it has never been in doubt that some of them could be selected for this research. Moreover, these plays contain some idioms that might not have necessarily been invented by Shakespeare but they might have been popularized by him adding another idiomatic meaning to them, which is why there is a possibility that they may still be quite frequent today.

Idioms that belong to the first group, i.e. those that contain archaic vocabulary or collocates, are the following: *to be hoisted by your own petard*, *to shuffle off this mortal coil*, *star-crossed lovers*, *once more unto the breach*, *the game is afoot*, *a hue and cry*, *by my troth*, *the quality of mercy is not strained*. Idioms belonging to the second group (containing modern vocabulary or collocates) are: *to carry coals*, *there is the rub*, *by the book*, *a wild goose chase*, *every dog will have his day*, *brevity is the soul of wit*, *a heart of gold*, *a band of brothers*, *a pound of flesh*, *all that glitters is not gold*, *to eat someone out of house and home*, *as dead as a doornail*, *to give the devil his due*.

Some idioms in the first group may seem to contain only modern words, but they have been put in this group because of collocates that are archaic. For instance, even though *to shuffle off this mortal coil* appears to contain only modern words, it, in fact, contains an archaic phrase that is comprised of two modern words. A phrase within a phrase, so to speak. The words in question are *mortal* (i.e. perishable, bound to die at one point) and *coil* (i.e. a series of circles formed by

winding up a length of rope, wire, etc.) which are indeed modern words, but when they are combined in this manner they bring into existence a metaphorical phrase which means “life.” And when such a term is coupled with a phrasal verb such as *to shuffle off* (meaning to get rid of something) it is safe to assume that the phrase mentioned above means “to die,” and this is indeed what it means. Similarly, looking at *once more unto the breach*, one may argue that the preposition *unto* can be heard or read today, but if we take a look at its definition in any dictionary (e.g. OALD), it is classified as an archaic word and it seems to be often used when people want to sound archaic or evoke some old language, for there are its modern equivalents such as *to*, *towards*, or *until*. This is why the idiom is considered to be archaic. Furthermore, if one takes a look at *the quality of mercy is not strained*; it will probably not cross their mind that the verb *to strain* is an old contracted form of the verb *to constrain*, which means “to force” (Collins English Dictionary, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/strain>). Naturally, it is not surprising why one might not have thought of that, because one of many modern meanings of this verb is “to stretch something to the limit”, which can also be used in a non-literal manner, which is a perfectly plausible explanation as to why somebody might think that the verb *to strain* means that in this case. The difference between the two meanings is minimal, but nevertheless, such differences need to be addressed and pointed out in order to classify each and every idiom accordingly.

Another issue that might need explaining is why some idioms are on the list if there is a good chance that they were not coined by Shakespeare, such as *a hue and cry*, *by my troth*, *as dead as a doornail* etc. There are two reasons: he made them very popular, which is why people and some other authors have kept using them until this day, like *a hue and cry*, or he just used them in a different way and thus invented new meanings for them such as *a wild goose chase*. Namely, if we take *a hue and cry* as an example, it is highly unlikely that it was coined by Shakespeare, because it is believed that it had been in use since Edward I became king in the 13th century (Encyclopaedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/hue-and-cry>) (Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hue%20and%20cry>). Also, today the idiom implies that something outrageous has happened and people strongly protest about it in public. Now, if we take a look at the context and its meaning in *Henry IV Part I*, we can conclude that the Early Modern English meaning and the PDE meaning are not the same. When the sheriff enters the brothel enquiring about Jack Falstaff's whereabouts he says that there has been “a hue

and cry” meaning Jack, who is charged with robbery, has been pursued by the authorities as well as other people. So, why is it even considered? Instead of giving words some new meanings as he usually used to do, Shakespeare decided to stick to the original meaning and thus give it a possibility to be preserved in PDE. Therefore, it is imperative to determine both the frequency of this idiom as well as how often its original meaning can be heard or read in American and British English.

Another important thing is to decide what methods are to be used in order to determine how frequent each of these idioms is. Therefore, they are going to be run through the corpora in four ways, depending on which one proves to be the most suitable for each particular idiom. Some idioms contain words that are either archaic or specific enough, such as *to be hoisted by one’s own petard*, *star-crossed lovers*, *by my troth*, *as dead as a doornail*. When running these idioms through the corpora it is enough to type in one word as a lemma in order to get the best possible results. In this case it is enough to type in *petard*, *star-crossed* and *troth* to achieve just that. However, not all idioms can be run through the corpora in such a manner. For some idioms, two or more lemmas should be typed into the corpora so as to find out how frequent they are. Some idioms that fall into that category are *a wild goose chase*; *the quality of mercy is not strained*, *a band of brothers*, *there is the rub* etc., because one needs to type in the words *goose*, *chase*, *quality*, *mercy*, *strain*, *band*, *brother*, *be* and *rub* as lemmas in order get decent results. It is also important to note that when searching for *there is the rub*, it is imperative to specify that the lemma *rub* is a noun, so as to distinguish it from the homographic verb. Also, another reason why it ought to be searched along with the lemma *be* is because the noun *rub* does not just mean “problem” and thus there may be too many results that do not have to do anything with this idiom. Then, some idioms contain chunks or collocates that are only found in those particular phrases so it is enough to type them into the corpora. If we take *to eat someone out of house and home* as an example, the chunk *house and home* ought to be run through the corpora. The same goes for *to shuffle of this mortal coil*, *once more unto the breach* *brevity is the soul of wit*, *all that glitters is not gold* for the chunks *mortal coil*, *unto the breach*, *soul of wit*, *all that glitters* are key to finding out how frequent those idioms are. Finally, there are those idioms that should be typed into the BNC and COCA as a whole idiomatic unit, for any other type of search is bound to yield too many results that are not relevant for this research. Such idioms are *a pound of flesh*, *by the book*, *a hue and cry* etc. All of these idioms will be searched in the same way in the two corpora,

which means that they will be comparable within a particular idiom, but not necessarily with each other (i.e. it may be difficult to compare frequencies of different idioms).

Once all the idioms have been run through the corpora, their frequency shall be determined by comparing the percentage rates in the BNC with the ones in the COCA. Also, based on forms and types of context in which they appear, the 21 idioms may be labelled as direct quotes from Shakespeare, examples that appear in their original form, variations and examples that are used as titles or names in popular culture. Those results that do not belong to any of these groups are going to be classified as either non-idiomatic words or different idioms.

RESULTS

GENERAL RESULTS

Before discussing each and every idiom in detail, a couple of things ought to be said on a more general level. Two tables have been compiled to show the general results. Table 1 reports the percentages of all of the idioms in BNC and COCA. It shows that the number of examples of these multi-word idioms amounts to about 74% (73.80%) in BNC, while the situation in COCA is slightly better, with approximately 79% (79.35%) of the sentences containing examples of the idioms in question. Based solely on these data, it is apparent that most of the idioms have been incorporated into both the British and the American variety of English, while it seems that they appear more frequently in American English. As narrow as that may seem, the difference of 5.15% is significant, as shown by the chi square test, $\chi^2(1, N = 1802) = 6.45, p < .05$, but the effect size was negligible (Cramer's $V = 0.06$), which suggests that there is no association, and that the result is due to a large sample size. Hence, even though it can be stated that Shakespearean idioms are in fact more frequently used by native speakers of American English, any sort of conclusion from this has to be drawn in as cautious a manner as possible, for the American corpus is far bigger than the British one, which in turn increases the possibility of each and every idiom to appear more frequently in quite a number of sentences in that particular corpus. But, as it stands, these idioms are more frequent in American English.

