An Excursion on *Land*

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Abstract
A fundamental aspect of political language is the words we use for potentially contentious political-cultural concepts, as well as how we use them. This paper investigates the use of the noun *land* in a small sample of English authors, from Shakespeare to Virginia Woolf, comparing that use to how the same authors use the nouns *country* and *nation*, as presented in a previous paper along the same lines. In addition to simple frequencies, the combinatory potential of the noun *land* is examined. Special attention is paid to the use of *land* in the works of Shakespeare and Marie Corelli. *Land* in Shakespeare was shown to have a higher combinatory potential than *country*, which was ascribed partly to the formal properties of the word, partly to its suitability as part of Shakespeare's imagery, in the context of the political situation in England in the late sixteenth century. Corelli's abundant use of *land* is seen as exaggeratedly symptomatic of Victorian style, which has contributed to the word being stylistically marked in present-day English. A general finding is that *land*, even when used in a political sense, retains some of its concrete meaning, which may contribute to its rhetorical usefulness.[1]

Keywords: land; country; nation; Shakespeare; Corelli

1. Preamble

> This land is your land, this land is my land
> From California to the New York island
> From the Redwood Forest, to the Gulf Stream waters
> This land was made for you and me

What "land" is Woody Guthrie singing about in his most famous song from the 1940's, as well as one of the most famous American folksongs of all time? Is it the same "land" as is mentioned by ageing Oglala Lakota[2] leader Maȟpíya Lúta ('Red Cloud') around the last turn of the century?

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[1] I would like to thank Ulf Dantanus for making valuable comments on an earlier version of this paper; and the peer reviewer, who should be praised for his/her keen eye. Any remaining shortcomings are mine alone.
[2] A Native American tribe, currently mainly residing in South Dakota.

> They made us many promises, more than I can remember, but they kept only one; they promised to take our land, and they took it.[3]

If Maȟpíya Lúta spoke in Lakota language rather than English when he said this—which is likely—it is difficult to know his exact wording, but for the sake of argument, let us say that both this and the Guthrie quotation use the noun *land* in a way that suggests a common human physical environment of some considerable size and importance, to which people claim some kind of inherent right. It is, in particular, this use of the word *land* that I am trying to explore in this paper, while at the same time further trying out a method of clarifying the meaning of contentious political-cultural words (cf Mobärg 2016).

2. The Etymology, Semantics and Grammar of Land

Land is a word inherited from proto-Germanic in several Germanic languages, including English and Swedish. Its original meaning refers to the physical world, denoting a "solid portion of the earth's surface" (OED), often contrasting with *water*. That meaning was extended early on to also denote a portion of land used for a specific purpose, thus often being synonymous with *ground* or *soil*: "And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof" (Exodus KJV 23:10), a quotation which in the *New International Version* of the Bible (1978) has the word *land* replaced by *fields*. In Swedish, alongside other meanings, *land* is still used productively for the specific meaning, 'small plot of land for growing vegetables, strawberries, potatoes' etc., typically in compounds specifying what type of plot it is: *jordgubbsland* ('strawberry bed').

The concrete meanings of *land* lead on to more abstract meanings, which often retain some of the physical content of the original word. Describing the first Viking ravages in north-east England,[4] the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle says: "Þæt wæron Þa ærestan scipu Deniscra monna Þe Angel cynnes lond gesohton" ('those were the first ships of Danish men that attacked the land of the Angles'; Parker MS). Here, "Þe Angel cynnes lond" suggests that *lond* ('land') refers to the territory of an

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[3] Quoted from the Internet.
[4] Incidentally, close to the place where the recipient of this festschrift was born and grew up.

ethnic group, a meaning of the word that is furthermore attested by OED to go as far back as c. 725 A.D. That is in fact an earlier attestation than those of the more physically-related uses of the word, which should however not, I think, be taken to suggest that the abstract use might have preceded the concrete use—which would be unreasonable—but rather, that the abstract use is also of very old standing.

In Swedish, the abstract use of *land* has developed into what is certainly the most common meaning of the word in that language, in SAOB defined as "part of the earth's solid surface which constitutes the area of a state […], realm" (my translation). In English, that use of the word appears to be clearly more restricted, but far from non-existent, see for instance the following quotation by the English historian T. B. Macaulay from 1849 (OED): "In our land, the national wealth has, during at least six centuries, been almost uninterruptedly increasing"; or the famous anthem by Edward Elgar and A. C. Benson from 1902: "Land of Hope and Glory."[5]

Behind the more restricted use of English *land* to denote the area of a state lies, of course, the fact that much of its place in that respect has been taken over by the word *country*, an Anglo-Norman word that began to be used in English during the Middle English period. Furthermore, that word has also taken over other uses of English *land*, for instance in the town-and-country dichotomy, where *land* could be used previously, as in this, now obsolete, quotation from 1818 by Walter Scott (OED): "I glance like the wildfire through brugh ['borough'] and through land." In Swedish, the corresponding dichotomy has the word *land* in it: *stad och land* ('town and country'). The same thing goes for German ('Stadt und Land') as well as Dutch ('stad en land') and Norwegian ('by og land'). Just like *land*, *country* can also have other, more physical meanings, interestingly glossed by OED as "land" or "expanse of land." So the two words were synonyms in many, if not all, respects during the Middle English period. Possibly because of "loan word prestige" (Kjellmer 1973: 155f), *country* appears to have been adopted fairly soon as the generic word, relegating the previously generic word *land* to the position

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[5] The dominance of *land* in a concrete, physical sense in modern English is reflected in existing lexicalised compounds with *land* as first element. Such compounds are exclusively based on the concrete sense of the word (OED). In Swedish, on the other hand, the compound element *lands*- typically carries the abstract meaning, e.g. *landshövding* (literally *'land chief' = 'county governor').

of a stylistically marked, less common, alternative. There are many examples of similar developments, e.g. Norman French *people*, another everyday word, becoming generic, at the expense of several old Germanic synonyms, including *folk* (Kjellmer 1973).

