

WORD-FORMATION IN JONATHAN SWIFT'S ROMANCE VOCABULARY. A STATISTICAL ANALYSIS₁

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The following lines offer a commentary on various aspects of word-formation in J. Swift's Romance vocabulary. First of all it is necessary to explain what Romance vocabulary is; the term has been used to denote all Latin and non-Latin vocabulary which has passed into the English language either from or through Latin, or through the Romance languages: French, Spanish, Portuguese or Italian. So words like "apostle" or "remark",² although the former is of Greek origin and the latter of Germanic, have both been considered Romance since they have entered the English language through Latin and French, respectively.

In all, 6761 different Romance words were recorded in the works of Jonathan Swift. Out of these 6761 words 2333 convey Romance prefixes, that is 34,50%, and out of these 2333 words 2126 or 91% convey Latin prefixes.³

The following table offers the different Latin prefixes recorded in the corpus in decreasing order of frequency:

Prefix	Total	Nouns	Verbs	Adjectives	Adverbs
In-	360	139	69	123	39
Con-	307	165	73	55	14
Ad-	228	105	89	27	7
Re-	225	13	188	19	5
De-	201	79	81	33	8
Ex-	197	91	53	40	13
Dís-	172	73	68	21	10
Sub-	72	31	18	20	3
Pro-	68	33	23	11	0
Ob-	61	27	12	16	6
Per-	60	29	14	10	7
Ab-	43	16	11	10	6
Trans-	28	8	14	6	0
Inter-	26	13	12	1	0
Super-	19	8	2	8	1

Se-	17	8	4	4	1
Intro-	3	2	1	0	0
Ante-	2	1	1	0	0
Preter-	1	1	0	0	0

Thus, the most productive Latin prefix of nouns is "con" with 307 appearances and with only 73 verbs and 55 adjectives; the most productive of verbs is "re" with 225 appearances, and with only 13 nouns and 19 adjectives. Nevertheless, the most productive of adjectives is "in" with 360 appearances, and with only 69 and 123 appearances in verbs and nouns, respectively. Some of these prefixes are not very productive, e.g. "intro", "ante", "preter", etc. This is because they are compound prefixes. Single prefixes are much more productive as seen above in the table. The most productive prefix of adverbs is of course "in" since it is in its turn the most productive of adjectives. Adverbs are generally formed from adjectives.

In all, 925 prefixed nouns (43%), 665 prefixed verbs (31%), 415 prefixed adjectives (20%) and 121 adverbs (6%) were recorded. The most productive nominal prefixes are "con", "ad", "in", and "ex", the most productive verbal prefixes are "re", "ad", "de" and "con" and the most productive adjectival and adverbial prefixes are "in" and "con".

92 words made up of Greek prefixes were recorded in the corpus, that is 13% of the Romance prefixed words. 65 of them are nouns (70%), 23 are adjectives (25%) and only 4 verbs (5%).

The following table offers the different Greek prefixes recorded in the corpus. A decreasing order of frequency is given:

Prefix	Total	Nouns	Verbs	Adjectives	Adverbs
Syn-	9	7	1	1	0
Dia-	8	7	0	1	0
En-	8	6	1	1	0
Epi-	8	6	0	2	0
Meta-	8	5	1	2	0
Ana-	6	4	0	2	0
Archi-	6	5	0	1	0
Cata-	6	4	1	1	0
Eu-	6	5	0	1	0
Pro-	6	5	0	1	0
Apo-	5	4	0	1	0
Pan-	4	2	0	2	0
Peri-	3	2	0	1	0
Hyper-	3	1	0	2	0
Hypo-	3	1	0	2	0
Anti-	2	1	0	1	0

Amphi-	1	0	0	1	0
Ex-	0	0	0	0	0

As the preceding tables illustrate if the number of Latin prefixed verbs (665) was bigger than the number of Latin prefixed adjectives (415), the number of Greek prefixed adjectives is bigger (23 adjectives but only 4 verbs).

Greek prefixes are not so common in the corpus as Latin ones. The most productive is "syn" (only 9 appearances). The majority of them appear only 6 or less times in the corpus.

