13 International Conference on Middle English

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Universidad de Málaga 8 - 10 May 2024

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Ana Mondéjar-Pérez

PLENARY TALKS

The Twain Shall Meet: Rethinking the Relationship between 'Old' and 'Middle' English Mark Faulkner Trinity College Dublin

We have grammars of Old English, we have grammars of Middle English; we have dictionaries of Old English, we have dictionaries of Middle English; we teach courses on Old English, we teach courses on Middle English; and, dare one say it, we have conferences on Old English, conferences on Middle English.

This partitioning is the first thousand years of English's history is of long standing, but predicated on a number of self-enforcing myths. For instance, when the disciplines of literary and linguistic history were crystalising in the ninteteenth century, nationalist ideas that inextricably linked language with nation coalesced with the myth of the Norman Yoke to encourage a belief that the Norman Conquest must also have been a linguistic conquest, with English necessarily displaced. In this view, nothing could have been written in English in the twelfth century, a prejudice that discouraged scholars from seeking out texts that might have been and forced them to assign those that could be to an earlier or later date and dismiss those that couldn't be thus brushed aside as sui generis. Looking for nothing meant nothing was found, providing evidence that nothing had been written in the twelfth century. The vacant twelfth century also justified delineating Old and Middle English as separate varieties, by sidelining the texts that might have problematised such a clearcut distinction.

This paper revisits the twelfth century from the perspective of both literary history and historical linguistics, to explore the extent to which a periodisation into 'Old' and 'Middle' English is sustainable today. It investigates this question from several angles: (1) quantitatively, using metadata about the sites and personnel for the production and dissemination of English-language texts assembled as part of the Searobend project (Faulkner, O'Sullivan, Curran, McKenna) and through the examination of large datasets for the major linguistic changes held to demark 'Old' and 'Middle' English (e. g. Faulkner 2020); (2) qualitatively, through tracing the history of particular kinds of writing at particular centres in the long twelfth century (Faulkner 2022, forthcoming) and through the examination of particular features of those texts' language.

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Laing, Margaret. 2000. "Never the twain shall meet» early Middle English — the east west divide. In I. Taavitsainen, et al (eds.), Placing Middle English in Context. Berlin: Mouton. 97-124.

The study of scribal formulas in Middle English manuscripts: or, Linguistics vindicated and Literature abashed

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Composed in either doggerel Latin or (rarely) some European vernacular, the formulaic inscriptions that (post-)medieval scribes penned by the thousand in the colophons of chronicles, glossaries, cookery books, medical tracts, legal digests or mystic poems has been the province of literary scholars at least since the times of Thomas Warton and Paulin Paris. A trove of witty sentences, ranging from the philosophical to the bawdy and from the elegiac to the festive, it is hardly surprising that these ditties have caught the imagination of many academics working with manuscripts. A number of inferences were soon made as to the actual physical and mental state of the copyist while (s)he selected a formula and, whenever the inscription granted it, an interest sprang on the life particulars of the person who decided to jot down the jingle on a book page. But are those rhyming inscriptions really trustworthy?

In the first part of this talk I will demonstrate some of the problems caused by such an impressionistic approach. I will use for the purpose a jingle that scholars have long assumed to have medieval English origins because it is very frequently encountered in manuscripts from that country. In the second part of the talk a new approach will be presented that applies a time-honoured and reliable linguistic tool to the same medieval inscription, so as to prove ultimately that most, if not all, scholarly preconceptions about these sentences should better be discarded. Through this new methodology, moreover, the history of any popular scribal ditty can be described with a degree of precision that was surely impossible heretofore, allowing to build data-driven hypotheses that can help pinpoint the birth of any given formula in time and space and clarify the way it spread through Europe.