In grammatical terms, *land* belongs to the class of nouns that can be either countable or uncountable (Quirk et al. 1985: 245ff). *Land*, in its sense of solid ground, is a prototypical uncountable noun, incapable of appearing with the indefinite article or in the plural (examples from the authors' sample used in this study):

> … at length, … we spied land, to our great joy, … (Defoe)

> … a continent of land of at least 1800 miles … (Defoe)

In the sense of "area … of a particular type or used for a particular purpose" (OALD), the word *land* takes on a slightly more human-related meaning, which is reflected grammatically by the plural becoming available, albeit with restrictions:

> … by bestowing her beauty and her lands on this lowly lover. (Eliot)

> … and of all my lands / Is nothing left me but my body's length. (Shakespeare)

A fully countable guise, including the applicability of the indefinite article, is taken on by *land* when the word becomes completely human-related, in assuming the political meaning of 'country':

> … there will be a land set for the halting-place of enmities … (Eliot)

> … in a land that was king-ridden, priest-ridden, peer-ridden … (Brontë)

3. Study
3.1. Fundamentals
I would now like to return to a sample of English authors that I have used for linguistic purposes on two previous occasions (Mobärg 2005, 2016), authors that together cover most of the period from roughly 1600 to the mid 1900's, thereby possibly offering some crude diachronic input to my discussion, without being in any way a statistical sample of the English language during that period. The following authors are represented in the sample: William Shakespeare (1564–1616), Daniel Defoe (1660–1731), Jonathan Swift (1667–1745), Samuel Richardson (1689–1761), Jane

Austen (1775–1817), the Brontë sisters,[6] George Eliot (pen name for Mary Anne Evans; 1819–1880), Marie Corelli (1855–1924) and Virginia Woolf (1882–1941). The samples have been retrieved from the "Hyper-Concordance" of *The Victorian Literary Studies Archive* of Nagoya University.[7]

In Mobärg (2016), I looked at the pseudo-synonyms *country* and *nation*, particularly with respect to how they behave combinatorially, i.e. together with other words. As a starting-point, I checked the words and their "companions"[8] throughout the authors' sample in order to get some kind of crude quantitative grasp of how frequently they were used by the authors. I now supplement those statistics with the corresponding frequencies for *land*, comparing, as a control, all statistics with the frequencies of the respective words in the British National Corpus (BNC):

Table 1 Sample sizes, frequency[9] of *country*, *nation* and *land* per author in the material; and in the British National Corpus

	tot tokens	*country* (freq/m)	*nation* (freq/m)	*land* (freq/m)
Shakesp.	958,594	172	43	292
Defoe	467,381	920	75	342
Swift	144,665	1,659	145	276
Richardson	652,609	93	15	26
Austen	834,828	283	10	25
Brontës	1,102,698	159	24	103
Eliot	1,740,411	206	21	201
Corelli	1,739,498	233	125	186
Woolf	1,186,086	257	16	140
BNC	100,000,000	521	85	200

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[6] The Brontë sisters, Anne (1820–1849), Charlotte (1816–1855) and Emily (1818–1848), are treated jointly as one sample.

[7] http://victorian-studies.net/concordance/. For more information, see Mobärg 2016: 65 (footnote).

[8] "Companion" was the term I chose in a previous study for words that in various ways were used together with the target word I was interested in. For a fuller discussion, see Mobärg 2016: 71ff.

[9] Frequency is calculated as number of instances per one million words of running text.

To begin with, we note that in present-day English (BNC), *country* is two and a half times as frequent as *land*, which in turn is almost two and a half times more frequent than *nation*. Turning to the authors' sample, we see that the frequency of *land* in the nine authors varies a great deal, the earliest authors in the sample, Shakespeare, Defoe and Swift, being the most frequent users. Richardson and Austen appear to be outliers, displaying considerably less use of the word than the other authors of the sample. In all the authors' samples but one—Shakespeare—*country* is used more frequently than *land*, which in turn is used more frequently than *nation* in all samples.

So what about the most frequent users of *land*? The largest part of the Defoe sample consists of *Robinson Crusoe* and *Captain Singleton*, two novels which, because of their insular and maritime setting, invite lavish use of *land* in its basic meaning of 'solid ground,' as opposed to 'water.' The Swift sample, too—small as it is—is heavily influenced by the dominance of a specific text, *Gulliver's Travels*, where the theme of exploration promotes the use of *land* in its physical sense. In Shakespeare, there appears to be no dominant triggering factor for his extensive use of *land*; he appears to be utilising the semantic potential of the word in all its variability.

3.2. Land *in a 'political' sense*
These comparisons should at this point be taken with a pinch of salt, as they are based on the total use of the words in the sample. As we have seen, the word *land* can be used with several meanings, the most fundamental of which are the physical, concrete meaning and the abstract meaning. It is the abstract meaning that may lead on to a political (in a wide sense) interpretation of the word, i.e. the place or territory of certain people, or the place or territory of a political state. It is also that meaning which is most interesting relative to the words *country* and *nation*. Let us therefore try to establish to what extent the authors in the sample use *land* in what, for want of a better word, we might call the 'political' sense. This can only be done by judging the individual items on the basis of their apparent meaning, and so, the method might certainly invite alternative opinions in some cases. There is also a possibility that a definitive judgement on the semantic status of a given instance of *land* might occasionally rely on a much wider context than the one available

in the concordance. Taking such problems into consideration, we now turn to the statistics:

Table 2. *Land* in the authors' sample

	tot tokens	*land* tot	freq/m	*land* polit.	%
Shakesp.	958,594	276	292	95	34
Defoe	467,381	153	342	11	7
Swift	144,665	38	276	10	26
Richardson	652,609	16	26	10	63
Austen	834,828	21	25	6	29
Brontës	1,102,698	114	103	55	48
Eliot	1,740,411	317	201	45	14
Corelli	1,739,498	324	186	152	47
Woolf	1,186,086	160	140	40	25

Legend: total tokens; *land* total number; *land* frequency per million words; *land* with 'political' meaning number; *land* with 'political' meaning percentage of *land* total.

