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THE ELIZABETHAN MAP

OF THE LANGUAGES OF BRITAIN:

EVIDENCE FROM TWO CELTIC-ENGLISH WORDLISTS

Abstract

Over a century before the systematic study of the Celtic languages developed, Tudor scholars were busy collecting lexicographical, phonological and etymological information about them. Early modern print and manuscript evidence indicates that the interest in the origins of Irish was particularly rife, and that speculations regarding its affinity with Welsh enjoyed some popularity in English circles. This article studies two little known examples of trilingual Irish-Welsh-English wordlists compiled by English speakers towards the end of the 16th century, which provide hitherto underexploited evidence of a rising interest of English colonists in Irish. The article posits that whilst such interest must be placed in the context of the Tudor discovery of Ireland, it also reflects fascinating developments in Elizabethan linguistic thought.

1. Introduction

Evidence demonstrates that decades before the systematic study of the Celtic languages flourished, Tudor colonists, travellers and scholars were collecting information about Irish and speculating about its affinity with Welsh. This was happening against the backdrop of the Elizabethan conquest of Ireland, and approximately a century before Edward Lhuyd demonstrated the relatedness of the Brythonic and Goidelic linguistic families in the first volume of the *Archaeologia britannica* (1707). This article focusses on two examples of trilingual Irish-Welsh-English wordlists written by English speakers towards the end of the 16th century. The article begins with an introduction on the context of the wordlists, which were compiled in Ireland or were based on reports from the colony. It moves then onto the

analysis of their forms and contents and gives an account of their rationale and authorship. The article posits that the aggressive colonial policies of the last decades of the 16th century created the conditions that brought a new generation of highly educated reformed English-speaking settlers in contact with Irish, and that the learning and religion of the new settlers were instrumental to the emergence of a fresh interest in the language. Potentially driven by curiosity as much as by a variety of intellectual and pragmatic needs, these wordlists provide compelling insight into the English observers' worldview, and in particular into their perception of the relationship between the two Celtic languages, and of each one of them with English.

2. Language policy and lexicography in early modern Ireland

As is known, the modern history of the Irish language in Ireland is predominantly one of marginalisation and repression at the hands of the British colonial governance. In the 16th century, the Elizabethan conquest of Ireland was also a linguistic colonisation, which advanced through the systematic denigration of Irish and promotion of English (Palmer 2001: 6). If such was the prevailing attitude supported by repressive language policies, negative evaluations of Irish and downright attempts at suppressing it were neither uniform nor immediately successful. Rather, Elizabethan Ireland was polyphonic: Munster was a "linguistic patchwork", Irish dominated in Connacht and Ulster, and the Irish lords knew little English. English was holding out only in Dublin, but even within the Pale: "[a]ll the comyn peoplle . . . for the more parte ben of Iryshe byrthe, of Iryshe habyte, and of Iryshe langage" (Palmer 2001: 42-4, cit. at 42). This notwithstanding, the English newcomers rarely acquired Irish.

English governments had attempted to push Irish back, or at least keep it separate from English, for centuries. In 1367, the Statute of Kilkenny marked a symbolic moment in the history of language policy in Ireland. Written in Anglo-Norman, it banned Irish among the colonists and it forbade intermarriage and the adoption of Irish names and dress by the English settlers. As Tony Crowley pointed out, the relationship between English and Irish has always been more complex than straightforward systematic antagonism (2005: 6), and rather than a piece of colonial legislation against Irish, the statute of Kilkenny reflected anxieties of 'going native' and reasserted English culture at a moment when it was evidently perceived to be threatened by 'Irishness' (2005: 9-10).

Segregationist language policies doubtless favoured a process of progressive divergence between Irish and English. In medieval Ireland, English "emerged gradually as the language of commerce, traffic, and eventually power within the boundaries of English rule" (Crowley 2005: 10), while Irish naturally continued to be spoken by the native population.

At the time of Edmund Campion's writing of his *Historie of Ireland* (1571 but the work was published posthumously in 1633), Irish displayed considerable variation:

> The tongue is sharpe and sententious, offereth great occasion to quick apothegmes and proper allusions, wherefore their common Iesters, Bards, and Rymers, are sayd to delight passingly those that conceive the grace and propriety of the tongue. But the true Irish indeede differeth somuch from that they commonly speake, that scarce one among five score, can either write, read, or understand it. Therefore it is prescribed among certaine their Poets, and other Students of Antiquitie. (Ware 1633: 12)

Here Campion, not a speaker of Irish, defined the gulf between the language of the common people and the sophisticated language of poetry maintained by the Bardic schools until the 17th century.