COCA VS BNC	COCA(numbers)	COCA(%)	BNC(numbers)	BNC(%)
YES	1000	79.35%=79%	400	73.80%=74%
NO	260	20.65%=21%	142	26.20%=26%
TOTAL	1260		542	

TABLE 1

As for the idioms that contain modern words and the ones that contain archaic words, Table 2 shows that the former group is the more dominant one of the two in COCA, with their numbers amounting to 55%, while the situation is somewhat different when it comes to the BNC, for the latter group is the more prevalent one with the numbers of these idioms hitting the mark of 54%. Also, if the corpora are compared in this manner, the idioms that contain only modern words will prove to be more numerous, with 53% of them being classified as such. The difference here is also significant, as shown by the chi square test $\chi^2(1, N = 1400) = 9.33, p < .05$, but the effect size was yet again negligible (Cramer's $V = 0.08$), which makes us draw the same conclusions as the ones drawn above. Taking stock of all that, even though American English has kept some linguistic features and qualities from the Early Modern Period that British English did not, it seems that the British variety of English is more archaic when it comes to Shakespeare's idioms in particular. There might be many reasons why this is so and some of them may be explored while analysing these idioms in a more detailed manner. All in all, two things are certain: the first one is that many of these idioms are indeed present in both of these varieties and the other one is that those ones that only contain modern words are a bit more frequent in general.

ARCHAIC WORDS VS MODERN WORDS	ARCHAIC WORDS	MODERN WORDS
BNC	216-54.0-54%	184-46.0-46%
COCA	448-44.8-45%	552-55.2-55%
BNC & COCA	664-47.43-47%	736-52.57-53%

TABLE 2

DETAILED COMPARISONS OF SHAKESPEAREAN IDIOMS

Before delving any further into the analysis, it is important to point out the contents of the following subsections and paragraphs. As it has been already mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, the goals of the research are to prove that the 21 previously selected idioms appear more frequently in British English than American English as well as that they are very well incorporated into both of these varieties of English and not just used in some rather archaic contexts or to quote Shakespeare. Therefore the results concerning each one of these idioms are going to be discussed and compared, but it is also going to be explained where these idioms come from, where they can be found in Shakespeare, why they fall into a certain category, what their original meaning is and whether it has changed over the years, etc. Only then will the numbers from the BNC and COCA be compared to one another and appropriate conclusions drawn regarding each and every idiom. Here is Table 3 that shows the most important raw numbers for each particular idiom so as to provide a better insight into their frequency.

IDIOM (RAW NUMBERS)	YES (BNC)	NO (BNC)	YES (COCA)	NO (COCA)
TO BE HOISTED BY ONE'S OWN PETARD	18	3	43	7
TO SHUFFLE OFF THIS MORTAL COIL	8	0	34	18
STAR-CROSSED LOVERS	8	2	32	2
ONCE MORE UNTO THE BREACH	2	0	27	2
THE GAME IS AFOOT	153	13	182	17
A HUE AND CRY	46	0	100	0
BY MY TROTH	2	18	30	21
TO CARRY COALS	1	28	1	31
THERE IS THE RUB	33	7	99	0
BY THE BOOK	46	18	76	24
A WILD GOOSE CHASE	19	0	49	1

EVERY DOG WILL HAVE HIS DAY	6	15	22	30
BREVITY IS THE SOUL OF WIT	1	0	31	0
A HEART OF GOLD	31	0	63	1
A BAND OF BROTHERS	12	1	52	0
A POUND OF FLESH	21	2	45	5
THE QUALITY OF MERCY IS NOT STRAINED	3	0	2	0
ALL THAT GLITTERS IS NOT GOLD	3	1	38	17
TO EAT SOMEONE OUT OF HOUSE AND HOME	8	6	33	23
AS DEAD AS A DOORNAIL	6	1	51	5
TO GIVE THE DEVIL HIS DUE	0	0	31	17

TABLE 3

As it can be deduced from this table, some idioms appear in great numbers in both the BNC and COCA, such as *the game is afoot*, while examples of some idioms such *the quality of mercy is not strained* are few and far between. All of these data are to be analysed in the following sections and subsections of this chapter.

IDIOMS THAT CONTAIN ARCHAIC WORDS OR MEANINGS THAT WOULD OTHERWISE BE CONSIDERED MODERN TO BE HOIST/HOISTED WITH/BY ONE'S OWN PETARD

The idiom *to be hoist by one's own petard* means “to be hurt or to have problems as a result of your own plans to hurt or trick others” (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries, <https://www.oxford>

learnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/petard?q=petard). It is believed to have been coined by Shakespeare himself sometime between 1600 and 1602 (*The Norton Shakespeare*, 1997, p. 1659) since this proverbial phrase had never been recorded before his writing of one of his most famous plays - *Hamlet*. The idiom appears in *Act III, Scene 4* and it is uttered by Prince Hamlet himself. To be more precise, once having realized what him being sent to England on a diplomatic mission with his two friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, means, the Prince of Denmark expresses his thoughts and uses the idiom in the following passage:

There's letters sealed; and my two schoolfellows,
Whom I will trust as I will adders fanged,
They bear the mandate; they must sweep my way
And marshal me to knavery. Let it work,
For 'tis the sport to have the engineer
Hoist with his own petard; and 't shall go hard
But I will delve one yard below their mines
And blow them at the moon. O, 'tis most sweet
When in one line two crafts directly meet.

(*The Norton Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act III, Scene 4*, p. 1724)

Here, Hamlet acknowledges that his two friends are in on a plot to murder him and because he is now certain where their allegiance lies, he exclaims that he is going to enjoy it so much when they fall into their own trap or in his words get "hoist with their own petard". And indeed, he manages to fabricate the letters so the King of England executes them instead of him.

This idiom is regarded to be an archaic one due to the fact it contains the word *petard* (a small bomb used to blow up and breach walls), implying that there are plenty of terms that can be used instead of that one (such as bombs, shells, mines, firecrackers, etc.). To find that out, the word *petard* has been run through both the BNC and COCA. The results show that the word appears in 86% of the sentences as a part of the idiom and in both the BNC and the COCA. For the sake of providing a better perspective to the reader, it may be good to mention that the BNC only yielded 21 results, with 18 of them containing the idiom in question. This clearly reinforces the assumption that the noun *petard* is indeed archaic, whereas the idiom it is part of is not. In other

words, these numbers are evidence that the term has been successfully incorporated into both the American and British varieties of English.

As for its meaning, it is the same as the one Shakespeare tries to convey in *Hamlet* with no exceptions. There are many variants of its original form, but most of them occur due to grammar. For instance, depending on the subject of a particular sentence, the appropriate possessive determiner is used (e.g. *Insiders reckon the group have been 'hoisted by their own petard.*) (BNC). The rest of the results have to do with the word order and syntax of certain sentences, (e.g. *His public commitment to that standard was the petard the press and the left (I repeat myself) hoisted him upon.*) (COCA), inserting adjectives for effect (e.g. *...the Jets have been hoisted by their own very unstable and also highly explosive petard.*) (COCA) and using the preposition “on” instead of the usual ones “by” and “with.” All of these examples are in line with what has been found for idioms in other research (Moon 1996). Overall, it can be stated that there are 57% of variations in the BNC, meaning there are 12 of them, whereas 29% of them are written or uttered in the same manner as they are in *Hamlet*, implying there are only 6 of them. All in all, none of them is a “direct quote.” And if we take a look at the COCA, it can be noted that the numbers do not vary that much between the two corpora in this regard either, with 56% of variations and 30% of those forms that are the same as the source material. Also, in the latter group, there can be found 2% of direct quotes from the play, but in this case, this may only show that native speakers of American English want to acknowledge that this idiom can be found in *Hamlet*, for in many other examples the idiom is used in quite a natural manner. Thus, we can say that this Shakespearean idiom has indeed been incorporated into both of these varieties based on these numbers. But, due to the results showing the equal percentage of frequency, we cannot say where it appears more often.

TO SHUFFLE OFF THIS MORTAL COIL

To shuffle off this mortal coil comes from Hamlet’s famous “to be or not to be” soliloquy (*Act III, Scene 1*) in which the prince contemplates life and death. As mentioned above in the methodology section the meaning of this idiom is “to die” (The Free Dictionary, <https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/shuffle+off+this+mortal+coil>).