Three authors stand out in using an especially high proportion of *land* in a 'political' sense: Richardson (63%), the Brontës (48%), and Corelli (47%). Of these, the Richardson sample is relatively small, and his total use of *land* is, as we have seen, very limited. Checking the actual text of the sample, which is predominantly from the epistolary novel *Pamela*, it turns out that almost all the instances of *land* are made up of small variations of one and the same formulaic phrase: *best/first lady/ladies in the land.*

The Corelli sample, on the other hand, is very big, but with a frequency of *land* that is roughly similar to the BNC frequency of the word (cf Table 1), and almost half (47%) of Corelli's instances of *land* are of the 'political' type. The Brontë sample is somewhat smaller than the Corelli one, but in terms of the proportion of 'political' *land*, it is very similar (48%) to Corelli. Both the Corelli and the Brontë samples are much more diversified in terms of the linguistic contexts in which *land* is used, than was the case in the Richardson sample.

4. Investigating the Combinatory Properties of Land

In my previous paper, on *country* and *nation*, I proposed a system for investigating the two target words by comparing three combinatory modes in which they were used:

1. the 'descriptive' mode, based on what modifiers (adjectival etc.) the target word is used together with;
2. the 'agentive' mode, based on the predicate verb the target word is used together with, typically when serving as subject;
3. the 'patientive' mode, based on the verb used together with the target word, typically when serving as direct object.

As in the previous study, I will be using the word 'companion' as a common term for the word that co-functions with the target word. Since it is the meaning of the companion that is being focused on here, rather than the exact syntactic function, constructions that can be understood as representing the same type of meaning will be grouped together, choosing the most salient meaning if a choice has to be made. Thus, "This revolting land" will be understood as an example of the 'agentive' use (number 2 above), i.e. equal to 'the land is in the process of revolting,' rather than seeing *revolting* as an adjectival modifier of *land.* Determining which category to place the target word in is of course not an exact science, but involves judgements that will sometimes have to be subjective and could be challenged.

4.1. Procedure
The very first step in the procedure, before the actual classification is made, is to identify all target words in the sample that have the kind of companions necessary for the analysis proposed. This means discarding from the analysis those instances of *land* ('political') whose companions are too weak to serve the present purpose, such as:

> … in a harbour within the land … (Defoe)

> … partitioned into different lands, where famous cities were founded … (Woolf)

In the Defoe example, *land* has no other companion than the definite article; and in the Woolf example, *different* cannot be said to be descriptive of *lands* (in contrast to, for instance, 'prosperous lands'), and the non-restrictive relative clause is too detached from the antecedent *lands* to be considered a companion.

Here follow examples of how the target word of the present study, *land*—in its 'political' sense—has been categorised according to the system proposed (companions marked by added italics):

1. … this land *of convents and confessionals* … (descriptive mode; Brontës)
2. All the land *knows* that; … (agentive mode; Shakespeare)
3. … have learnt how *to run* the lands *they govern* … (patientive mode; Woolf)

For each of these three categories, it has also been determined whether the target word (*land* 'political') and its companion display a positive ("great land"), negative ("frown upon the land") or neutral ("in an unknown land") meaning. In addition to this, the target word has also been categorised according to whether its companion is human-related (e.g. "All the land *knows* that" [Shakespeare]) or not (e.g. "the land *of shades*" [Eliot]), i.e. whether or not *land* has been personified. These classifications, too, are less than absolutely clear-cut, but since I am making no strong statistical claims, but rather looking for tendencies, as well as further trying out the method I devised in my previous paper, this should not be a major problem.

4.2. Results: land *with companions*

Table 3. Number of occurrences of *land* ('political') per companion category

	Descriptive				*Agentive*				*Patientive*			
	neg	*neut*	*pos*	*tot*	*neg*	*neut*	*pos*	*tot*	*neg*	*neut*	*pos*	*tot*
Shakesp.	3	6	21	30	10	1	--	11	12	9	11	32
Defoe	1	2	1	4	--	--	--	0	1	2	--	3
Swift	1	4	--	5	--	--	--	0	--	1	--	1
Richardson	--	--	--	0	--	--	--	0	--	--	--	0
Austen	--	3	--	3	--	--	--	0	--	--	--	0
Brontës	11	4	17	32	--	1	1	2	4	8	3	15
Eliot	6	13	12	31	--	--	--	0	--	--	3	3
Corelli	21	38	40	99	2	3	1	6	6	3	3	12
Woolf	3	17	7	27	--	1	--	1	--	1	--	1

Table 3 shows the number of occurrences of *land* ('political') in the respective authors' samples classified according to the descriptive, agentive and patientive modes, each of which is further subdivided into 'negative,' 'neutral,' and 'positive.' The reader is reminded that these are absolute numbers, which, in order for the reader to gain a quantitatively

sound understanding of the figures, have to be seen in the light of the size of each of the authors' samples, cf table 2.

What can be seen immediately is that in two of the samples, Richardson and Austen, the use of *land* ('political') with pertinent companions is non-existent or close to non-existent. The use is almost as scanty in Swift and Defoe. None of these four authors use *land* ('political') in the agentive mode (i.e. typically as subject). Defoe has three examples of *land* ('political') here classified in the patientive mode (typically direct object), but they all display a fairly weak sense of patientiveness:

1.   … that the land was inhabited … (cf 'to inhabit the land')
2.   … my absence from the land … (cf 'to stay away from the land)
3.   … the people who thus left the land …

In general, looking at all the authors' samples, it seems clear that *land* ('political') is unusual in the agentive mode, i.e. it is rare to talk about *land* ('political') as 'doing things'; Shakespeare however breaks this pattern somewhat. Also in the patientive mode—what can be 'done to' it—*land* ('political') is unusual in the sample, although less unusual than in the agentive mode. It is primarily in the descriptive mode that we can observe some considerable use of the word, i.e. when simply using it together with a modifier to say something about what the *land* 'is like.' This situation is what we should expect from a word in the semantic field of *country/nation/land* that shows a certain amount of resistance to personification.