"Ex", although used with Greek roots in contemporary English (e.g. "exodus") was not recorded in Jonathan Swift's works.

In all, 104 French prefixes were recorded, 16% of the Romance prefixed words. We must bear in mind that French prefixes are Latin prefixes which on passing into French changed their spellings.

Thus:

Latin Prefix	French Prefix
In-	En-
Contra-	Counter-
Super-	Sur-
Per-	Par-
Ad-	A-

"En" is by far the most productive prefix (84 appearances) as the following table illustrates:

Prefix	Total	Nouns	Verbs	Adjectives	Prepositions
En-	80	25	54	1	0
Counter-	9	7	2	0	0
Sur-	9	4	5	0	0
Par-	4	2	1	1	0
A-	2	0	0	0	2

Latin prefixes are much more productive than French. It shows that the number of Latin borrowings is greater than the number of French ones.

Suffixes

In all, 3307 Romance suffixed words were recorded, that is 49% of all the Romance words recorded in the corpus. The number of different Romance suffixes is 46 as the following table illustrates:

Suffix	Total	Nouns	Verbs	Adjectives
-Ion (tion/sion)	432	432	0	0
-Al, -Ar	227	44	0	183
-Er	206	206	0	0
-Ty	186	185	0	1
-Ous	164	0	0	164
-Ate	134	10	97	27
-Y	134	131	0	3
-Able	127	3	0	124
-Ent	106	21	0	85
-Ment	105	105	0	0
-Our	102	102	0	0
-Ic	87	9	0	78
-Ence	75	75	0	0
-Ant	70	28	0	42
-Ance	63	63	0	0
-Ive	59	14	0	45
-Ary	54	24	0	30
-An	47	47	0	0
-Ure	42	42	0	0
-Ish ⁴	36	0	36	0
-O	32	32	0	0
-Ete, -Ette	32	32	0	0
-Fy	26	0	26	0
-Ist	26	26	0	0
-Ible	24	0	0	24
-Ency	24	24	0	0
-Ess	22	22	0	0
-Ery	21	21	0	0
-Id	20	4	0	16
-Ize	20	0	20	0
-Ory	20	13	0	7
-Ancy	19	19	0	0
-Ism	16	16	0	0
-Ry	17	17	0	0
-Tude	15	15	0	0
-Ice	12	12	0	0
-Ade	8	8	0	0
-Eer	7	7	0	0
-Ics	6	6	0	0
-Ard	5	5	0	0
-Ee	4	4	0	0
-Ot	4	4	0	0

-Ite	4	4	0	0
-Ese	3	3	0	0
-Ern	2	2	0	0
-Esque	2	2	0	0

No distinction between Latin, Greek and French is made in the list because they are very interconnected.⁵ However "ist", "ism", "ize", "ics" and "ot" are of Greek origin, while "ish", "ard", "ette", "eer", "ee", "ese" and "esque" are French.

A distribution of Romance suffixed words by grammatical categories offer following results: 1509 words are nouns (45,50%); 924 words are adjectives (28%) and 119 are verbs (only 3,90%). No adverbs appear in the list as there are no 100% Romance adverbs in the English language because the only English suffix for the formation of adverbs (of manner) is "ly" of Anglosaxon origin.

The low number of verbs is explained by the fact that the simple root is normally used to express verbal action in English; nevertheless four suffixes for the formation of verbs were recorded in the corpus: "ate" and "fy" of Latin origin; the former appears in 97 different terms and the latter in 26; "ize" of Greek origin with 20 appearances and finally "ish" of French origin with 36.

The main suffixes for the formation of adjectives are "al" (with variant "ar") with 183 appearances; "able" (variant "ible") with 124 + 24 appearances; "ous" with 164 appearances; "ant" (variant "ent") with 42 + 85 appearances; "ic" with 78; "ive" with 45; "ary" with 30 and "ate" with 27.

The most productive suffix of nouns is "tion" (variant "sion") with 432 appearances, that is 17% of all the suffixed words recorded in the corpus, followed by "er" with 206 (8%). Other common suffixes are "ance" (variant "ence") with 138 appearances; "y" with 131; "ment" with 105 and "our" with 102.