Irish demonstrated to have survived another potentially disruptive piece of legislation in its early modern history. In fact, Henry VIII's annexation of Ireland to the English Crown in 1541, "allowed Englishmen to view Ireland as an integral part of the Tudor kingdom" (Palmer 2001: 46). The position assumed by Irish under the new judicial system, moreover, contributed to its being stigmatised as a deviant and dissident language: "In a context where the legitimacy of separatist claims was inconceivable, the rebel's tongue would be heard as a dissident *patois* rather than as an autonomous foreign tongue" (Palmer 2001: 46).

Part of the colonial governance claimed in fact that Irish should be erased. William Gerard, Lord Chancellor of Ireland in 1576 and Master of Requests in 1580, believed that the Irish should be taught to speak English, since the language defined the character, a character which was uncivilised and rebellious (Hadfield 1994: 36, 40-1). Language incomprehension came in the way of successful colonisation and peaceful coexistence according to William Herbert, an undertaker of the Munster Plantation who had arrived in Ireland in 1587 (Hadfield 1994: 48). In such setting, Andrew Hadfield observed, "new urgency was given to old questions" of language and politics (1994: 36). The English colonial governance appeared to start wondering whether the Irish resistance to the English rule was a matter of "deficiency, diabolic stubborness", or perhaps "the product of simple misunderstanding". Connected to

this was the issue of whether "the Irish vernacular [could] be used to teach the Irish" or was "an essential part of the Irishness that had to be removed" (Hadfield 1994: 36).

A different set of attitudes towards the Irish language thus emerged, fostered by a combination of factors in which the cultural and religious reformations also played substantial roles. In the wake of the Protestant reformation, in particular, the knowledge of Irish had acquired a new value. Sir Henry Brouncker, writing from Munster in 1606, conceded that the reformation of religion in Ireland could be attempted only in the towns, where English was understood, "for there are few or no Irish preachers, and the country people understand little English" (cit. in Palmer 2001: 43). The already cited William Herbert advocated for education in Irish, had the Creed, Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer translated into Irish, and observed that catechesis in a language alien to the native population was "altogether unprofitable" (cit. in Hadfield 1994: 49).

During the reign of Elizabeth I, the central government did begin to implement measures for the promotion of "texts and practices in Irish which would enhance the Protestant Reformation" (Crowley 2005: 18), and which in their turn fostered a certain interest in Irish. In 1571, Seán Ó Cearnaigh (John Kearney) published an Irish Alphabet and Catechism, which contained an introduction to the orthography and pronunciation of Irish besides a catechism, articles of religion and prayers (Kearney 1571). In 1584-5 the famous Primer compiled by Christopher Nugent for Queen Elizabeth I included a short glossary, idioms, instructions for reading the language, and an introduction to the origins of Irish. One further important landmark was the translation of the New Testament into Irish, completed by Huilliam O'Domhnuill (William Daniel) in 1587 and printed fifteen years later (Daniel 1602). Furthermore, the core of the programme of educational reform in Ireland, at the centre of which was the foundation of a university in Dublin, was the training of Irish-speaking ministers.

The late 16th century was also a period of flourishing antiquarian and historical activity in Elizabethan England and Ireland. Antiquarians concerned themselves with the preservation of the memory of the past for posterity, which put an emphasis on documentation and on the methods of etymology and lexicography. The ability to trace etymologies constituted a gateway into the origins of words, the meaning of historical and sacred texts, and the study of the affinities between linguistic families. The importance given to the study of language was an innovation of this period, as was the insight that Celtic languages had to have a place for a comprehensive reconstruction of British antiquities, alongside Old English (Considine 2008: 170).