Land *with human companions*
Let us now look at the classification of *land* ('political') based upon the presence of a human companion. Here are examples of such cases in, respectively, the descriptive, agentive and patientive mode (added italics to human companion):

… the native of a *Christian* land … (descriptive; Brontës)

… all the land will *rue* it … (agentive; Shakespeare)

… to *greet* my own land with my wishful sight. (patientive; Shakespeare)

Not all instances are as clear-cut as these, so the following table, just like the previous ones, should be interpreted with some caution.

Table 4. Land ('political') with human companions

	column 1	column 2	column 3	column 4	column 5	column 6
		land polit.	*land* polit.	*land* polit.	% col3/col2	% col4/col3
	tot tokens	tot	de+ag+pa	human		
Shakesp.	958,594	95	75	46	79	61
Defoe	467,381	11	7	0	64	0
Swift	144,665	10	6	0	60	0
Richardson	652,609	10	0	0	0	0
Austen	834,828	6	3	0	50	0
Brontës	1,102,698	55	49	9	89	18
Eliot	1,740,411	45	34	5	76	15
Corelli	1,739,498	152	117	34	77	29
Woolf	1,186,086	40	29	3	73	10

Legend: Total sample sizes; total number of land ('political'); total number of land ('political') in descriptive/agentive/patientive mode; total number of land ('political') with human companion; percentage column 3 of column 2; percentage column 4 of column 3.

Column 5 of table 4 supplements my previous discussion of table 3, showing that the degree to which *land* ('political') selects descriptive, agentive and patientive companions seems to be rather equal between authors' samples (except for Richardson, who has no such examples at all). In column 6, the human dimension is added. Apparently, Shakespeare is very much in the lead when it comes to using *land* ('political') together with human companions, Corelli being the runner-up. This state of affairs becomes even more emphatic if we relate *land* ('political') human (i.e. column 4) to total sample sizes (column 1). Shakespeare's total sample is only just over half the size of Corelli's, but has more instances of *land* ('political') with human-related companions. The remaining authors are very far behind in this respect. I therefore choose to concentrate on Shakespeare and Corelli in my following discussion.

But let me first give a couple of pertinent examples selected from some of the remaining authors' samples with few instances of *land* ('political'): In the Woolf sample, we find "this dear, dear land" as well as "that barbarous land," both being examples of personification of *land* ('political'), as are Eliot's "the land of sacred oaths" and "a hungry land." We have already noted "a Christian land" in the Brontë sample,

which could be supplemented by another phrase from the same sample, in the same general semantic field: "this land of sin and sorrow." All of these examples are in the descriptive mode, and, as has already been stated, that is indeed where we encounter most instances of *land* ('political') in general in the present material. So we see here that even among authors whose use of *land* ('political') is very limited, the word apparently does invite a certain degree of personification.

5. Zooming in on Corelli
5.1. Land *('political') in the Corelli sample*
In my previous paper on *country* and *nation* (Mobärg 2016), I paid special attention to the Corelli sample, because, in addition to being the second largest sample in the material, it also displayed the most lavish use of *nation* relative to *country*, the relationship between those two words being my chief concern in that paper. This now enables me to carry out a fairly thorough comparison between the words *country*, *nation* and *land* ('political') based on the Corelli sample. Let us begin by looking at the basic statistics.

Table 5. Number of occurrences of *country*, *nation* and *land* per category of companionship in the Corelli sample. The total number (tokens) of *country*, *nation* and *land* in the Corelli sample is given far right

	Descriptive	Agentive	Patientive	Total D/A/P*	Corelli tot
Country	32	24	20	76	405
Nation	32	67	45	144	217
Land	99	6	12	117	324

*) Descriptive/Agentive/Patientive

The first thing to be observed here is the difference in the overall degrees to which the three words appear in companionship settings. It is clearly more common for *nation* to appear in these settings (144 out of 217 total instances, 66%; compared to 117 out of 324, 36 %, for *land*; and only 76 out of 405, 19 %, for *country*). Looking at the differences between the individual companionship settings, there is a particularly strong tendency for *nation* to be part of agentive companionships; and an even stronger tendency for *land* to be part of descriptive companionships. On the other

hand, *land* does not seem to invite either agentive or patientive companionships to any high degree. In other words, *nation* in Corelli is a word particularly likely to 'do things,' whereas *land* on the contrary is unlikely to 'do things,' but quite likely to be expressed as 'being in a certain way.' *Country* appears to be a halfway house, in being fairly equally committed to all three companionships, 'being in a certain way,' 'doing things' and 'having things done to it.' As for *nation* and *land*, this state of affairs very much reflects the original meanings of the words, *nation* ultimately deriving from the Latin word with the eminently human meaning 'to be born,'[10] *land*, as we have seen, originally meaning 'solid ground.'

5.2. Corelli's land *compared to her country and nation*

So what differences can be seen between the companions selected by *land*, as compared to *country* and *nation*? A way of broaching that issue is to begin at the other end, by looking at similarities of selection. The agentive mode has virtually nothing to offer, since *land* was only used very few times in that mode, and, when it was, with not very pertinent companions. Somewhat more can be found in the patientive mode. The following verbs are shared by *land* and *country*, forming the patientive mode: *benefit, leave, love, rule*. The verb *love* is also shared by *nation*, making it the only verb selected by all three target words in the patientive mode. These four verbs all invite human direct objects, although *leave* is less committed in that respect, so *land* ('political') and *country* ('political') might, according to this kind of combinatory analysis, be seen as equally prone to adopt a human guise in patientive mode. This is not a statistically based statement—numbers are too small for that—but a statement of meaning potential suggested by the evidence.