If we have a close look at the tables given, we can see that while most prefixes can be used for the formation of nouns, adjectives and verbs, only one suffix was recorded in this sense. It is "ate" which can produce nouns, e.g. "candidate", adjectives e.g. "delicate" and verbs e.g. "celebrate".

The majority of the suffixes recorded are used to form only one grammatical category. Thus: "ize", "fy", "ish" produce only verbs. "Tion" ("sion"), "er", "y", "ance" ("ence"), "ery", "ment", "our" and "ure" are employed only for the formation of nouns. On the other hand "able" ("ible"), "ant" ("ent"), "ous", "ive", "ic" and "ary" for the formation of adjectives.

The number of suffixes for the formation of nouns is much greater than the number for the formation of adjectives and verbs.

Hybrid Words

Hybrids are words made up of elements of different origin e. g. "ungrammatical" from "un-" (Anglosaxon) "-grammatic-" (Greek) and "-al" (Latin).

Five patterns of hybrids were recorded in the corpus:

1) Romance prefix+Anglosaxon root

Only 11 formations of this kind were recorded, that is 1% of the hybrid words as the following list illustrates:

"Counterspell", "endear", "enliven", "entangle", "entrust", "intermingle", "interweave", "rebuild", "recall", "remark", "renew".

All these hybrids are verbs.

2) Anglosaxon Prefix+Romance Root

In all, 164 words were recorded. 14 of them are nouns, 18 are verbs and 128 are adjectives. Strikingly the number of adjectives is much greater than the number of verbs and nouns. This is due to the fact that "un" produces mostly negative adjectives in English as the following table illustrates:

Prefix	Total	Nouns	Verbs	Adjectives	Adverbs
Un-	143	6	12	128	0
Be-	12	6	6	0	0
Mis-	7	3	1	3	0
After-	1	1	0	0	0
Fore- ⁶	1	1	0	0	0
Out- ⁷	0	0	0	0	0

As we can see the most productive native suffix of hybrids is "un"; but the most striking thing is that it is used more with Romance roots than with Anglosaxon ones despite its Anglosaxon origin.

Thus in *Gulliver's Travels* it was recorded in 67 different words and it is added to Romance roots in 67 cases and in only 13 cases to Anglosaxon roots.

In *Journal to Stella*, although the difference is not so big as in *Gulliver's Travels*, it is used more with Romance roots than with Anglosaxon ones. Respectively 24 and 16 appearances.

In *A Modest Proposal*, *Polite Conversation* and other works "un" is used more with Romance roots than Anglosaxon ones.

3) Saxon Root+Romance Suffix

In all, 99 different terms, all nouns, were recorded; that is 10% of the hybrid

words recorded in the corpus. 66 of these terms that is 67,50%, are formations with the suffix "er". It shows the lack of a native suffix to form agent nouns in the Germanic languages.

4) Romance Root+Anglosaxon Suffix

In the corpus 596 different terms were recorded, that is 62% of the hybrids, 68 of which are nouns, 102 adjectives, 326 adverbs and strikingly only 5 verbs.

"En" is the only Anglosaxon suffix for the formation of verbs that English had. It is therefore understandable that the number of hybrid verbs of this pattern is so small, only 5: "chasten", "cheapen", "christen", "hasten", "moisten".

"Ly" is the only suffix in English for the formation of adverbs so its predominance is also to account for.

The list of the Anglosaxon suffixes which have been added to Romance roots in the corpus is as follows:

Suffix	Total	Nouns	Verbs	Adjectives	Adverbs
-Ly	339	0	0	13	326
-Ness	51	51	0	0	0
-Ful	34	0	0	34	0
-Less	19	0	0	19	0
-Ish ⁸	14	0	0	14	0
-Y	14	0	0	14	0
-Ship	8	8	0	0	0
-En ⁹	6	0	5	1	0
-Some	6	0	0	6	0
-Dom	3	3	0	0	0
-Hood	2	2	0	0	0
-Th	2	2	0	0	0