In the BNC there are only 8 results in total, with 5 (62.5%) of them showing that the expression *mortal coil* is combined with the phrasal verb *to shuffle off*. Out of those 5 examples, 2 (25%) of

them are quoted directly from *Hamlet*, 2 (25%) of them remain unchanged and 1 (12.5%) of them is labelled as a variation (e.g. *She was, I am sure, less motivated by dreams of Elysian fields than a longing to shuffle off her mortal coil...*) (BNC). Here, the demonstrative determiner “this” is dropped in favour of the possessive determiner “her,” but that is only a natural variation based on the English grammar, so it really is of no consequence. As for the remaining 3 sample sentences (37.5%), they cannot really be considered fully fledged examples of this idiom because the expression *mortal coil* is used as the name of a band. (e.g. *I love The Cure, Pink Floyd, This Mortal Coil, and having fun - Freaky and friendly.*) (BNC) However, it ought to be stated this is in fact some sort of quotation, because at least some members of the band must be aware where this expression comes from. Naturally this is neither a direct quote from Shakespeare nor is it any evidence that this idiomatic phrase is incorporated into PDE, but there is a distinct possibility that this might be used to evoke old language and thus remind people of Shakespeare in a sense.

In the COCA, 32% of examples do not belong to the idiom in question and in most of them *mortal coil* is used on its own, or in a combination with words that create the opposite meaning to that of dying (e.g. *Are the shirts destroying the wearers' wills to continue on in this mortal coil, - thereby shutting down Beach City?*). On the other hand, there are 68% of examples containing the idiom in its various forms. In 42% of examples the idiom remains more or less unchanged, 4% are direct quotes, 2% of them refer to a *Star Trek* episode and there are 20% of variations. Those variations include grammatical ones (as above) as well as some more significant ones, where different lexical verbs are used, but the meaning is kept the same. (e.g. *When the time comes, darling, and I have departed from this mortal coil.... or Maybe Old Muck will luck out and kick off this mortal coil before things get really nasty.*) (COCA) Such lexical changes are in line with what Moon (1996) finds for how idioms are varied. As for that *Star Trek* episode, the expression *mortal coil* is used in the same manner as it is used for the name of that band in the BNC, so everything that is said above in that regard also goes for the title of that episode. Although this idiom appears almost as frequently in the BNC and as in the COCA, it is incorporated to a greater extent into American English because there are more variations and fewer direct quotes, which might imply that this expression is used more in running text than it is used in British English. However, this needs to be taken with a grain of salt, because although there are not many variations in the BNC, that does not mean that their number is that scarce when it comes to using them regularly. The reason for this might be similar types of context this

idiom may or may not appear in. Nevertheless, the lack of variations may suggest that this phrase is far more fixed in British English, while in American English it is not as fixed as one may think.

STAR-CROSSED LOVERS

The meaning of this idiom is that lovers cannot be happy or together because of bad luck or fate, and if we take into consideration the Renaissance mind-set, one may say that even the stars in the sky are not in favour of this relationship (The Free Dictionary, <https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/star-crossed+lovers>). As to where this multi-word idiom could be found in numerous Shakespeare's works, one should look no further than the prologue of *Romeo and Juliet*:

Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life;
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
Doth with their death bury their parents' strife.

(The Norton Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, Prologue, p. 872)

Due to its poetic nature, this term is very popular with poets, however, how often it is used in other contexts of Present-Day English remains to be determined. Once the key *star-crossed* part of the phrase has been run through the BNC, 8 of the results (80%) can be labelled as the phrase coined by Shakespeare, with 7 of these examples (70%) which do not vary from the source material. There is only a single remaining example (10%) that varies from the original phrase because the word *lover* is substituted by some other noun as well as a name. Furthermore, the remaining examples (20%) are not considered to belong to this idiom, as is exemplified in the sentence *The common people do not blame me or my husband for Buckingham's downfall but say his fate was star-crossed by this house.* (BNC) In this example, it is clear that the meaning of the phrase *star-crossed* is different, because Buckingham did not suffer from some sort of lovelorn heartache, but he rather suffered some kind of catastrophe because of bad luck. In this case, the

meaning of the adjective *star-crossed* is extended, but because it misses its crucial characteristic, the one that has to do with love, any other word with which it forms a new phrase cannot be regarded as a variation. The same goes for those two phrases (6%) that can be found in COCA because the context simply does not allow us to classify them otherwise. As for the remaining 32 examples (94%), 18 examples (53%) appear in their original form, one (3%) of them is a direct quote from *Romeo and Juliet* and 13 (38%) of them are variations. Those variations are not qualitatively different than the ones in the BNC (e.g. using a singular form in this instance, *(I thought she was your true soul mate. Your star-crossed lover.)*) and adding other premodifying adjectives as in the case in this sample (*...it does play an influential role in shaping the lives of these two star-crossed and comically inept lovers.*)) (COCA) Overall, it can be stated that the phrase is more frequent in American English by a somewhat larger margin, plus variations are also far more numerous and they are slightly more elaborate, which may imply that this particular linguistic feature is far more frequent in American English than British English. If that is not the case, then the fact that the American corpus is larger than the British one should be the reason why there are more variations in the COCA. But still, the presence of this idiom in British English cannot be denied, for those examples that appear in that corpus are well and truly incorporated into the language.

ONCE MORE UNTO THE BREACH

This phrase appears at the very beginning of *Act III, Scene 1* of *Henry V*. Namely, the walls of the French town of Harfleur have just been breached and King Henry urges his soldiers to rush towards a breach in the walls and claim the town for the English Crown. Although the meaning that Henry tries to convey here is quite literal, because of its quite overt implications the meaning of this line has been rendered more idiomatic and hence extended to "let's try it one more time". The results show that there are only 2 sample sentences that contain the idiom in question, but not only do they make up 100% of the results, but they are also direct quotes. On the other hand, the results in COCA show that this phrase can be read or heard in 27 of the sentences (93%) but it also clearly displays that there are plenty of ways in which it is used in these sentences. There are 13 (45%) of them that can be successfully incorporated into American English without any change in form. Then there are 10 direct quotes (34%) one variation (3.5%) and one idiom that is not considered to fall into any of those categories (3.5%). Now, that particular example is well

and truly regarded as a phrase but it means completely the opposite thing than the idiom in question (e.g. *No More unto the Breach*) and as for the variation mentioned above, it has to do with syntax and it actually refers to a direct quote from *Henry V* (e.g. ...*as uttered by Henry V: "Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more." And unto the breach I gladly went.*) (COCA). Also the remaining 4 sample sentences (14%) contain examples in which there is a part of the idiom, but it is the title of a chapter of a book, so it cannot, in fact, be determined whether the meaning is literal or extended. And even though this very phrase did spring out from quite a literal meaning, these samples cannot be regarded as fully fledged examples of this phrase because there is not enough context. Thus, these titles ought to be classified as quotes that either evoke all this idiom implies or old language, but they still cannot be classified as direct quotes or variations like other sentences that provide enough context in these texts. On that note, it can only be concluded that this phrase is incorporated into American English and is in use from time to time in various contexts, while in British English it is only used to quote Shakespeare.

THE GAME IS AFOOT

This is yet another idiom form *Henry V* which also appears in the same speech as the previous one, but unlike *once more unto the breach*, this one is uttered by King Henry at the very end:

“The game’s afoot:

Follow your spirit, and upon this charge

Cry 'God for Harry, England, and Saint George!’”