  Only a handful of verbs used patientively in the Corelli sample are uniquely used with *land* ('political'): *cast (the blight on), possess, light (with ... desire), remember, darken*. This may certainly be incidental, but it is noticeable that these verbs—or verbal phrases—all seem to go naturally together with nouns denoting some aspect of physical reality, although *remember* may be more generally applicable. Thus, *land*, in the

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[10] Kjellmer (1973) includes *nation* among Middle English words for 'people.'

light of this type of analysis, seems to retain some of its physical concreteness also when used in a 'political' sense.

The descriptive mode, as we have seen, is very dominant in connection with *land* ('political'), one particular type of companion being clearly favoured by this word: post-modification by means of an *of*-phrase "stating one of its [the land's] prominent characteristics" (OED *land*). About a quarter of the instances of descriptive mode in the Corelli sample is made up of such formulaic *of*-phrases, e.g. "land of song," "land of shadows," "land of awful mysteries," meaning 'land characterised by ….' We do find the odd example in Corelli of the same type of companion with *country* and *nation*, e.g. "country of my birth" (with a different, more specific meaning than the previous examples), "nation of shopkeepers,"[11] but nowhere as numerously as with *land*. This is a good example of what appears to be characteristic of the use of *land* ('political') also in present-day English: that the word mainly occurs in fairly fixed collocations, and is thus used less productively than *country*.

There is no descriptive companion shared between all the three words, *country*, *nation* and *land* in the Corelli sample, but *land* shares some companions with either of the other two. *Country* and *land* ('political') can both be *old*, *far*, *far-off*, *native*, *foreign* and *fair*. *Nation* and *land* ('political') can be *mighty* and *happy*; and can, unlike *country*, be preceded by a nationality adjective: *the French nation*; *all the wild Norwegian land.*

There are just under twenty companions that are used together with *land* ('political'), without being shared by either *country* or *nation*. Two of them make up well-established idioms that typically have a restricted scope of reference: *holy* and *promised* [land]. These phrases tend to be used as names and are often capitalised, but they can also be used as regular noun phrases (sometimes drawing on the idiomatic meaning), as in this example from Corelli: "… the dream of joy which shone before me like the mirage of a promised land …." Six of the companions only used together with *land* ('political') clearly emphasise the external, physical aspect of the word: *infinite*, *distant*, *sunny*, *ocean-girdled*, *eastern*, *southern*; whereas ten of them seem to regard *land* through a human filter, either through direct personification: *silent*, *Christian*; or by indicating feelings than humans might have towards *land*: *lovely*, *lost*,

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[11] A quotation referring to England, often attributed to Napoleon.

strange, *famous for*, *mystic*, *terrible*, *magic*, *enchanted*. Some of these words have very obvious stylistic connotations, indirectly reflected in the way OALD comments on *land* ('political') for the benefit of learners of English: "(*literary*) used to refer to a country or region in an emotional or imaginative way."

6. Zooming in on Shakespeare
6.1 Land *('political') in Shakespeare*
We have already seen (table 2) that Shakespeare's use of *land* (in all senses) in absolute numbers is second only to that of Eliot and Corelli. However, in relation to sample sizes, Shakespeare uses *land* clearly more frequently than do Eliot and Corelli. Shakespeare also uses *land* (in all senses) more frequently than *country* (see table 1). However, only a third of Shakespeare's *land* displays the meaning under scrutiny here, viz. the 'political' meaning. There are other authors' samples with a higher proportion of *land* ('political': Richardson, the Brontës), but their use is much smaller than Shakespeare's in absolute terms. Furthermore, Shakespeare has the clearly highest proportion of human-related *land* ('political'; see table 4).

6.2. Where do we find Shakespeare's land*?*
Looking at how the word *land* ('political') is distributed across Shakespeare's works, one tendency is particularly conspicuous, viz. the heavy concentration of the word in the history plays. Out of a total of 95 instances of *land* ('political') in the Shakespeare sample, as many as 81 can be found in the history plays. Moreover, the word occurs in nine out of ten history plays, as compared to five out of 17 comedies and romances and four out of eight tragedies.[12]

6.3. Shakespeare: land *'political' in agentive mode*
Even though the agentive mode is the mode to be employed the least also by Shakespeare, he employs it considerably more than the other authors in the sample (most of them do not employ it at all, or very little; see

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[12] Two tragedies, *Coriolanus* and *Titus Andronicus*, are missing from the sample.

table 3). There are all together eleven instances of agentive mode in Shakespeare, ten of which are particularly clear, in having verbs as companions: "All the land knows that"; "your blust'ring land"; "this revolting land"[13]; "a bleeding land"; "this bewailing land"; "this declining land"; "our fainting land"; "the land is burning"; "land gasping for life"; "all the land will rue it." The remaining one is a noun phrase that can be paraphrased agentively as deriving from 'the land grieves.' It should be noticed that all eleven instances of the agentive mode in Shakespeare (with the exception of "the land is burning" and possibly also "this declining land") are clearly human-related, indeed personifications. It is also obvious that there is a strong negative bias in Shakespeare's agentive use of *land* ('political'): 'bleeding,' 'burning,' 'fainting,' etc.

6.4. Shakespeare: land *'political' in patientive mode, compared with the Brontës and Corelli*

It is in the patientive mode that Shakespeare's use of *land* stands out the most, having about twice as many instances as runners-up Brontë and Corelli, in spite of their respective total samples being larger than Shakespeare's. Since these three authors' samples show the greatest use of *land* ('political') in a patientive mode, it might be interesting to compare them in some detail in that particular respect. Here follow alphabetical lists of patientive-forming companions for the three authors' samples. The reader is reminded that, in addition to the most straightforward case, verbs (taking direct object, e.g. 'love the land'), there are also cases with other types of structures that have been paraphrased as verb plus object, as this is not a study of the syntax, but rather the meaning, of *land*.

> Brontës: *conquer, go through, king-ridden, leave, long for, love, priest-ridden, reach, rule, see, sigh over, stray to, wander from … to …*

> Corelli: *benefit, cast the blight on, darken, light … with desire, leave, love, possess, remember, rule*

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[13] *Revolting* here has a purely verb-based meaning (= 'rebelling,' RS: 825), rather than the adjectival meaning (= 'horrible' etc.) typical of present-day English.