As shown by John Considine, ideas about the Celtic languages and their origins "were widely used by philologists interested in the supposed Scythian or Celto-Scythian origins of their own vernaculars" (Considine 2008: 112). In particular, the mythical Scythian ancestry of the Irish was argued based on etymology as well as history, and exploited by English writers to legitimise Tudor claims of suzerainty over Ireland (Hadfield 1993: 407). In such milieu, a fresh interest in Irish could flourish. John Considine called the situation of Irish lexicography in the 16th century "rather strange", since the apparent lack of English interest in the language contrasts with the "strong and ancient native lexicographical tradition" (Considine 2017: 82). However, the Irish tradition remained inaccessible to English untrained in the Celtic languages.

What may be the first attempt to transcribe the sounds of Irish by an Englishman (Crowley 2005: 20) appeared in a peculiar text by the physician, author and traveller Andrew Boorde, *The first book of the introduction of knowledge*, first printed posthumously around 1555. Boorde's work has been described as a "travel-guide cum phrasebook" (Shrank 2004: 33). Each chapter of the book was dedicated to one country introduced by verses spoken by a stereotypical inhabitant describing its people, nature, food, sites of interest, and concluding with a collection of phrases in the native language with an English translation. The Irish phrasebook contained numerals and simple dialogues with forms of greeting ("God spede", "How do you fare", etc...) and replies, as well as typical travel-book phrases – from the question "Syr, can you speke Iryshe" to ways to order food in taverns, ask for directions, for the time, or for the bill (Boorde [1555?]: C4-C4v).

Other discussions from the period displayed an interest in the relationship of Irish with other languages. Considine has pointed out that by the early modern period there had been "occasional comparisons between Irish and Welsh for centuries", but that the debate had become serious only towards the end of the 16th century (2017: 123). In his *Rerum scoticarum historia*, published in 1582, George Buchanan identified a common ancestor of Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Welsh in the ancient *lingua gallica* spoken in Gaul, Britain, and Ireland (Buchanan 1582: fol. 19-19v; Collis 1999: 102-4). In the *Britannia*, William Camden concluded that Irish seemed to be related to German and Welsh but to no other European language (cit. in Considine 2017: 123). Sir James Perrott, the son of a Welsh-speaking Lord Deputy of Ireland, suggested that Irish and Welsh had "in many words much affinitie" which indicated that the two nations were originally the same (cit. in Considine 2017: 123).

The affinity of Irish and Welsh would in fact only be definitively demonstrated between the end of 1699 and January 1700. This was thanks to the work of the naturalist and

philologist Edward Lhuyd, whose Irish connections and knowledge of Welsh surely played a crucial role, but the key was his method. Lhuyd's would become a pioneering study based on regular correspondences of sounds between the two languages. The fascinating story of his lexicographical inquiries and discoveries is told by Considine (2017: 124-131).

Before such systematic study of the Celtic languages developed and flourished, however, the two Elizabethan wordlists help us complete the picture of the proto-lexicographical inquiries undertaken by English observers fascinated by the similarities displayed by Irish and Welsh. What these wordlists lack in method they make up for in imagination, intuition, and ideology. As shall be seen, the conjectural dating for these wordlists places the activity of their compilers against the backdrop of the Elizabethan conquest of Ireland, a juncture during which principle and politics, pragmatism and curiosity all coalesced to stimulate inquiries and reveal more of the complex relationship between the languages of Britain.

3. The Elizabethan wordlists

The first wordlist is anonymous and not dated, but it is bound as part of the British Library manuscript Lansdowne 98, a collection of accounts, treatises, adages, translations and miscellaneous papers dating to up to 1598. The papers that make up the miscellany were connected to the entourage of Sir William Cecil, Lord Burghley, Principal Secretary of State and later Lord Treasurer of England, a giant in Elizabethan politics and culture, and one of the principal orchestrators of the English settlement in Ireland in the 1580s. The papers display a wide thematic range: religion, military strategy, political philosophy. A number are in some way related to languages and linguistic interests,[1] but item 20, in which our wordlist appears, is the only document connected to the Celtic languages in the collection.