(The Norton Shakespeare, Henry V, Act III, Scene I, p. 1477)

After Henry utters these lines, his soldiers storm the city and defeat the French army in the process. As for the meaning of the phrase, it means that something is about to start, all thanks to the adjective *afoot* which means being planned or underway. However, this word is more than three centuries older than Shakespeare, and its meaning had to do with going somewhere on foot. While the original meaning has been kept, it is believed that another meaning was added to it in 1597 in *Henry IV Part I* by Shakespeare’s coining the very same expression that was going to be used later in *Henry V*. Now even though the word “afoot” is still in use today, there are many who consider it to be used when people want to sound a little bit more educated or in literary works. Our results from the BNC show 92% of the hits contain the idiom, out of which 2% are

more or less unchanged, 0.5% of them are direct quotes, while 89% are variations. Those that do not fall into any of these categories comprise 8% of the results and are either a phrase that is not in the focus of the research (7.5%) or a typo (0.5%) (e.g. *That rod was about afoot too short and had one of the most unforgiving actions I have ever seen.*) (BNC). Furthermore most of those that are phrases that are of no major interest have to do with the very first meaning of the word “afoot.” As for COCA, there are 91% of hits that contain the idiom, out of which only 5% are said or written in the same way Henry V says them, whereas there are 86% of variations. As for those that are not deemed suitable to be any of those, there are 9% of them, out of which there are 3% of typos and there are 6% of them which are the type of phrase mentioned above. Overall, the numbers show that uses in BNC and COCA are similar. As for the variations in the COCA and BNC, most of them have to do with substituting the word *game* with something else. So, we have examples such as the following: *Terrible events are afoot....it will become apparent that shenanigans are afoot, But change is afoot at 109-year-old National Capital....* (COCA) *Plans are now afoot for an important exhibition of Canaletto in England...* “*Moves are afoot to increase tutors' profiles in clinical areas...*”(BNC) Considering the fact the core meaning has not changed much as well as these various contexts they appear in, it can be stated that this expression has been incorporated into the English language in more ways than one. One of the reasons may be the fact that this idiom is not as fixed as it may seem at first glance, and its constant evolution has ultimately led native speakers to develop many variations, thus thoroughly incorporating the idiom into the Present-Day English Language. What is more, the very first meaning of the word *afoot* does crop up in those results, which means that even though this word is archaic, its use is not only restricted to some literary or historical contexts. But as for *the game is afoot*, although the numbers show that the idiom is slightly more present in British English, the difference between them is practically non-existent, so it is a far safer choice to assume that there is no difference regarding both the frequency and use of this idiom in both British and American English.

A HUE AND CRY

This idiom appears in *Henry IV Part I* and it is uttered by the sheriff who comes looking for Jack Falstaff, saying that there has been "a hue and cry" meaning Jack, who is charged with robbery, has been pursued by the authorities as well as other people. As mentioned above in the

methodology section, another meaning has been added to the idiom pair over the years, implying that something outrageous has happened and people strongly protest about it in public. Because of that, both the original meaning and the extended meaning are going to be discussed in the following analysis.

Results from the BNC show that all of the sample sentences contain the idiom in some way, with 30% of them expressing the extended meaning, rather than the original one. (e.g. *What might otherwise be a dry debate on science policy has raised a hue and cry among the American public, for the issue is which of the 70000 chemicals on the market may cause cancer*) (BNC). Then there are 15% of hits that display the original meaning of the idiom (e.g. *After you had gone, the murderer went backstage, abandoning the gun on the way. The hue and cry started for you, but you could not be found.*), as well as 7% of those examples whose exact meaning cannot be figured out from the context, so there is a possibility that in these instances both the original meaning and the extended meaning are expressed, for they are in fact very similar. (e.g. *In that case her relatives would have enquired for her, raised a hue and cry at the time of the accident.*) As for the other 48%, the idiom is used for names of some bands and magazines, and even though they cannot be considered fully fledged examples of this idiom, they are quotations in a way, for it is very likely that these band members or magazine editors wanted to evoke some old language or remind people of the existence of this idiom, so they might take interest in it and find out where it comes from. The results from COCA show that the idiom appears in 100% of the sentences, with 86% of those phrases that have the extended meaning, 5% of them that have the original meaning and 8% of them that have both the former and the latter meaning. As for direct quotes and variations, there are 14% of those that exhibit changes such as being premodified by adjectives (e.g. *...it probably won't get prosecuted, unless there's just enormous public hue and cry.*) while 86% of them do not contain any changes (e.g. *The duty goes back to the days of hue and cry... To make pursuit effective, there were statutes in those early days*) (COCA) The remaining 1% refers to the title of a book and the same goes for it as for the band mentioned above. Based on those results, we can say that the form of the idiom is still its original one, but its meaning has been extended and somewhat changed. Naturally, the original meaning is also in use, but, according to those results, it appears far more rarely than one would expect. As for the differences in frequency, there is no real difference between the BNC and COCA in that regard, so that means the idiom is well and truly incorporated into both of these varieties of

English. The only difference that can be found is that the original meaning is a little bit more frequent in the BNC than in the COCA, which shows that the British are a bit more likely to use that meaning alongside the extended one.

BY MY TROTH

This expression is similar to the previous one in its characteristics. As for its meaning it is an oath or a pledge of fidelity. The noun *troth* itself comes from the Middle English word for “truth” or even “betrothal” or “fidelity”. The expression *by my troth* is the equivalent of *you have my word*. The expression seems to have been common during Shakespeare’s time; it appears in multiple places in *Henry IV Part I*, and in his other works such as *Henry IV Part II*, *As you like it*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, etc. It may seem from the author's frequent usage of this idiom that it has survived until this day. However, 18 (90%) sentences from BNC that contain the word *troth* yielded negative results. In 9 cases (45%), it refers to someone's name or surname while the other 9 examples (45%) refer to a different phrase, and most of these examples are *to pledge/plight one's troth* which is something that you say if you promise someone to marry them (e.g.. ...*I, Darren John Johnson, being of sound mind, do ask my beloved Sharon Samantha Edwards, if she will plight her troth unto me.*) (BNC) This expression cannot be classified as a variation of the one mentioned above, because its meaning is more specific and so is its usage. *To pledge one's troth* can be used as a part of a clause, whereas *by my troth* can stand on its own as an adverbial as well as it can be used as an exclamation. Concerning the remaining examples, one of them (5%) has kept their unchanged form, while the rest (5%) are considered to be variations. (e.g. *I call'd; and thought T' have begged or bought what I have took, good troth, I have stol'n naught...*) Those variations manifest themselves in the form of the idiom (e.g. *good troth*, instead of *by my troth*) but it can be deduced from the context that the meaning has remained the same. As for the results analysed in COCA, 59% of its examples are regarded to be the discussed idiom in some way, so we can see that the frequency is significantly higher. However, 49% of those examples are direct quotes from Shakespeare, 6% of them have the same form as they do in Shakespeare’s works, and 4% are variations. The remaining 41% do not belong to any of these categories because they are either different phrases (33%) or they are not such constructions at all. (8%) The reasons are more or less the same as the ones pointed out in the analysis of the results in the BNC. Based on that evidence, we can only assume that the

expression is more frequent in American English, but that it is usually used in contexts where some old language is evoked or when people want to quote Shakespeare or read or utter it directly from one of his plays. All in all, the idiom appears to have survived in both varieties, but it does not seem to be fully incorporated into them, so you probably will not hear them on a daily basis.

THE QUALITY OF MERCY IS NOT STRAINED

This proverbial idiom from the *Merchant of Venice* is uttered by Portia disguised as a judge so that she might persuade Shylock to forgive Antonio (the titular character) his debts and spare his life. It appears at the beginning of her soliloquy and it goes like this:

The quality of mercy is not strained.

It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven

Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest:

It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.

(The Norton Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice, Act IV, Scene 1, p. 1132)

Here, Portia explains that mercy is something that has to be given freely, for if one feels constrained to show mercy, it is highly unlikely that anything could urge them to show it, therefore forcing them to do so usually falls on deaf ears (Dictionary.com, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/the-quality-of-mercy-is-not-strained>). As powerful as that phrase may be it seems that it is not frequently used in either variety of English. The results from the BNC show that only 2 quotes (75%) come directly from Shakespeare while there is only one variation (25%). (e.g. *It's already being said of her that unlike her famous namesake she is one in whom the quality of mercy is very finely strained.*) As for the results found in COCA, there are but two of them and they are all direct quotes. Based on these data, the idiom is used more frequently in British English, but this is not enough to state that the idiom is fully incorporated into that variety of English, for there is only one example that is incorporated into PDE. On the other hand, there is not a single example of such kind in the American variety of English, which might imply that native speakers in America solely use it to quote Shakespeare or in the context of the play. On that note, it is only safe to assume that this idiom is barely used in any of these two varieties, which probably means that it is not really incorporated into PDE at all.