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T/V variation in Middle English versions of "The Knight and the Loathly Lady"

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The long history of English pronominal terms of address is that from the universal use of the singular form thou in the Old English and Early Middle English period, irrespective of social standing, age, gender, level of formality or intimacy, to the equally universal use of the plural (and historically oblique) form you in Modern English (Finkenstaedt 1963; Blake 1992; Burnley 2003; Bergs 2004; Jucker 2020). The emergence of the plural pronoun in singular contexts in the second half of the thirteenth century is considered by many to have been triggered by contact with French (Mustanoja 1960; Finkenstaedt 1963; Heine & Kuteva 2009). Unlike English, French has retained the distinction between polite vous and familiar tu, but in the Middle Ages the distribution of the two pronominal options in both languages was far from stable (Blake 1992). Furthermore, it has been argued that in Middle English the system of pronoun was negotiated and even renegotiated by interlocutors in the course of a single conversation (Mazzon 2000, 2009, 2010), and their interactional status was decisive for the choice of that pronoun (Jucker 2006, 2014, 2020).

This pronominal system has been extensively documented in studies based primarily on Chaucer's poetry, which has naturally raised the question of its validity in prose, as well as in other Middle English authors. The imbalance has partly been addressed in Bergs (2004), which uses a database of Middle English correspondence, and in Timofeeva & Kahlas-Tarkka (fc 2025), based on The Book of Margery Kempe. With verse, Mazzon (2009) has extended the scope of address terms enquiries to mystery plays and Jucker (2014) to Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. These studies document a predictable expansion of ye across time and region and a gradual restriction of thou to pragmatically marked contexts. At the same time, into Late Middle English, pronominal switches from ye to thou as well as from thou to ye remain a feature of individual writers, individual texts and individual interactions within texts, to the extent that they have been suggested to "serve dramatic purposes" and to "coincide with turning-points in the narrative" (Jucker 2006: 63).

This plenary talk will explore whether a historical pragmatic approach can indeed illuminate stylistic and narratological analysis, by comparing three versions of "The Knight and the Loathly Lady" story: Chaucer's The Wife of Bath's Tale, Gower's The Tale of Florent, and the anonymous The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle. It is going to demonstrate what dramatic effects can be achieved by pronominal switches and how the protagonists of the three romances can be constructed linguistically through second-person pronouns.

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FULL PAPERS

Lexical Replacement of Norse-derived Terms in the Southern Manuscripts of the Siege of Jerusalem

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Abstract

This presentation aims to illustrate the Norse impact on the Middle English lexis in the poem *Siege of Jerusalem*. The nine extant manuscripts produced between the late 14th and late 15th centuries testify to the attention the poem must have received during the Middle Ages, a popularity that has undoubtedly waned in the present day.

As the original manuscript (which has not survived) was written around 1390 in West Yorkshire, the presence of terms of Scandinavian origin is reflected in the oldest extant copy closest to the original artifact, L (Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 656), as well as in the four manuscripts written in the north, PAVEx (Princeton University Library, MS Taylor Medieval 11; British Library, MS Additional 31042; British Library, MS Cotton Vespasian E.xvi; and Devon Record Office, MS 2507).

Given the limited number of research on this poem, this presentation aims to explore the Scandinavian lexical impact on the *Siege* and the lexical replacements in the nine manuscripts. For this purpose, I use Michael Livingston's edition (2004), which is based on the oldest extant copy (L), to retrieve Scandinavian terms and the Gersum typology to select a representative sample of terms with a higher probability of Norse origin. Furthermore, based on the stemma proposed by Ralph Hanna and David Lawton (2003) and the provenance of each manuscript, this paper also aims to discuss the regional distribution of these Norse-derived terms in Middle English and the scribal attitudes towards and familiarity with these borrowings in Scandinavianised areas and regions where the Scandinavian influence was less far-reaching. Examples such as ME $l\bar{o}t(e$ 'look, glance' (from ON $l\bar{a}t$) or ME *spaklī* 'quickly' (from ON *spakr* 'quick, ready'), which are both attested in the northern manuscripts and replaced with native near synonyms (*loke* 'look' and *spedely* 'quickly', respectively) by southern scribes, are only a minor part of my findings.