The Lansdowne wordlist contains 41 terms in English with Welsh and Irish equivalents in three columns as illustrated in Table 1 below:

Englishe	Walshe	Irishe
god	dyw	dye

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[1] For instance, item 21 "A specimen of characters and marks for secrecy, answering to each letter of the English alphabet, &c."; item 26 "Critical observations on some particular modes of expression in the Greek tongue; by Mr. Laurence, an eminent teacher of the same to Lady Burghley".

the devill	dyaul	dyaul
churche	egloys	agloys
howse	ty	ty
barne	scybor	scybor
hearringe	scadan	scadane
boarde	borde	borde
boate	bade	bade
goolde	oyr	our
sylver	arian	argeol
hand	lau	lauf
legg	coyse	cosse
eare	clist	clas
water	dure	dure
lyfe	byn	ben
rocke	craig	craige
shipp	longe	lunge
doar	drus	dorus
man	dyn	dyne
cowe	bugh	bow
calfe	loo	loe
dead	marow	maruf
whyte	gwyn	fwyn
blew	glas	glass
great	maure	moore
litle	bagh	beg
southsayer	barde	barde
candel	cannyl	cynyl
horse	march	ach
wood	cynyd	conn
fyer	taune	tene
bread	bara	aran
dogg	cy	coo
stagg	carw	carye
valley	glyn	glany
drynck	diod	diogh

foote	trode	tree
sweet	melis	mylis
bell	clogh	clogh
honny	myell	myll
paper	papyr	paper

The wordlist is written in a neat italic hand, introduced by an endorsement indicating that the terms were selected to demonstrate "that Walshe and yrishe weare one languaige, at the firste because of the nearenes and affinitie of the speache". In a concluding note, the anonymous compiler warns the reader: "Note that I doo not certeynely knowe whether I have truely the orthographie of the Walshe, and Irishe: but I suppose, yt ys spoken according the above writinge" (Lansdowne MS 98 item 20). The author was evidently educated and displayed a metalinguistic awareness of the complex relationship between sound and sign. Considering his preoccupation with writing and orthography and "spoken" form, the term 'speech' in the endorsement seems to refer to the "Manner or mode of speaking",[2] or in other words the 'accent'.

The terms in Lansdowne are connected to nature and daily life. We find terms to indicate body parts ('hand', 'leg', 'ear', 'foot'), human existence ('life' and 'dead'), religion and culture ('god', 'the devil', and 'southsayer' to translate the Celtic 'bard'). There are then a number of objects that must have been a common sight in Tudor towns and villages, and which also point to aspects of society and communal living, from worship ('church'), timekeeping ('bell'), dwelling ('house', 'door', 'barn'), to means of transport ('boat' and 'ship'). The natural world has terms to describe the landscape ('valley', 'water', 'rock'), resources ('wood', 'silver', 'fire'), and subsistence ('herring', 'honey' and 'cow' among others). The majority of the words are very common terms, though there is an appreciable number of words that can be related to cultural production and worship. The presence of abstract nouns is noteworthy, with 'god' and the 'devil', 'life' and 'dead' as terms that seem to foreground the more complex semantic fields of belief and spiritual life.

The order of the terms of the Lansdowne wordlist may be hierarchical, at least in part. God and the devil are the first terms in the list, immediately followed by 'church', 'house' and 'barn', which may represent three types of abodes – for the Christian community (and God), people, and cattle. However, the wordlist cannot be said to maintain a thematic

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[2] See *OED online*, s.v. SPEECH, 1, II.6.

organisation. Some body parts are grouped together, but 'foot' appears separated between semantically unrelated terms. We jump then from 'herring' to 'board', to 'boat' and 'gold'. The terms seem to have been recorded as they were collected rather than following consistently any alphabetical, semantic or phonetic association.

The same may be said for the second wordlist. This appeared in print in 1633, in a collection edited by the Irish antiquary and historian Sir James Ware. Alongside Edmund Spenser's *View of the present state of Ireland* and the already cited Campion's *Historie of Ireland*, this collection included a work by the Church of England minister Meredith Hanmer. Hanmer's *Chronicle of Ireland*, so it was called, was published posthumously but must have been compiled between the year of Hanmer's arrival in Ireland, *c.* 1593 and April 1604, the date of his death in Dublin (Andreani 2018 and 2020; Ford 2004). The *Chronicle* dealt with the history of Ireland up to the 13th century, and, of immediate relevance for our present discussion, it included a section devoted to the origins and nature of the Irish language. The section was enriched with a list of words that in the intention of the compiler illustrated the several examples of Welsh terms that the Irish "have taken hold of, and have caused to vary little from their speech" (1633: 11), here presented in Table 2 below in the same order in which they appeared in Ware's edition:

	Welsh and Irish	**English**
British Irish	bara ran	bread
Br. Ir.	diod diogh	drink
Br. Ir.	tan tine	fire
Br. Ir.	drus dyrrus	door
Br. Ir.	ithyn ityn	firres
Br. Ir.	mawn mon	turfe
Br. Ir.	gaver gawr	goat
Br. Ir.	mawr more	great
Br. Ir.	myn mynan	kydde

Br. Ir.	ty ty	house
Br. Ir.	scadan scadan	herring
Br. Ir.	carregg carregg	rock
Br. Ir.	teer tyr	land, ground
Br. Ir.	sidan sidan	silk
Br. Ir.	kos kos	leg, foot
Br. Ir.	sane fessane	hose, stockings
Br. Ir.	losky losky	burning, burnt
Br. Ir.	berw berwy	sod
Br. Ir.	glan glyn	"in both a like"
Br. Ir.	duffrey duffrin	"in both a like"
Br. Ir.	mah mac	son
Br. Ir.	cuanid cunnoch	wood
Br. Ir.	knaie knoe	nuts
Br. Ir.	kwyr kwyragh	wax
Br. Ir.	cantref cantrud	cantred (a hundred towns)
Br. Ir.	avon owen	river
Br. Ir.	moil moil	bald
Br. Ir.	mantagh mantagh	toothless

The table attempts to reproduce the layout as it appeared in print in 1633, since this is an important feature of the wordlist, suggesting that the affinity of Welsh and Irish

constituted the real focus of Hanmer's compilation. The wordlist presented British (i.e. Welsh) and Irish together in one column and English on its own on a different column.

The terms are predominantly related to nature, topography and natural resources and seem to appear in no particular order. The natural world and the landscape typical of an Irish environment are represented by the words 'turf', 'sod', 'glen' and 'river'. There are terms that define urban spaces and organised living in a society, such as 'house', 'cantred', and 'door'. Several terms denote subsistence and nourishment, such as 'bread', 'drink', 'nuts' and resources, such as 'wood', 'wax', 'fire' and 'herring' – both a staple of the English diet and a significant resource for trade (Hadfield 2015). The majority are nouns, but we also have four modifiers, two of which are adjectives commonly used to describe people, 'bald' and 'toothless'. The terms in the list are ordinary words that we can imagine constituted a common vocabulary for the English settlers and the native population alike. There is no focus on any recognisable specialised field, rather, what seems to emerge from Hanmer's wordlist is the ordinary day-to-day reality of life in Tudor Ireland, from fishing to gathering nuts and fruits, chopping wood, making a fire, and tending cattle.

The point of the Irish-Welsh affinity was further expounded by Hanmer, who claimed that "the Irish have affinity with no tongue more than with the British language", as attested by his sources:

> First of all according unto the first command, the Celticke tongue was of force in all these Northerne parts. Bodinus writeth, that the British and Celtick language was all one. Pausanias the Grecian maketh mention how the Celts in their language called a horse *Marc,* and three horses *Trimarc,* the which the Welshman useth to this day with a gutturall alteration, Margh and Treemargh. Also Camden the learned Antiquary of this our age, is of this opinion (remembering the story of Gurguntius, and the infinite number of British words in use among the Irish, the which he termeth, *infinitam vim Britannicarum dictionum*) that the Britaines first peopled this land. (Ware 1633: 8)

and by reason of a long history of contact and exchange:

> Secondly the British and Irish oft matched together, so that there grew among them great alliance and affinity, to the furtherance of the language. [...] Thirdly, when there was any trouble in Ireland, they fled to Wales; when they had any warres or rebellion there, they came for refuge and aide into Ireland: hereof came the shaking of hands [...] Fourthly, the first conquerors in Henry the seconds times, that brake the ice into this land, were Welch men, whose names and seates to this day are fresh in memory. (Ware 1633: 9-10)

Hanmer reported that Irish was believed to have been brought to Ireland by Gaithelus, the ancestor of the Gaels according to the medieval tradition. Contrary to the common opinion that Gaithelus was a Greek, Hanmer claimed that he found "no Greek in the Irish

tongue" (Ware 1633: 7), a point on which he had a certain authority as the respected translator of *The auncient ecclesiasticall histories* by the Greek fathers Eusebius of Caesarea, Socrates of Constantinople and Evagrius, Scholasticus published in 1577. Rather, "the Irish (excepting the Red shanks and the Scottish of the haye londe) have affinity with no tongue (as I can learne) more then with the British language" (Ware 1633: 8). Hanmer included several examples of toponyms in which he recognised a Welsh element: "Carregfergus" a compound with "Carreg & Craig", a 'stone' or 'rock' in Welsh; "Lismore" where the first element is "in British is a Court or Palace"; compounds with "Glan and Glyn", both "British words"; and compounds with "Inis, and Iland, is British and Irish" (Ware 1633: 10-11).