IDIOMS THAT CONTAIN MODERN WORDS

TO CARRY COALS

Before saying anything about this phrase, it is imperative to mention a phrase which is very similar to it and which predates it. *To carry calls to Newcastle* is a phrase coined in 1538 and it means to take something somewhere where it is not needed or to do something that is pointless from the outset. As to what Shakespeare's idiom means we do not have to look any further than *Act I, Scene 1 of Romeo and Juliet*:

Enter SAMPSON and GREGORY of the house of Capulet, with swords and bucklers

SAMPSON: Gregory, on my word, we'll not carry coals.

GREGORY: No, for then we should be colliers.

SAMPSON: I mean, an we be in choler, we'll draw.

(The Norton Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, Act I, Scene 1, p. 873)

In the very first sentence, Sampson says that they will not suffer humiliation (i.e. “not carry coals”) and his remark can be taken quite literally, because its meaning cannot be inferred from the context until the moment when a couple of members from the House of Montague show up. Also, if we should consider that the aforementioned similar idiom was also in use in the 16th century, there is a possibility someone might have thought it to be its variation, without realizing that this might actually be a new idiom until later on in the play. With all that having been said, it is very likely that the two idioms and literal meaning conveyed by combining the words *carry* and *coal* are going to appear in both the COCA and the BNC, so the results indeed have to be analysed thoroughly, because the only way to find this out is to type in the lemmas *carry* and *coal*. In the BNC, 28 sentences (97%) do not contain Shakespeare's idiom, with 26 of them (90%) not being a phrase at all and 2 of them (7%) being the phrase mentioned above. There is, in fact, one of those sentences (3%) that contains the idiom with Shakespeare's meaning and in that instance it appears to be used as a pun. In COCA the results are similar: 26 of the hits (81%) do not contain any sorts of idiom, 5 of those (16%) are related to the expression that contains Newcastle, and one idiom (3%) is a direct quote from Shakespeare. This clearly shows that the idiom has not been incorporated into the British variety of English, let alone the American one. The reason for that is probably the fact that there is another idiom very similar to it, so

ambiguities would be never-ending if the Shakespearean one was still prominent in Present-Day English, plus there is also the literal meaning, which is far more present and frequent in any language and English is no exception.

THERE IS THE RUB

This is another idiom from Hamlet's "to be or not to be" soliloquy in *Act III, Scene I* and it means that there is the biggest problem, difficulty or obstacle ahead (The Free Dictionary, <https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/there%27s+the+rub>). In this case, Hamlet refers to his current conundrum of either committing or not committing suicide. He also ponders on what consequences he might have should he opt for the former option. Overall, 82.5% of the results in the BNC contain the idiom, with 50% of them being unchanged (e.g. *Should he not have acquired a deep mental calm and certainty? But there was the rub. One could never say 'I have reached the limit of my religious development...)* and with 25% of them being variations. Also, 7.5% of them are quoted directly from *Hamlet*. The remaining 17.5% are simply not phrases. As for the variations, they have to do with the conjugation of the verb *to be*, syntax and at times instead of *there*, adverbs such as *here*, and pronouns such as *this* and *that* are used. (e.g. *But what was she supposed to have lost? Nothing that mattered to her. That, of course, had been the rub. She had not cared enough. He told her so at the very end.*) (BNC) As for COCA, all the results contain the idiom in at least some form or variation. There are 30% of those samples which are in their original form (e.g. *But here's the rub: Voters without clear party allegiance outnumber both Democrats and Republicans.*), 1% of them are direct quotes and 69% of these idioms are considered to be variations, which are almost identical to the ones present in the BNC. (e.g. *Here's the rub: Klout started with one data point - Twitter followers and reach.*) (COCA) According to those data, it could be said that the idiom is more present in American than British English, but there is a sufficient number of examples that prove that this idiom is a part of the British variety of English. Furthermore it should be noted that up until this point, the COCA contains more examples in general as well as more variations, probably because of its enormous size and the fact more and more texts are being added to it from time to time. However that might mean that our first hypothesis is incorrect, but in order to state this, eleven more idioms are still to be analysed and discussed.

BY THE BOOK

This construction is so widely used today that there is no doubt that it will appear in both the corpora and almost everybody knows that it means “conventionally” or “in accordance with tradition or rules.” Although its form does not appear to be coined by Shakespeare, it is very likely that Shakespeare did add another meaning to this idiom. Namely, if the Merriam-Webster Dictionary is to be believed, John Foxe used it in 1583 in his book entitled *Actes and monuments of matters most speciall and memorable, happenyng in the Church Via* where we can find the following sentence: “I will shew you by the Booke how ignoraunt he is” (Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/shakespeare-insults/by-the-book>). This either means that he will show someone how uneducated they are by literally using some book to prove them wrong or that he will prove that by utilising the most traditional methods there are known to man. The play this idiom appears in is *Romeo and Juliet*. In *Act I, Scene 5* Romeo tries to woo Juliet so he kisses her a couple of times and at one point Juliet says that he kisses “by the book.” According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the phrase here means “by rote” or “by heart.” The reasoning behind this is that scholars in the 16th century had to do much of their learning by memorizing, so the expression refers to things that are done as if memorized. However, the issue with Juliet’s remark is that it can be interpreted in two ways: Romeo is so good at kissing that he could be a scholar on that topic or Romeo is not special at kissing at all. Now, which one of these meanings Shakespeare had in mind is not known, because not enough context is provided for anybody to decipher it. But, it is very likely that he meant both and this is why both the former and the latter meaning are going to be taken into consideration when running the idiom through the corpora. As for that, the results from the BNC show that 72% of the samples are idioms, with 3% of them being puns (e.g. *Now look, we're gonna play this by the book. - Somebody just rewrote the book. - Hit the deck! – Really...*). The remaining 28% have a literal meaning. (e.g. *Also covered by the book are game cheats and advice on hardware configurations to get the best out of your Amiga for game playing...*) Furthermore, the situation in COCA is not that different. In accordance with that statement, there are 76% of hits that contain the idiom, with 7% of them being puns. (e.g. *Smith played by the book in a situation where the book should be lit on fire.*) As for the remaining 24%, they are not idioms at all. According to these results, the phrase is slightly more frequent in American English, but their qualitative analysis shows that it is incorporated in both of these varieties of English.

A WILD GOOSE CHASE

This is yet another expression from *Romeo and Juliet* and Mercutio is the one who uses it in *Act 2, Scene 3* when he realizes that he is losing a battle of wits to Romeo. The meaning of the idiom today is “chasing after something that we will never catch”, or “pursuing some course that will lead nowhere.” The meaning that Mercutio intends to convey here is slightly different and it has to do with a sport that was popular at that time. A wild goose chase was a race popular in 16th century England in which horse riders had to follow the lead horseman at a certain distance, thus resembling wild geese flying in formation (Know your phrase, <https://knowyourphrase.com/wild-goose-chase>). What Mercutio wants to tell Romeo is that now that Romeo has already bested him, he can take this battle of wits in whichever direction he wants, so it is utterly useless for him to continue his quipping. However, this motivation is not widely known today and is probably unfamiliar to native speakers using the idiom. The results from the BNC show that all examples contain the idiom (100%), out of which 15 appear in the original form (79%) (e.g. *It'll probably be a wild goose chase, just like your trip to Glasgow.*) and 4 of them (21%) are variations, which are in accordance with the grammatical rules of English. For instance this happens in: *You're a fanatical prospector they'll have a great time winding you up and sending you off on a series of wild goose chases.* The results from COCA are somewhat different but not that much: 98% of the sentences contain the idiom, with 64% of them unchanged, 2% of them quoted directly from Shakespeare, and 32% of variations. As for the variations, they are more or less the same as the ones found in the BNC, with a couple of them omitting the adjective *wild* and some of them adding other adjectives as in *So began a deep-pink goose chase...* So, based on that evidence, the idiom appears to be a bit more frequently used in British English in its original form and in general, whilst in American English variations are far more present as well as some direct quotes from Shakespeare. The reason why there are no direct quotes from Shakespeare in the BNC may be because the corpus is considerably smaller than its American counterpart, so they are to add those quotes yet, if they choose to do so. But as it stands there is not much difference in frequency between the two corpora.