Keywords: Middle English; Old Norse; language contact; lexical replacement

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Stance and Voice in the Early Culinary Recipes

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Abstract

It has been generally agreed that medieval culinary recipes are scarce in information. Görlach (2004) calls them incomplete and imprecise, as they lack accurate instructions (Hammond, 1993) or indication of quantities (Carroll 2009, Cruz Cabanillas 2017). This might be accounted for by the fact that the instructions were either written for the cook (Brears, 2008) who did not need to be reminded of such details, or by the cook (Scully, 1995) who wanted to boast about his skills rather than instruct how to prepare a dish. It is argued that despite their brevity, these texts do contain various language markers which indicate the presence and attest to a certain interplay between the author and the reader.

The proposed paper aims at examining various interpersonal strategies employed by the authors, which will reveal the writer's attitude towards the reader and the text. In the discussion we will apply Hyland's (2005) framework for analysing the linguistic resources used by writers. He divided textual interaction features into stance and voice, understanding the former as "a writer's rhetorically expressed attitude to the propositions in a text and voice as his or her attitude to a given community." (2012: 134).

The preliminary research has shown a variety of attitudinal stance markers, such as value-laden lexis or epistemic stance markers, which, for instance, refer to the source of the acquired knowledge. Voice, such as direct reader mentions, seems to be less frequent and restricted to particular collections only. It is expected that a detailed analysis of the strategies employed in the recipes will not only illustrate the writer- and reader-oriented features of the instructions, but it may also shed some light on the role of the medieval cook, be it the role of the writer, reader, or neither.

The corpus selected for the analysis contains over 1,000 medieval recipes from 6 fourteenth-century and 10 fifteenth-century collections.

Keywords: stance; voice; culinary recipe; author; reader

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Magical Realms and Harsh Realities: Exploring Merlin's Birth in the *Prose* Brut

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Abstract

All chronicles known as *Brut* concentrate their narrative on a specific rendition of the legendary history of Britain, originating with the arrival of the Trojan exile Brutus on the island. This narrative, initiated by Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c. 1136), was first adapted by Wace in his *Roman de Brut* (1155), later giving rise to several new interpretations. Among these, the *Prose Brut*, in its Anglo-Norman (c. 1300) and Middle English (c. 1380-1400) variants, assumes a pivotal role in late medieval English historiography.

One of the crucial actors in this depiction of the legendary history of Britain is Merlin. A magician, prophet, and political advisor, he foretells Vortigern's final demise, crucially aids in Uther's success, and orchestrates the magical means resulting in Arthur's birth, thus acting as an active force for the formation of a unified nation.

In Geoffrey's representation, Merlin's birth appears to be mythologically codified, arising from the union between a nun and an ambiguously identified being, possibly an *incubus*. While Geoffrey's initial portrayal introduces doubts about the consensual nature of this union, subsequent versions often embellish the supernatural elements to obscure the discomfort associated with such episodes. Conversely, the *Prose Brut*, characterized by a more pragmatic representation of reality seeking to rationalize the magical aspect of the narrative, minimizes the marvelous elements and recognizes the instance of rape as a social reality in which the victim is not to be blamed.

This paper will delve into an analysis of the episode as depicted in the *Prose Brut*, comparing it with earlier representations, and considering the impact of historical context on narrative choices. The aim is to shed light on the evolving portrayal of Merlin's conception and explore how the *Brut* chronicles address the sensitive issue of rape in contrast to earlier depictions.

Keywords: Arthurian historical narratives; *Prose Brut*; Merlin's conception; gender studies; rape.