> Shakespeare: *bestride, bless, coop from, death follows to …, deny … service, enrich, envy, escape, fill … with, fly* ('flee from'), *frown upon, gloze* ('interpret' RS: 937), *greet, infect, invade, love, make stride upon, own* (i.e. various phrases paraphrased as the verb 'own'*), possess, promise blessings on, protect, purge, rule, teach, trouble, weed, woe to*

Love and *rule* are shared by all the three authors in forming the patientive mode with *land*. Even though it is difficult to draw a rigid line between the verb phrases allowing some degree of physical interpretation of *land* and the ones that more likely are based on a metaphorical use of *land*, meaning 'land as its people,' it seems that Shakespeare's selection of companions, apart from being larger, also exhibits a stronger metaphorical potential than those of the Brontës and Corelli. Whereas about half of the Brontë and Corelli samples are just as likely to invite a physical as a human-metaphorical interpretation of *land*, in the Shakespeare sample, a clear majority are unequivocally human-metaphorical (e.g. *greet*, *bless, teach, deny*). A particularly interesting example is "He cannot so precisely *weed this land* / As his misdoubts ['suspicions'] present occasion" from *Henry IV part 2* (italics added),[14] which forms a two-level trope: *Land* is used metonymically, in reference to problems the king has in England, and is in that sense clearly human-related; whereas the verb *weed* is used metaphorically, but in a way that fits the physical meaning of *land*.

6.5. *Shakespeare:* land *'political' in descriptive mode*
Here follows an alphabetical list of the companions (excluding some semantically less salient ones, such as *thy*, *our*) that Shakespeare uses together with *land* ('political') to form the descriptive mode (typically by pre- or postmodification):

> *at large, Christian, dear, duteous, fair, fairy(-), famous, fleshly, glorious* (paraphrased from NP's with 'glory'), *great, guilty of, Holy, less happier,[15] like an offensive wife, noiseless, remote, Salique,[16] woeful*

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[14] Act IV sc. I, l. 203

[15] An example from *Richard II* (II.I.49) of a double comparative that is apparently contradictory (Brook 1976: 118).

[16] 'Salique': "referring to a Frankish tribe that lived on the river Sala, the ancient name for one of the mouths of the Rhine" (RS: 937).

More than half of these companions are potentially human-related and of those, there are several (e.g. 'Christian,' 'fleshly,' 'guilty of,' 'like an offensive wife') that are eminently human-related. There is also a strong emotional component among these words, which again tallies with the modern usage information on *land* quoted from OALD at the end of the Corelli section above.

6.6. Comparing country *('political'),* nation *and* land *('political') in Shakespeare*

The total number of *country* in the Shakespeare sample is 153. Out of those, about one fifth represents *country* for 'countryside,' and similar meanings, leaving some 120 instances of *country* in a 'political' sense, i.e. the 'territory of a nation' etc., which is the meaning of interest here.

Nation is used 38 times in the Shakespeare sample. It is possible to discern certain variations of meaning in the word (see Mobärg 2016: 67ff), but they will not be emphasised in the present context.

As we have already noted, *land* ('political') occurs 95 times in Shakespeare.

Table 6. Approx. number of instances of *country* ('political'), *land* ('political') and *nation* in the Shakespeare sample in three categories of plays

	country polit.	*land polit.*	*nation*	*words total*
Comedies/Romances	≈35 (90)	≈10 (26)	≈12 (31)	389,000
Tragedies	≈33 (161)	≈5 (24)	≈8 (39)	205,000
History plays	≈50 (188)	≈80 (301)	≈18 (68)	266,000
Total	≈120 (140)	≈95 (110)	≈38 (44)	860,000

The rightmost column gives the total number (rounded off) of words in each category. Figures in brackets represent the frequency of the words (per category; calculated per million words).

In table 6, we can see how the three target words are distributed across the three categories of plays. A similar pattern is repeated in all three categories, the strongest tendency being that the highest numbers of the three target words can be found in the history plays. This tendency is

emphasised when looking at the frequency (301/million) of *land* ('political'), which stands out remarkably compared with all other frequencies in table 6. So whereas *country* ('political') and *nation* display frequencies that are fairly close to the total frequencies, meaning that the words are distributed reasonably equally across the three categories of plays, *land* ('political') is strongly concentrated to the history plays.

Let us now see how the three target words behave in terms of the companions they select.

Table 7. Number of occurrences of *country* ('political'), *nation* and *land* ('political') per category of companionship in the Shakespeare sample[17]

	Descriptive	Agentive	Patientive	Tot D/A/P*	Shake. tot
Country pol.	≈8 (7)	≈10 (8)	≈36 (30)	≈54 (45)	≈120
Nation	≈8 (21)	≈7 (18)	≈4 (11)	≈19 (50)	≈38
Land pol.	≈31 (33)	≈11 (12)	≈32 (34)	≈76 (80)	≈95

*) descriptive/agentive/patientive
(The total numbers (tokens) of *country* ('political'), *nation* and *land* ('political') in the Shakespeare sample is given in the rightmost column. Numbers in brackets are percentages of the total numbers.)

Shakespeare's total use of *country* ('political') is somewhat greater than his total use of *land* ('political'), but the difference is not remarkably great (120 vs. 95 instances). However, when *land* is being used, it attracts companions to a much higher degree than does *country* (80 vs. 45 % of total instances). It is in the descriptive mode that we find a particularly strong relative dominance of *land*, i.e. noun phrases where *land* is pre- or post-modified (see list of companions at the beginning of section 6.5 above). In a majority of cases, *land* in descriptive mode is used with a positive companion, such as: "this great land," "this dear dear land," but that particular statistic is skewed by the repeated use of

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[17] Weak companions, such as "her country," "all the land" have been discarded from the analysis; as have genitive forms and *of* constructions such as "my country's X," "of my country" In some instances, genitives and *of* constructions might be paraphrased as agentives ('my country has X,' etc.), but because of the great variation, I decided to discard them all. This is not a self-evident choice. A more fine-grained analysis might be able to accommodate this variation more effectively.

name-like phrases such as "fairy land" and "Holy Land," and so cannot be drawn upon for far-reaching interpretations. Post-modification by means of an *of*-phrase does occur ("This land of such dear souls") but is nowhere as frequent as was the case in the Corelli sample.