BREVITY IS THE SOUL OF WIT

Brevity is the soul of wit is another idiom that appears in *Hamlet*. It is uttered by Polonius in *Act II Scene 2* and it basically means that one can say a lot more by using very few words in an

intelligent way (Dictionary.com, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/brevity-is-the-soul-of-wit>). In the BNC, the number of hits is rather small, and none of them is a variation. To be more precise, there is only one single hit and it is a direct quote from Shakespeare. The results from COCA show that 17 sentences contain the idiom (58%) in its original form (e.g. *Babe you're about to be introduced! Brevity is the soul of wit! Huh? Something succinct!*) 6 of them (19%) are quoted directly from Shakespeare and 8 of them (23%) are some sort of variation. Those variations usually involve different forms of the verb *to be*, syntax or even substituting key words such as *brevity* with some other words and thus changing the meaning of the idiom. (e.g. *...but repetition is the soul of wit*) However, due to the *soul of wit* part being its core, it still can pass as a variation, because it reminds the listener of the original idiom. All in all, there are more variations and direct quotes in the American variety of English, and solely on those grounds can we say that the idiom is to some extent better incorporated in this variety than it is in the British variety of English for their word percentage rates are exactly the same. It also needs to be pointed out that there is only one example in the BNC, which is far beyond expectations to say the least. Apart from their size one of the reasons why this is so may be that these corpora are actually two different types. According to Davies, the BNC is a static corpus, implying that no more texts have been added since 1993 when it was compiled (Davies, 2010, pp. 447-448). Also, Leech claims that the main goal of this corpus is to achieve “representativeness” by covering “as broad a range of the language as possible in a balanced way” (Leech, 1991, p. 5). On the other hand, the COCA is a monitor corpus, meaning that “new texts continue to be added” to it which makes it more “dynamic”, plus the balance between “spoken language, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, and academic journals stays more or less the same from year to year” (Davies, 2010, pp. 447). Therefore, one of the reasons why certain idioms such as this one barely appear in the British corpus is because no new texts have been added to it since 1993, while, the American corpus keeps growing, which increases one’s chances of finding examples of any idiom in many various contexts within it.

EVERY DOG WILL HAVE HIS DAY

This is yet another phrase from *Hamlet*, spoken by the Prince of Denmark himself in *Act V, Scene 1*. It means that, everybody will have their moment sooner or later. In this case, he wants Laertes to know that even though he is currently superior to him, this may not be the case in the

future, and when that day comes Hamlet will have his way. Given that the idiom contains frequent everyday words of English, the results from the BNC show that 6 samples (29%) contain the construction in question and that they are all variations, while the remaining 15 of them (71%) do not contain it. All of those variations involve a different tense of the verb *to have* or a different possessive pronoun. (e.g. *Try to remember that every dog must have its day.*) In COCA, there are 42% of hits which can be considered examples of the construction. They are all variations and there are 58% of them that cannot be classified as phrases, because one of them is a different phrase (2%) and the rest of them simply are not phrases or idioms. As for the variations they are quite similar to the ones appearing in the British corpus, however there is a case in which the verb *to get* is used instead of the auxiliary verb *to have*. (e.g. *All the way to New York just to pick a jury. Every dog gets his day.*) Therefore, it is safe to assume that this idiom is more present and frequent in American English, albeit never in its original form. But, since those are all grammatical changes, this perhaps is not really worth mentioning, for the idiom can always appear in its original form, should the grammar of the English language require it to do so.

A HEART OF GOLD

This idiom is used when somebody wants to say that some other person has a kind and generous disposition, that they have a good-natured personality. However, this is only one part of that meaning, The other part of its meaning can be inferred from *Henry V*, when the king decides to disguise himself so as to find out what his soldiers think of him. When asked that question, a soldier by the name of Pistol replies that the king is “a bawcock, and a heart of gold, a lad of life, an imp of fame...” (*The Norton Shakespeare, Henry V, Act IV, Scene 1, p. 1492*). That actually suggests that he admires him, but also that the king is not without his flaws. This is why this phrase is used to point out that even despite all their flaws and imperfections, deep down in their heart one is a good person. Now, as to how frequent this idiom is in the British variety of the English language, 100% of the sample sentences in BNC contain the idiom in question. Moreover, 25 of these examples (80%) remain unchanged in any way, and 3 of them (10%) are labelled as variations. Those variations usually have to do with the act of omitting the article "a", rendering the idiom a little bit informal. (e.g. *Staff Nurse Charlie Whitehead (Derek Thompson) was the very first New Man sex-symbol - confused, caring, heart of gold, yet often incapable and*

flawed) The remaining three examples (10%) that have not been addressed yet, actually could be the idiom we are looking for, but due to them being used as titles, it can only be said that they are used as some sorts of quotation, so that the listener may remember the phrase or the one who came up with it. (e.g. *They pay good money and I'm not up there playing 'Heart Of Gold', so they start getting upset*) In the COCA 98.5% of examples contain the idiom. Some of them contain it in its original form (57.5%), some of them are used as titles and names (36%) some of them are variations. (5%) Those variations include some examples that omit the indefinite article and change it for a possessive determiner (e.g. *His humbleness was as genuine as his heart of gold.*) As for the titles, there are a couple of original and interesting examples, such as the name of a spacecraft (e.g. *In the final scene, the Heart of Gold sets down on Magrathea and you exit the ship*) but the same that has already been said above goes for these examples as well. As for the rest, they are not considered to contain the idiom. All in all, we can say that the expression is indeed present in both varieties of English, but it is slightly more present in the British one. Also, there are many instances in which this idiom or at least this wording is used in various titles and names and that trend is far more present in American English than in British English according to these results. This means that this idiom is far more likely to be used as a title or a name so as to remind people of its meaning. However, this does not imply that this idiom reminds people of Shakespeare, because there is not a single direct quotation from his works. That implies that most people are probably not aware who coined the idiom, but, nevertheless this suggests that it is used on a daily basis and thus it is considered to be successfully incorporated into both the British and American varieties of the language.

A BAND OF BROTHERS

This expression is from *Henry V* from The St Crispin's Day speech. In *Act IV, Scene 3*, King Harry delivers quite a long and rousing speech to his troops in order to raise their morale for the upcoming battle against the French army. At one point, he says that if they should succeed at vanquishing their foes they shall be remembered by their own family and people because of that heroic feat and in accordance with that sense of camaraderie he hastens to add this line: *We few, we happy few, we band of brothers. For he to-day that sheds his blood with me shall be my brother.* (*The Norton Shakespeare, Henry V, Act IV, Scene 3*, p. 1500) The idiom is used when a group, usually a martial one, is referred to as loyal, trustworthy and reliable. Henry uses this

idiom to tell his soldiers that even though they are outnumbered, he would rather fight and die beside them than have thousands of soldiers more because he knows that they would never let him down or betray him. In the BNC, examples of that idiom amount to 92%, out of which 23% appear as they would in their original form, 8% are quoted directly from Shakespeare, and 61% of them are variations. The variations usually involve adjectives modifying the idiom, definite articles, and possessive pronouns. (e.g. *He stalked off towards the camp's edge where a huge band of his brothers waited.*). In COCA each and every sample sentence contains the idiom in question and there seems to be 10% of examples which appear in their original form, 6% of them that are direct quotes from Shakespeare, 29% of them that are variations and 55% of them that are used as titles and names. Among those, there is one title of a popular TV series and because it is about a group of soldiers who fought in World War II, it can be regarded as a quote of that idiom, but it remains unknown whether the inspiration was Shakespeare, although it is very likely that this is the case here, given the meaning of the idiom as well as the context. (e.g. *Anyone who saw episode 2 of the HBO special Band of Brothers knows just how dangerous that was.*) All in all, it should be safe to assume that the idiom is used in British English as equally as in American English, even though it appears a bit more frequently in the latter. However, there are many examples that are used as titles and names, and even though some of them appear in some contexts that may suggest their meaning, they are not used as an idiom should be used to show its full meaning. However, there are enough variations and direct quotes in both of these varieties of English, so the idiom can be considered well and truly incorporated into it.