Hanmer noted a number of correspondences, but there is no evidence that he saw any regularity in them, nor did he attempt to describe them, with the notable exception of the "guttural alteration" of *Marc/Margh* and *Trimarc/Treemargh* (Ware 1633: 8). Incidentally, in the short treatise preceding the wordlist he recorded another correspondence between British "Gwidhealaec" and Irish "Gaodhealgh" failing to notice the same phonological pattern (Ware 1633: 7). He believed that the "Britaines" had been the first inhabitants of Ireland, and explained the divergence of Irish from Welsh in terms of decadence: "And although of a long time (by reason of troubles and alterations) the speech grew wholly out of vse; yet afterwards in success of time it was revived", but found change to be a constituent aspect of languages: "wee finde that diversity of times, alteration of government, invasion of strangers, planting of new Colonies, and conversing with forraigne nations doe alter languages" (Ware 1633: 8).

For a treatise on Ireland, Hanmer's attention was admittedly a lot on Welsh. Hanmer's partiality may not surprise us if we consider his origins: Hanmer was a native of Brogyntyn, only a few miles from the Welsh-English border; this was the borderland, the "marches" between England and Wales, a plurilingual and culturally hybrid territory (Morgan, Power 2009: 104, 107). As a man of the borderland, Hanmer must have been familiar with Welsh if not a fluent speaker, and his fluency could have enabled him to find parallels between the languages, just as Sir James Perrott and Edward Lhuyd did after him. One comment in particular underscores Hanmer's *Sprachgefühl*, when he noted about the Irish term *rath*, meaning a moat or round trench, that "if Beda had not said that it was a Saxon word, I would have said it had been British" (Ware 1633: 11).

It is clear that the focus of the attention in both wordlists was the similarity of the two Celtic languages. Nine terms, moreover, occur in both the Lansdowne (L) and Hanmer (H) lists. These are 'herring', 'rock', 'valley, dale', 'bread', 'drink', 'fire', 'wood', 'house' and 'door'. Seven pairs have identical spelling while eleven present spelling variations, the most

significant of which concern the terms 'valley', 'rock' and 'wood'. The pair Welsh "glyn" Irish "glany" in L has the variants Welsh "glan" Irish "glyn" in H. The variants Welsh "craig" Irish "craige" in L are Welsh "carregg" Irish "carregg" in H, and Irish "conn" in L is Irish "cunnoch" in H. Some caution is needed here, though, since the list was published posthumously and edited by Sir James Ware, who may have amended Hanmer's original spelling. Variation in spelling and the observations of the Lansdowne compiler regarding speech and orthography may suggest an aural element; yet, the repetition of nine words in both lists and the consistency of spelling in several cases appear to point to a connection between them.

Perhaps, both compilers learnt some of the terms through their travels, readings and connections. It is possible that a number of the lexical correspondences between Irish and Welsh were commonplace in Elizabethan Britain. Similar compilations may have been in circulation among various groups of antiquarians or travellers, whether orally or in writing, possibly in the form of manuscript ephemera like the Lansdowne wordlist. Moreover, the compilers appear to have shared the same spelling conventions (cf. Welsh "diod" vs Irish "diogh" in Tables 1 and 2 above). In summary, both lists may have derived from common or connected sources.

The wordlists reveal fascinating details about their compilers' perception of the relationship between the Celtic languages and English. In particular, Welsh played an interesting role. Whilst the knowledge of Irish on the part of the English colonists remained low and inadequate (Palmer 2001: 46), several members of the English army in Ireland and a considerable number of undertakers of the Irish plantations were of Welsh origins (Morgan 2014). Welsh was also "comparatively strongly codified", it had a grammar and had been the object of lexicographical studies (Considine 2017: 69). It was more familiar to English speakers than Irish, and it was ultimately the language of a population which they understood to be part of the English nation, due to their loyalty, a shared history and traditions (Morgan 2014: 131, 152), as opposed to the Irish.