Here follows, for comparison, a list of salient companions (all pre-modifiers) forming descriptive mode with *country* ('political'):

> *cheapest, fatal, fearful, poor [multiple use]*

All of these are negative in meaning, and a couple may be human-related, but the general scarcity of instances allows no certain interpretation in these respects. There is no example of *country* ('political') post-modified by an *of*-phrase. The comparison between *country* and *land* in descriptive mode therefore yields only a clear difference in volume, *land* being more likely to occur in descriptive mode, whereas the selection of companions does not offer any basis for distinguishing the two words.

It is in the agentive and patientive modes that personifications are most likely to occur, which makes them especially interesting for this discussion. In terms of numbers, *country* ('political') and *land* ('political') in these modes are very equal in the Shakespeare sample, and not too much should be made of the higher frequencies for *land* in this respect; numbers are small, particularly in the agentive mode.

Here follow lists of agentive- and patientive-forming companions of *country* ('political'). To facilitate comparison, the corresponding lists for *land*, originally presented in sections 6.3 and 6.4 above, have also been included here, in smaller print:

> Agentive companions with *country* (underlined): *bleed, poor country; forgive me, country; How will the country ... misthink* ['think ill of'] *the King; our country sinks beneath the yoke; suffering country; ... whom their o'er-cloyed country vomits forth; the worthiest sir that ever country call'd his*

> [Agentive companions with *land*: "this bewailing land," "a bleeding land," "your blust'ring land," "the land is burning," "this declining land," "our fainting land," "land gasping for life," 'land grieves' /paraphrase/ "All the land knows that," "this revolting land," "all the land will rue it"]

> Patientive companions with *country* (verbs or verbal paraphrases only): *be bitter to, become* ['suit'], *conquer, do sth for, do ... good, do ... loss, ease ... of, enjoy, feed, fight for, free, give ... liberty, govern, know, lay* ['prepare'], *live in, look on, love, please, pull ... down, purge, quit, run from, sack, see, seek, skirr ... round* ['run swiftly'], *waste*

[Patientive companions with *land*: *bestride, bless, coop from, death follows to ..., deny ... service, enrich, envy, escape, fill ... with, fly* ('flee from'), *frown upon, gloze* ('interpret' RS: 937), *greet, infect, invade, love, make stride upon, own* (i.e. various phrases paraphrased as the verb 'own'), *possess, promise blessings on, protect, purge, rule, teach, trouble, weed, woe to*.]

Only very few companions are shared between *country* and *land*. In agentive mode, we find *bleed*, a good example of personification, and in patientive mode, *love* and *purge*, both typically used with human agents. As for other kinds of similarities, we note that in agentive mode, both *land* and *country* seem to select a majority of companions with a negative meaning—the land 'grieves' and the country 'suffers'—but only very few companions with a positive meaning. Again, because of small numbers, caution should be observed when interpreting this. In patientive mode, the situation is more equal, with *land* and *country* using about the same proportion of positive and negative (and neutral) companions. So we find 'bless the land' and 'give the country liberty,' as well as 'deny the land service' and 'do our country loss.'

Nation is used much less frequently than *country* ('political') and *land* ('political). There are all together 38 instances in the Shakespeare sample, 19 of which are used together with companions. As should be expected, companions with *nation* are often human-related. In Shakespeare a nation can be: *impudent, gentle, sacred, curious, miserable, lordly, fickle, wavering, apish*; it can *boast*, and it can be *scorned*. There is clearly a negative bias in this selection, which can be traced back to the dramatic context, but I choose not to go any further in that direction, since instances are few, and *nation* is not my main focus in this paper.

7. Discussion

The focus of this excursion has been the noun *land*. We noted early on that the original meaning of this native word refers to solid ground, a meaning that is very much still in existence, indeed dominant, in present-day English. An analysis of two small random samples (100 items in each) of *land* in the British National Corpus (= present-day English) suggests that an overwhelming majority of instances (in the area of 90 %) represent the 'physical' or 'concrete' meaning of the word. Only a handful of these BNC instances unequivocally have a 'political'

meaning: "a land fit for heroes,"[18] "the law of the land,"[19] "a prophet is without honour in his own land,"[20] "two of the greatest powers in the land," "throughout the land," "Israel is a tiny land forced to fight," "CCG has a strong presence in its native land" [= Scotland],"to a strange land," "a great war in another land," and the oft-quoted "land of hope and glory." Some of these examples are well-known quotations or fixed expressions, and most of them undoubtedly carry a sense of high rhetorical, partly obsolete, style, principally triggered by the word *land*, a style which from a present-day perspective might feel dated, or at least very restricted in its application. But, as we have seen, in the works of Victorian best-seller writer Marie Corelli, who—although all but forgotten now—was extremely popular in her day, this use of *land* abounds. If the Victorians—often undeservedly—suffer from a less than entirely good reputation in the eyes of later observers and critics, this can to some considerable extent be attributed to their style: "sentimental," "melodramatic," "florid," "effect-seeking," are words often associated with them (cf Frykman 1980: 9), and Corelli is certainly a star representative of such style; so much so that even at the height of her popularity, she was frowned upon by contemporary critics (see Corelli homepage). So even if the good Anglo-Saxon word *land* in itself does not carry such meaning, its association with the Victorians might have added connotations that make it stylistically marked when used in an abstract, 'political' sense.

With Shakespeare, the situation is different. We must assume that for him, the word *land* still retained more of its unmarked meaning, obviously in its physical sense, which is represented by about two thirds of his use of the word, but also in the more abstract, 'political' sense. In his time, the competing word, *country*, had been in the language for some three hundred years, and would have been well integrated by then. But it still kept its character as a French loan word, for instance in

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[18] A pseudo-quotation from a speech by David Lloyd George in 1918. According to *Chambers Dictionary of Quotations*, he actually used the word "country," but the wording has apparently been embellished in later renditions of the quotation.