A POUND OF FLESH

This Shakespearean idiom appears in *The Merchant of Venice* in a couple of places, but it is uttered by many characters, such as Shylock, Antonio, Bassanio and Portia, in *Act IV, Scene 1*. Although its meaning can be taken quite literally, because Shylock wants literally to carve out one pound of flesh from Antonio, its meaning goes beyond that for the Jew keeps reiterating that he wants to have what he is due by the law. Therefore, it has never only been about a mere pound of flesh, it has been about getting something someone is strictly or legally entitled to, but which is ruthless or inhumane to demand. Thus, this idiomatic meaning is weaved into the expression ever so subtly and gradually by Shakespeare from the beginning of the play to its very end, and thanks to this, there is a distinct possibility that it has survived till this day.

Results from the BNC show that there are 21 examples (91%) that contain the idiom. Out of these, 20 (86.5%) are variations, with various determiners and adjectives modifying them, (e.g. *The Government are still after their pound of flesh or I shall demand my full pound of flesh , McAllister, be sure of that.*) while one of them appears in its original unchanged form. As for the 2 remaining examples (9%), none of them is a phrase, but one of them does contain a reference to Shylock, even though the meaning of that construction is quite literal. (e.g. *Old, harmless Enoch suddenly turned into a Shylock and demanded that Bobby remove his pound of flesh.*) In COCA, 90% of examples refer to the idiom. Variations appear in 74% of the cases, while those examples which do remain unchanged amount to 16%. The variations share almost the same characteristics as the ones found in the BNC (e.g. *...but, the Universe took its proverbial pound of flesh and made me do it anyway*). To sum up, these numbers imply that the expression is used more frequently by the British, but by the narrowest of margins, for the percentage rates are slightly higher when it comes to variations, plus there is a reference to Shylock, even though the meaning is literal. There are a couple of references to Shakespeare in COCA as well, but the meaning of these examples is idiomatic in those cases. Furthermore, it also needs to be pointed out that there are no direct quotes from *The Merchant of Venice* in any of these corpora, but the fact that there are some references to it clearly indicates that people from both Britain and America are aware of the origin of this idiom, while all those variations and examples that appear in the original form mean that the idiom is truly incorporated in both the British and American varieties of English.

ALL THAT GLITTERS IS NOT GOLD

Yet another proverbial idiom from *The Merchant of Venice*, however, it is noted that some proverbs and expressions did appear in other languages and cultures a little bit earlier. Namely, there is a Latin proverb that conveys a very similar meaning, but the wording is of course different. (*Non omne quod nitet aurum est - Do not hold everything gold that shines like gold*). Be that as it may, Shakespeare is the one who rendered it popular by interweaving the literal meaning with the idiomatic one in the 16th century. Thus, he fashioned it into the form that we know today. This is illustrated perfectly in *Act II. Scene VII* of the play, when Morocco has to guess in which box Portia's portrait lies in order to be allowed to marry her. He opts for the one made of gold and in it he finds a skull with the following note:

All that glitters is not gold—
Often have you heard that told.
Many a man his life hath sold
But my outside to behold.
Gilded tombs do worms enfold.

(The Norton Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice, Act II. Scene VII, p. 1111)

The point that this idiom tries to put across is that not everything that seems good, attractive, etc. is actually good. (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/glitter1?q=glitter>) In the BNC, there are only 4 hits in total, with 3 sample sentences (75%) containing the idiom, which suggests it is a part of Present-Day English. Furthermore, 2 of these sentences (50%) contain examples that have the same form as the one from *The Merchant of Venice* and the remaining one (25%) contains a variation which has to do with a different form of the verb *to be*. (e.g. *All that glitters may not be gold, but these decorations would add elegance and sparkle to any Christmas tree.*) As for COCA, the situation is quite different, for the results show that about 69% of these sample sentences contain the idiom in question so it is reasonable to conclude that the phrase has been incorporated into the language successfully. A total of 27% of the examples appear in their dictionary form, while 22% of them are variations, which are manifested in different word order, inserted adverbs, different forms of the verb *to be*, etc. (e.g. *All that glitters ain't gold.*) As for the remaining 20%, these examples have to do with names and titles, so they can only be considered as quotations that are used to evoke the meaning of this idiom and thus remind the reader or listener of it. (e.g. *...she's taking that big step and making All That Glitters, filming in Toronto. Ex-Fox studio chief Bill Mechanic exiting the lot...*) As for the rest, 7% of them are idioms, with most of them conveying quite the opposite meaning, (e.g. *All that glitters is gold*) while the remaining 24% of the results do not contain the idiom at all. To sum up, the idiom is well and truly present in both of these varieties of English, with American English having more variations and with British English having the larger percentage of the two in general. But all in all, this proverbial idiom is used in the latter variety of English as equally as in the former one.

EAT SOMEONE OUT OF HOUSE AND HOME

This idiom appears in *Henry IV Part 2, Act II, Scene 1* when Mistress Quickly urges the authorities to arrest Jack Falstaff because of the money he owes. In fact, he owes her so much that when the Chief Justice asks her what sum Jack owes her she replies that “he has eaten her out of house and home.” The best possible explanation of the phrase is that someone has eaten so much and in the process has depleted someone else's resources so much so that they have lost their home, as is the case here because Mistress Quickly hastens to add that everything that is owed to her is in Falstaff's belly. The BNC shows that 57% of the results contain the idiom, with 50% of them being variations and they are only grammatical. (i.e. the verb *to eat* and any pronoun or noun that follows it.) But this is the way that each language functions, so this is nothing out of the ordinary. (e.g. *Then in a matter of days, or even one day, are they not up and about again eating us out of house and home?*). Then, there are 59% of the sentences that contain the idiom in COCA, but the situation with variations is a bit different, because even though there are 30% of variations of the aforementioned kind, 9% of them indicate that the verb *to eat* has been completely omitted and substituted with some other verbs. (e.g. *It shouldn't be legal to cheat people out of house and home.*) Now, although these types of variation have their meaning somewhat altered, one important part of the meaning remains the same and that is that there is a possibility of losing one's home. Regarding the results in general, it seems that this idiom is slightly more present in the American corpus, but only by a narrow margin, so it is safe to assume that the idiom is as frequent in British English as it is in American English. But the most important point is that the idiom has survived until this day and it is quite often used in all various present-day situations.

AS DEAD AS A DOORNAIL

The meaning of this idiom is pretty straightforward - to be clearly and obviously dead. It appears in William Langland's poem that was written in the period between 1370 and 1390 AD. The title of the book is *The Vision of Piers Plowman* and this is the passage it appears in: *That faith without feat is feebler than naught, And as dead as a door-nail but if the deeds follow* (*The Vision of Piers Plowman*, 2006, p. 17) Therefore, contrary to the popular belief, it is safe to state with utter surety that Shakespeare was not the one who penned it first. Nevertheless, this idiom is going to be analysed after all, because its appearance in Shakespeare's plays is what made it

popular. As for the plays that made it popular, it is enough to mention *Henry VI Part II* (written in 1591) and *Henry IV Part II*. (written between 1596 and 1599). It appears in *Act IV, Scene 10* in the former play while it can be found in *Act V, Scene 3* in the latter. Furthermore, in *Henry IV, Part II* it does not appear in its original form, but rather in a conversation between Jack Falstaff and Pistol in the following manner:

FALSTAFF

What, is the old king dead?