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The First Girls in England*

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Abstract

Words for 'boy' and 'girl' are well known to have obscure origins and histories in many languages. The Oxford English Dictionary entry for 'girl' was last revised in 2008, and it was decided that the origin of the word is unknown. The word is certainly first found in Middle English. In this work, we take a yet-unused onomastic approach and point out an unremarked but straightforward fact: prior to the first lexical attestation of gurle about 1300, there are instances of Gurle or Gerle as a byname or surname in records from the counties of Suffolk and Norfolk in eastern England (and only here), with the first in 1209. There are about a dozen examples. This allows us to argue that there is a strong possibility that the word has been introduced into English from a continental language such as Dutch, Frisian, Low German, or Norman-French. We consider two possible etymologies in continental Germanic, and suggest that the word may have been transmitted to England through North Sea trading contacts. Such ideas would be consistent with the recent dialectal distribution of 'girl' (as opposed to 'wench', 'lass', 'maid', etc.) in eastern and central England. Although a definite origin cannot be established, this work aims to show that important anthroponymic data relevant to 'girl' has previously been ignored, and new directions for research are thus opened up.

- * This talk is based on my published papers:
- Briggs, Keith. "The First Girls in England." Notes and Queries 67, no. 2 (2020): 200-202.
- Briggs, Keith. "The Etymology of 'Girl': Two More Ideas." *Notes and Queries* 68, no. 1 (2021): 1-4.

Keywords: anthroponyms; etymology; 'girl'

In Support of the Continuity between the Early and Middle Ages Homiletic Tradition: The Linguistic Perspective

Isabella Buniyatova Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University

Abstract

The focus of the study is to validate the assumptions as to the longevity of the Old English homiletic tradition in the Middle English texts. The groundbreaking book *Sermon* edited by B.M. Kienzle (2000) has largely inspired my intention to revisit the problem from the linguistic point of view. In this paper, we extend the continuity problem through exploring the linguistic strategies of sermon texts aimed to achieve the interaction between the preacher and the target audience, in particular, structural elements they employ to provide the solidarity between the participants of the discursive event. The type of constructions given in chronological order will be presented for the discussion: *Is eac monnum to witenne... or Bidde we nu be holigost* The material we have designated to prove our point has been retrieved from the Helsinki Corpus of English Texts. It encompasses the texts from the two collection of homilies (three from each): twelfth century homilies found in MS. Bodley 343, and Trinity Homilies in MS 335 (B.14.52) produced in the early thirteenth century.

The prior considerations based on a thorough analysis of empirical evidence have proved to be consistent with Kienzle's stance hence ascertaining the continuity trend in the development of the English language. Linguistically, it is confirmed by a set of common traits descending from the English epic poetry and Alfredian prose, which include formulaic opening addresses, repetitive employment of tautological or contrastive pairings, alliterations, etc. Also notwithstanding the changes in the early Middle English period, the cases of the first-person plural imperatives, which are typical of the exhortation context in the earlier homiletic preaching, have been attested in the thirteenth century.

Keywords: Middle English; Old English; homiletic; continuity; linguistic

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Translation Strategies in the Middle English Capsula eburnea

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Abstract

My study focuses on analysing some translation strategies of the Middle English *Capsula eburnea*, a pseudo-Hippocratic prognostic text translated from Latin. To date, the *corpus* consists of eight witnesses of two different traditions. In all the Middle English versions, swellings, cysts, and other rashes are considered the main symptoms of death. The terms of comparison used to describe them are often linked to the Mediterranean area's culture and style of life, as the *Capsula eburnea* was written in Greek between the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., presumably in Alexandria, in Egypt. Consequently, these comparisons were sometimes differently translated due to the lack of referents in the target language. The Middle English translators employed various techniques to overcome these issues. For example, in the *Secreta Ypocratis* (London, British Library, Ms. Add. 34111, ff. 231-233v), the Latin *musca canina* 'Dexiosoma caninum' was translated into Middle English as *tike* 'tick'. In other cases, the most practical solution was eliminating some details or deleting the comparison.

In my presentation, I will analyse and discuss the most significant examples of these translation strategies to underline the common features of the different versions. This approach also shows how some of the lacunae in Middle English translations may not necessarily be due to corrupt Latin source manuscripts but to the precise choices of the various translators.