The difference between the Romance suffixes and the Anglosaxon ones is that while some of the former ones can produce nouns and adjectives, the latter ones can only create words of one grammatical category: "ness", "ship", "dom", "hood" and "th" are used for the formation of nouns; "ful", "less", "ish", "y" and "some" for the formation of adjectives.¹⁰

5) Finally a miscellany is given; terms with more than one prefix and one suffix, each of them with a different origin:

Pattern	Appearances
Anglo.+Romance+Anglo.	Unfruitful, unsuccessful, uneasiness talkativeness, readership
Anglo.+Anglo.+Romance Romance+Anglo.+Anglo.	Unanswerable, unspeakable, unrighteous Usefulness, cheerfulness, listlessness bashfulness
Anglo.+Romance+Angl.+Angl.	Unacquaintedness
Anglo.+Romance+Romance+Angl.	Unreasonableness

Conclusion

From my point of view Romance prefixes and suffixes are very productive in Jonathan Swift's works considering that it was in the early Eighteenth Century¹¹ that these works were written. If Jonathan Swift didn't use more affixed words it was simply because they didn't exist in the English language of that time.

If we compare the kind of English in which J. Swift wrote his works with that of today, we can plainly see that present-day English is richer in affixed Romance words since many more terms of this kind have come into the language. We have only to think of the productivity of some prefixes and suffixes like "anti-", "re-", "-ist" or "-ist" to realize what the difference may be. Even today's English has more Romance prefixes and suffixes than then, e. g. "a" and "non" to express negation. Even more patterns of hybrids are used, words that Swift didn't use because of the simple fact that they didn't exist.

On the other hand J. Swift was one of the greatest scholars of the Eighteenth Century, who knew Latin as well as French to such a degree that he was able to use them in some of his writings. That is in my opinion one of the reasons why he used so much English vocabulary.¹² The fact he knew those languages helped him to use the Romance vocabulary in a much useful, precise and flexible way.

Notes:

1. This article is a part of my doctoral thesis: *Jonathan Swift's Romance Vocabulary*, presented on June 1st 1985 in the English Department of the University of Alicante (Spain).
2. "Apostle" from Greek "apostolos" (apo+stolos); "remark" from French "remarquer", in its turn from Latin "re"+Germanic "*markjan".
3. The number of non-affixed Romance words in the corpus is very short indeed. Only 15% of the recorded Romance words. This is due to the fact that what English needed were newer Latin formations which were mostly affixed words. So, to set an example, English had "send" a native word to denote what "mittere" expressed in Latin but it did need to borrow all its derivations; "admit", "commit", "omit", "permit", "transmit", etc.
4. "Ish" was not in its origin a real suffix, it comes from French "ss" e. g. "finish" from French "finissent" from "finir"; "ent" of the third person plural is not pronounced in French.
5. In some cases we don't know exactly whether some suffixed Romance words came into English through French or directly from Latin, e. g. "fidelity" which might have come into English directly from Latin "fidelitas" or from French "fidélité".
6. The only word recorded in the corpus was "forenoon". Today it is obsolete.
7. Although "out" (Old English "ut") can be used with Romance roots, e. g. "outcory", "outline", "outnumber", "outpost", etc. it was not recorded in compounds of this pattern.
8. See note number 4.
9. "En" is an Anglosaxon suffix used, among other things, for the formation of adjectives and verbs.
10. "Ly" can produce adverbs and adjectives. It is the only exception to the rule.
11. Jonathan Swift's career comprises at least 47 years, since 1691 when he started writing Pindaric odes, such as *Ode to the King* or *Ode to the Athenian Society* up to 1738 in which he wrote what is supposed to be his last important work, *Polite Conversation*.
12. I compared some of Swift's works with some of his contemporary writers. For example, *Gulliver's Travels* with Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*; *Cadenus and Vanessa* with A. Pope *The Rape of the Lock*; *Polite Conversation* with W. Congreve's *The Way of the World*; some of his pamphlets with some by Addison and Steele, and so forth. I reached the conclusion that the amount of Romance vocabulary in Swift was greater than that used by his contemporaries. Nevertheless much more research should be done on this particular subject.