PISTOL

As nail in door. The things I speak are just.

(*The Norton Shakespeare, Henry IV Part II, Act V, Scene 3, p. 1371*)

Now as for the analysis, a total of 86% of the results (i.e. 6 out of 7 examples) contain that idiom in the BNC, while there are 91% of them in the COCA. In the BNC, there are only 14% of variations (i.e. 1 example), all of them having to do with the suffix “-s” at the end of “doornail” and thus making it plural (e.g. *Another day and they'd have been as dead as doornails*) while the number of variations in the COCA amounts to 77%, with quite a lot of them omitting the first “as” as well as the comparative form of the adjective “dead”. (e.g. *One's deader than a doornail, and the other's unarmed*) All in all, the idiom is somewhat more frequent in American English and the number of variations points to its regular use. In BNC the number of variations is considerably smaller, which may come down to context, the characteristics of the corpus, or may, perhaps, show that the idiom is more integrated into American English.

TO GIVE THE DEVIL HIS DUE

This idiom crops up in a couple of Shakespeare’s plays but *Henry IV Part I* (1597) is where it is deemed to have appeared for the first time. In *Act I, Scene 2*, Harry’s friend Poins hurls some insults at Jack Falstaff, implying that Jack has already sold his soul to the Devil, plus that he is somewhat untrustworthy, to which Prince Henry says:

Sir John stands to his word, the devil shall have

His bargain; for he was never yet a breaker of

Proverbs: he will give the devil his due.

(The Norton Shakespeare, Henry IV Part I, Act I, Scene 2, p. 1162)

What Harry wants to convey here is that if someone who is generally considered bad or undeserving has any redeeming features these should be acknowledged. In this case, he also wants to point out that Jack Falstaff is many things but being a traitor is not one of them. Also Henry, due to Falstaff's irreparable character, jokingly implies that Jack being true to his word is literally what he owes to the devil, so this appears to be a play on words. But if there is any doubt about whether this construction is idiomatic or not, one should look no further than *Henry V*:

CONSTABLE

I will cap that proverb with "There is flattery in friendship."

ORLÉANS

And I will take up that with "Give the devil his due."

(The Norton Shakespeare, Henry V, Act III, Scene 7, p. 1489)

Here, it is clear that Shakespeare is aware of the idiomatic meaning of the construction, because he refers to it on a par with another expression that he calls a "proverb".

When it comes to how frequent this idiom is in the BNC, the fact that there are no results at all is quite unexpected to say the least. Moreover, there are still no results, even after different approaches to searching it have been utilized. As for the COCA, the situation here is also not as one would expect it, for 64.5% of the results contain the idiom, 46% of them are in their original form and 18.5% of them are variations. On a more problematic note, there is no way that this idiom is not used today in Britain for some example sentences appear in the Cambridge Dictionary (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/to-give-the-devil-his-due>), so what might be some reasons for its absence in The British National Corpus? Well, the BNC is significantly smaller than COCA, with the BNC containing about 100 million words and the COCA contains about 1 billion. Whatever the reason for this absence may be, the very fact that there is one could indicate that the idiom would be more frequently used in American English all the same, even if it were present in some manner in the BNC. However, because of the lack of evidence, this has to be taken with a pinch of salt.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Overall, it seems safe to say that the results yielded by this research have not quite turned out to be the ones expected to be shown by the BNC and COCA at the beginning of this paper. Firstly, the idioms in question appear more frequently in the corpus of American English in terms of percentages. Moreover, raw numbers show that there are numerous examples for many of these idioms in COCA, while the numbers of those examples found in BNC vary quite a lot: some of them are numerous; some of them are few and far between. What is more, the idiom *to give the devil his due* has no examples at all in the BNC, which is quite odd, considering the fact that it appears a couple of times in Shakespeare, dictionaries of British English, and articles published by some British newspapers such as *The Telegraph* (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/10965366/Giving-the-Devil-his-due.html>). There are a couple of reasons that might help explain this phenomenon as well as why other idioms appear to be more frequent in American English than in British English. One of them is the sheer size of the American corpus, which is far greater than the size of the British one. Moreover, the BNC is a static corpus and the number of its words stays more or less the same, while the COCA is a monitor corpus, meaning its size keeps expanding on a regular basis. Due to that, some idioms happen to appear in the latter but not in the former corpus. Then, there are some idioms, such as *the quality of mercy is not strained*, that are not frequent in either of the corpora and most of those examples that do appear there are but quotes from Shakespeare. That probably means that this proverbial idiom is only used when people want to quote Shakespeare in order to evoke old language, to show how well-educated they are by utilising it to prove some point or simply use it when staging *The Merchant of Venice*. And although this idiom appears frequently in the corpora, it cannot really be said that it has been incorporated into either of these varieties of PDE because there are either very few examples appearing in the present-day context or they are completely non-existent. As for those idioms that do predominantly appear in the present-day context, some of them are also found in sentences that have to do with Shakespeare's plays or there is just a reference to Shakespeare. Such quotes appear in both the BNC and COCA, but they seem to be more frequent in the former. That implies that native speakers of British English are a bit more aware of who either coined or introduced those idioms into the language, which is not surprising considering the fact that Shakespeare was in fact born in England on the island of Britain. As for those examples that

appear solely in the present-day context, they either appear in their original form or they are variations. Some of those variations are grammatical so their occurrence is completely natural while others are lexical, which is, considering the nature of languages in general, also nothing out of the ordinary, but those changes are far more significant when it comes to determining to what extent they have been incorporated into PDE. In BNC, there are more examples that appear in their original form, whilst variations of all kinds appear to be more frequent in COCA. This proves that the idioms in question are incorporated into both of these varieties of English, but it seems that they are incorporated slightly better into American English, for the more variations there are, the better chance there is for an idiom to survive in some form in a language. Namely this sort of thing points to the evolution of certain idioms over the years and the ability of native speakers to be creative with their language so as not to let these idioms fade into oblivion, which is why they have been preserved in both their original form and in numerous variations till this very day. As to why those variations are more numerous in American English than in British English it is very hard to say. One reason might be that these particular idioms have been preserved in different forms in various American dialects, which is why they have changed a little bit over the years and thus some forms have made it into Standard American English, although the same can be said for these variations in British English, for, as mentioned above, they are also present there in quite a decent number. But again, the size of the COCA might again be the reason here, because the more words a corpus contains, the greater the number of variations might be present within it.

In conclusion, these results indicate that Shakespearean idioms are slightly more frequent in American English than in British English and most of these idioms are quite well incorporated into both of these varieties of English. Some of those that are used on a day-to-day basis are also used to quote Shakespeare while there are also a couple of examples that prove that some of these idioms are solely used to quote the playwright. This proves that some idioms are considered to be the thing of the past, some of them are still considered to be relevant today because of the impact made by Shakespeare (which is why people remember that it was he who coined them) and some of them people use on a daily basis without even thinking about who came up with them in the past, because they have been incorporated so well into the language that they might not appear to be Shakespearean to a regular native speaker at first glance. Moreover, some people might actually be quite surprised if they were told that Shakespeare had

something to do with it (i.e. they are more likely to ascribe the *band of brothers* phrase to the *Band of Brothers* miniseries than to *Henry V* (Grandage, 2019, 1386)). All in all one thing is certain: Shakespearean idioms are present in one way or another in Present-Day English. Some of them are more frequent in one variety of English while some of them appear more frequently in the other, and how frequently they appear usually depends on what type of idiom they are, what context they are written or uttered in and how well incorporated they are into the Contemporary English Language.

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