As has been seen, the place of Welsh in the geography of the languages of Britain appears to be at the heart of Hanmer's wordlist. His remarks about the involvement of generations of Welsh in the conquest of Ireland, his perception of the direction of a unilateral language exchange, i.e. 'from' Welsh 'to' Irish, and ultimately his belief that the Welsh were the true native inhabitants of Ireland reveal a bias. According to Patricia Palmer, Hanmer was driven by a colonial agenda, since positing the identity of Irish and Welsh (and actually deriving Irish from Welsh) essentially meant to argue for the British origins of Ireland, a fact

that legitimated the English colonial claims over it (2001: 104). This reading can be complemented with Rhys Morgan's understanding of Hanmer's design. According to Morgan, Hanmer used his text to defend the Welsh as key "members of the British state", as a means to confront English suspicions that they might rebel and cooperate with the Irish (2014: 144). Clearly, there were serious underpinnings to defining the role of Welsh in the map of the languages of Britain and to emphasising the nature of its connection with Irish.

The paucity of information regarding the Lansdowne wordlist and its author makes it more difficult to pin down the thrust and function of this compilation as precisely, but its form and manuscript context allow some speculation. The fact that this manuscript ended up in Burghley's papers makes us think of this wordlist as one of the documents produced as part of the process of acquisition and transmission of knowledge about Ireland. The activity of production and collection of reports, treatises, descriptions and information about Ireland, termed by Christopher Maginn and Steven Ellis as the Tudor "discovery of Ireland" had been ongoing since Henrician times (Maginn, Ellis 2015). Lord Burghley himself was one of the most active participants in this network of manuscript circulation (Maginn, Ellis 2015: 18), and the Lansdowne wordlist contents and material features make it look like one of the papers that were compiled for presentation by one of the administrators, officials or clients of the Burghley entourage.

4. Concluding remarks

In conclusion, the Elizabethan wordlists testify to an interest in the Irish language that appeared to go beyond representations and perceptions of Irish as barbarous clamour (see Palmer 2001: 74-107). They document the beginnings of a non-indigenous lexicographical activity in Ireland, which revolved primarily around the speculation of an affinity between Irish and Welsh, based on their lexical and phonological correspondences. Even so, the Lansdowne author did point out his ignorance of either Irish or Welsh, thus possibly underlining his distance from them both, while Hanmer established a clear hierarchy in which Welsh dominated. In summary, these wordlists supply compelling evidence of their compilers' linguistic ideas and biases (including the perception of language change as a process of decadence) as much as of a growing metalinguistic awareness amongst groups of educated Elizabethans (such as the understanding of the problematic relationship of sound and sign). They may have been the result of fieldwork – doubtless, Meredith Hanmer had the

opportunity to conduct first hand inquiries during his years in Ireland – yet, recurring terms and consistency in spelling suggest that they derive from connected sources or shared commonplace knowledge.

Even if the wordlists appear to have been driven primarily by curiosity and by an antiquarian thrust, some practical application in the context of the Tudor conquest and attempted reform of Ireland cannot be ruled out entirely. The words we find in them are very common terms that were presumably frequently heard and used for basic communication between English and Irish. Hanmer surely lived in Ireland for over a decade, and he was only one of several soldiers, preachers and administrators who moved to Ireland as part of the Elizabethan colonial enterprise. Incomprehension was a particularly urgent issue for clergymen whose duty was to preach and reform the Irish people, so that a portable glossary of the most common words and phrases could have been a helpful tool to use with Irish parishioners. Incidentally, Hanmer's own interest in the language is proven by a number of fragments that have been preserved among his papers at The National Archives (SP 63/214).

Insofar as they collect an essential lexicon of common terms, the Lansdowne and Hanmer wordlists can open up aspects of the day-to-day reality of Elizabethan life: the landscape people saw, activities, means of transport, and moments of societal connection and interaction. In fact, while they stand as significant witnesses to the regularity of language contact and multilingualism in early modern Britain, these early examples of English-Celtic lexicography were undoubtedly situated politically and reveal the pressing concerns of their authors with the power dynamics between the languages of Britain.

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