Keywords: Translation; Capsula eburnea; Prognostics; Middle English; Medieval medicine

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Language Contact and Intraspeaker Variation in the Recipient Address of Some Late Fifteenth-century English Letters

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Abstract

My presentation will focus on the effects of multilingualism in a series of late fifteenth-century English letters, especially the collection known as the Cely letters (1472-1488) (Hanham 1975; 1985). The Celvs were a merchant family based in London whose members exchanged business and personal letters with their associates (mainly mercers and wool producers) and with dependants working for them at Calais, where Staplers negotiated the sale of their products in the marts of the Low Countries. The majority of the letters are written in monolingual English; however, there is no doubt that they were produced and received in the resilient multilingual context of late fifteenth-century England, where written French still circulated, as well as in the specific multilingual context of business transactions in London, Calais and the Low Countries where oral contacts between English, French and Dutch were the norm (Machan 2009; Häcker 2011; Putter 2016). This means that their authors were sensitive to other languages they were in contact with, and this was often reflected in their writing. In my paper, I will concentrate on multilingual influence in the recipient addresses written at the dorse of letters. A formulaic construction was normally used with this purpose, involving the title, name and sometimes profession of the addressee, together with his or her location. This factual information was framed by an opening preposition and a closing deliverance formula (Rutkowska 2003). Variation in the languages used in this construction obviously depended on the location of the recipients, since it was vital that letters reached them. Thus, dorses written in English, French and, occasionally, Dutch are common. However, they coexist with mixed patterns, combining English and French, and even showing the loan translation of the French set phrases into English. Defective French is also common, hinting at the imperfect bilingual ability of some correspondents. I intend to analyse these patterns of intraspeaker variation in connection with the following factors: (i) the location of the letter writer and his/her addressee, (ii) their respective social position and age, and (iii) the intensity of their contact with the foreign language.

Keywords: Language contact; intraspeaker variation; multilingualism; recipient address; Cely letters

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Cashing-in on Cato: The Readership and Cultural Value of Benedict Burgh's Middle English *Distichs of Cato*

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Abstract

The *Disticha Catonis* (Distichs of Cato) was a popular text throughout the Middle Ages for educating children simultaneously in worldly wisdom and Latin translation. In the late 15th Century, Benedict Burgh – a follower and possible acquaintance of John Lydgate – produced a translation of the *Disticha* into Middle English verse, expanding each two-line Latin distich into seven-line rhyme royal stanzas in the process. Burgh's translation survives in thirty-five manuscript copies, and was printed three times by William Caxton at his Westminster press. This paper is interested in the social value of the translation, asking who its readership was, and why this particular version was appealing enough to warrant copying and repeated printing.

The discussion is based on examination of the surviving manuscript copies (where possible – one was inaccessible and two had to be examined through microfilm imagery), cataloguing user marks and co-occurring texts in anthology and miscellany collections, and evidence from early print copies from Caxton's press. It argues that Burgh's translation was disseminated both through religious networks and the aspiring merchant class, partly due to the work of scribes such as Stephen Dodesham who copied texts for the Carthusians of Sheen Charterhouse, the Bridgettines of associated Syon Abbey, and the lay families who patronised these institutions.

The association of Benedict Burgh with John Lydgate is borne out by the frequent occurrence of Lydgate texts in anthology-style manuscripts, and the possible ties between these authors (or, in some instances, conflation of Burgh with Lydgate) are likely to have contributed to the poem's success. At the same time, the paper argues, Burgh's *Disticha* translation gave the audience of Caxton's press exactly what it wanted – a well-respected text with a long history in education and resultant social cachet, now available in the vernacular for a growing readership of literature in Middle English.