[19] A translation of Lat. *lex terrae*, a legal term that goes back to the Magna Carta (13th century). The alliterative English translation is a fixed expression.

[20] Another pseudo-quotation, this time from the Bible (St Matthew 13:57). Both Tyndale and KJV give "country" for the original Greek *Πατρίς* ('patrís').

allowing stress also on the second syllable in poetry,[21] a variant form attested as late as in Byron (OED *country*). The fact that *country* also invited a well-known bawdy pun in *Hamlet* ("country matters," Act III Sc 2; cf Mobärg 2016: 70), might suggest that the word still had some otherness about it—word play based on core vocabulary words would seem less likely.

But a very strong contributing reason why Shakespeare uses *land* in the abstract, 'political' sense almost as much as he uses *country* in the same sense (see table 6) is probably the convenience and suitability of the word in a bound metrical format. We know that Shakespeare did not slavishly adhere to metrical requirements (McDonald 2003: 83ff), but also that he was sometimes prepared to make radical choices to fit the verse, e.g. turning *vast* into "vasty" (Crystal 2003: 75). Thus, it would certainly not be beyond him to choose between near synonyms with a different number of syllables for the same reason. *Land* is monosyllabic, which generally makes it easy to handle, and as a noun, together with a definite or indefinite article, it forms an iamb, which is the primary building-block in blank verse, the verse of most of Shakespeare's dramatic writing. In addition, *land* is a very sonorous word, consisting solely of voiced sounds, including the sonorants [l] and [n]. We might add, as an aside, that for a poet using end rhymes, it has an extremely good rhyming potential, not least in comparison with the competitor *country*, which is very much void of such potential (Fergusson 1985: 125, 171, 46). Now, blank verse is unrhymed, so that particular argument does not apply to most of Shakespeare's work. Checking his sonnets, we find one instance of *land* used as an end rhyme: "For nimble thought can jump both sea and land,"[22] an example of the 'physical' meaning of the word. Of course, poets do not select words, including rhyming words, just on the basis of their phonetic properties; meaning and associations are more important, and in love poems like Shakespeare's sonnets, we might not expect a word like *land*, however sonorous it may be.[23]

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[21] Around the year 1400, Chaucer writes: "His fader was a man ful **free**, // And lord he was of that con**tree**" (*The Canterbury Tales*, "Sir Thopas," l. 10–11 [Chaucer 1974: 164])

[22] Sonnet 44.

[23] A quick check of a relatively substantial poetry anthology (Leeson 1980) shows that out of the 130 poets included, 20 use *land* as an end rhyme: Chaucer, Ralegh, Anonymous (x2), Dryden (x2), Swift, Gay, Pope, S. Johnson (x3), Gray

One of the most salient findings in the Shakespeare sample was the way *land* ('political') often figured with human-related companions; and the fact that these companions were often emotionally loaded. In comparison to *country* ('political'), *land* occurred more frequently with companions generally, but the limited number of instances is not enough to determine a clear difference in meaning between the words. Again, the fact that *land* is metrically handier than *country* might be part of the explanation why it attracts companions more frequently. The human and emotional aspect of the companions, on the other hand, is very certainly a function of Shakespeare's style. Personification is a much-discussed stylistic phenomenon in Shakespeare. Spurgeon (1935: 246ff) shows how in *King John*, the two "protagonists France and England [i.e. *countries* or *lands*], [and] the fate that befalls them … , the emotions and qualities called into play by the clash of their contending desires … are seen … as *persons*," and she lists a multitude of adjectives (here: 'descriptive companions') and verbs (here 'agentive' and 'patientive companions') to illustrate her point. It would have been technically possible to extend this investigation to also look into individual plays, where there are sure to be differences in the use of *land*, depending on the context. That is beyond the scope of this study, but brings me to my final point.

As we have seen, there is a remarkably strong tendency for *land* ('political') to occur in Shakespeare's history plays, something which cannot be ascribed to the form or stylistic potential of the word, but must be understood in terms of its meaning. The history plays were "the vehicle by which the young Shakespeare first made his mark as a playwright" (Rackin 2003: 193). Writing in that genre was a wise choice in order to become established on the London stage at that time, because history was a popular theme not only in drama, but also in books, during the last couple of decades of the sixteenth century. The celebration of English history in works adapted to fit the purpose was a way for the monarchs of the new Tudor dynasty to "legitimate their rather dubious claim to the throne" and to "define an emergent nation-state," and so the period was characterised by a "sentimental veneration" of the past

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(x2), Goldsmith (x4), Cowper, Blake, Coleridge (x3), Shelley, Tennyson, Browning (x2), Arnold, Brooke, Empson, D. Thomas, all together 31 instances, 12 of which represent the 'physical' meaning of the word, 16 the 'political' meaning, and 3 the fixed expression "holy land."

(Rackin 2003:194ff) as well as exaggerated patriotism, even chauvinism (Frykman 1986: 131ff). It is in such a situation that the word *land* ('political'), with all its formal and stylistic advantages, becomes especially useful also because of what it stands for.

There can be no doubt that Shakespeare was aware of *land* being an Anglo-Saxon word that would contribute to making his history plays strike the right chords in the prevailing situation. But the most important aspect of the word is maybe not its origin, but the fact that it accommodates two meanings in one and the same package: the concrete meaning of the physical environment that people can see, love and long for; and the abstract meaning of the state and its government.

So are we any the wiser for all of this? Has the meaning of the noun *land* become clearer? I hope so. A dictionary definition may suffice a long way to understand a word, but it is in the way a word is conditioned in actual use that its connotations are shown. But finding out about that requires a method. The method used and further developed here has been to look at frequencies and to identify "companions" that function together with the target word chosen, in order to obtain a fuller understanding of the target word, and to facilitate comparison between different target words with similar meanings.

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