Keywords: Distichs of Cato; Benedict Burgh; John Lydgate; Middle English verse

La3amon's French Lexis: Analyzing Language Contact in Early Middle English

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Abstract

This paper is concerned with French loanwords and lexical assimilation in Early Middle English. Following the Conquest of 1066, England became more drastically characterized as a multilingual society through the inclusion of Anglo-Norman as the language of prestige and the court. Language contact was thus an inextricable factor of late medieval English interaction, and would go on to contribute to the dismantling of the English inflectional system, reshaping of syntax, and shoring up of lexis. Most importantly, for the purposes of this paper, English experienced an unprecedented influx of foreign vocabulary, primarily of French and Latin origin, that occurred in mounting waves. This presentation will examine the initial wave of French lexical influence during the Early Middle English period around the beginning of the thirteenth century. In particular, it will analyze the effects of French language contact using the early thirteenth-century verse chronicle La₃amon's *Brut*. Prior scholarship has noted the *Brut*'s French lexis – but, usually, only to mention how insignificant it is in comparison to the text's overwhelmingly English and decidedly archaic vocabulary.¹

Although comparatively small, the inclusion of such French lexis in a text that is intentionally antiquated makes these loanwords all the more pertinent and noteworthy for further examination. This paper examines a dataset comprised of La3amon's French lexis, and sets forth to answer these questions: Broadly, what can this lexical dataset reveal about French integration and language contact during this period? More specifically, what does it reveal about La3amon as a translator/adaptor and how beholden he was to his French source, Wace's *Roman de Brut*, when incorporating these words? Furthermore, is the chronicle genre/tradition a determiner of certain lexical terms, thereby necessitating the use of French in La3amon's French vocabulary can we determine was already a part of his lexical repertoire, and what does this say generally about the level of French integration underway in the West Midlands of England? The results of this analysis will demonstrate that although the English poet was bound by many of the narrative and generic precepts of his French source, thereby

¹ For example, Daniel Donoghue argues that a more cosmopolitan writer would have been 'tempted' by the French vocabulary from Wace's text, featuring a much greater collection of borrowings than actually appears in Layamon's *Brut*. However, he does not provide an assessment, quantitatively or qualitatively, of these French words, nor does he enumerate the French words used in the works of Layamon's contemporaries which he says feature far more than those found in the *Brut* ('La₃amon's Ambivalence', p. 540). While Thomas J. Harford, in comparing the two extant manuscripts of the English *Brut*, Caligula and Otho, notes that the Otho text is not only a few thousand lines shorter than the Caligula text, but also "lacks many of Caligula's archaisms, and has a higher degree of French loan-words". But here, we see no further elaboration or analysis on the matter ('A Comprehensive Study of Layamon's Brut', p. 1).

dictating some of his French terms, there is a notable number of new loanwords (predicated on his own knowledge) which the decidedly antiquated La₃amon uses to suit his own poetic ends.

Keywords: Loanwords; Language Contact; The Brut

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The Maiden and the Philosopher. Platonism in the Middle English Life of St Katherine.

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Abstract

The life of St Katherine of Alexandria in the *South English Legendary* shows a controversial passage in the debate between the maiden and the fifty philosophers, when she suggests that Plato prophesied the Incarnation (II. 115-120). These lines are quite peculiar and pose a challenge not only to modern interpretation but also to medieval understanding, given the diverse readings offered both in the *South English Legendary*'s different redactions and in other Middle English versions of Katherine's life (e.g. the *Katherine Group*, the *Scottish Legendary*, the legend in MS Auchinleck). No commentary has been provided for the passage so far. The aim of the contribution is to shed light on the sources of these lines, in order to better understand them, and to trace the reception of Plato's work as displayed in the different lives of St Katherine.

The research methodology will encompass three major steps. Firstly, an examination of the principal manuscripts of the *South English Legendary* will be conducted, supplementing the critical texts of the "L" and "A" redactions as per Horstmann's edition and D'Evelyn and Mill's edition with variants from other unedited redactions. Secondly, a search for the sources will involve exploring Latin versions of the legend (e.g. *Legenda aurea* and texts in the *Acta sanctorum*). Finally, a close reading of the other Middle English versions of the life will be undertaken, aiming to map the differences in the respective passages in light of the findings about the sources.

The expected results are a deeper comprehension of the lines, the tracing of actual sources of Platonism in Middle English hagiography and a better understanding of the relation among *South English Legendary* redactions as well as among different Middle English legends and legendaries retelling the story of St Katherine.

Keywords: St Katherine; Middle English; Hagiography; Platonism

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The Pragmatic Force of V1 Negative Constructions in the Early Middle English Homily

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Abstract

The paper focuses on negative constructions of the type NEG V1 pattern in Early Middle English homiletic texts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The early ME grammatical strategy of negation allows for multiple marking (NEG-concord), the common pattern being a bipartite pattern *ne* ... *neg*-word, where the preverbal particle *ne* is reinforced by NEG-elements such as pronouns, adverbs *non/nan* 'no one', *na*, *nafre* 'never', *nohht/naht* 'not'. In this paper a set of texts, which are aimed to be orally delivered in the course of preaching event, will be treated as a 'fossilized' type of discourse. The latter allows for the occasional rearrangement of SOV-pattern to conform to the preacher's communicative intention, NEG V1 being for one. The type of sentential structure with NEG VI conveys foregrounded instruction, admonition, or exhortation, depending on what performative meaning is negotiated, and how the audience might react in certain contexts. Cf.:

(1) EME *Ne beo giuer heorte noht iðreued ne ofdred* – 'Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid' (Trinity Homilies, XX, 11-12).

(2) EME *Ne ondred* he him nænne, for \Box an de nan oder nis mihti3ra \Box onne he, ne fordon him ilic – 'He does not fear anyone, because there is no other mightier than he, nor even equal to him' (Bodley Homilies, IX, lines 23-25).

The suggested methodology to achieve validated results is based on the data from Early Middle English homilies, i.e., Bodley Homilies (twelfth century), and Trinity Homilies (the beginning of the thirteenth century) retrieved from the Helsinki Corpus.

Foregrounded discursive formations NEG V1 are used in order to instruct and warn, and at the structural level reflect the communicative goal of the preacher. We assume that the analyzed constructions testify an interplay between homiletic discourse and grammar in the EME period.

Keywords: negation; Early Middle English; homiletic discourse; foregrounding.

From Contradiction to Affirmation: Yes in Middle English

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Abstract

Early English had two different affirmative response particles, *yea* and *yes*, distributed very much like Modern French *oui* and *si* or Modern German *ja* and *doch*: The former (OE *gea*) was used in replies to positive utterances (1), the latter (OE *gyse*) in replies to negative utterances (2) (Wallage & van der Wurff 2013).

(1) hwæt wyllað hig hyne for godum weorce ofslean? [...] gea, leof (Nic (A) 2.6.6)

(2) eower lareow ne gylt he gafol? [...] gyse, he deð (Mt (WSCp) 17.24)

Around 1600, this distinction was dropped and *yes* became the "ordinary affirmative reply to any question positive or negative" (OED s.v. *yea*, cf. also Culpeper 2018), at least in the standard; several traditional dialects in PDE still preserve the distinction (cf. Howe 2018). A pilot study on the uses of *yea* and *yes* in language teaching manuals from the 1570s to the 1620s (Huber Forthcoming.) suggests that, pragmatically, the generalization of *yes* started in contexts with negative implicatures; in *But is it so late as you say*? - *yes*, for instance, where the answer can be argued to reply to the implicature ('It cannot be so late!') rather than to the proposition.

The origin of this change seems to lie in the ME period, whose distribution of *yes* has, to my knowledge, never been studied. In this paper, therefore, I investigate the ca. 250 instances of *yes* from the *CME*, showing that already in ME, *yes* after positives is no exception, cf. (3).

(3) "[...] Help now!" Quod he, "3is, by my trowthe, I shal." (Chaucer, TC, I.1054)

The attestations will be analysed according to form, pragmatics, and collocations, to see which contexts play a role in the generalization of *yes*, and to investigate whether the hypothesis that this starts with negative implicatures (Huber Forthcoming.) is borne out in the ME data.

Keywords: response particles; polar answers; pragmatics; Middle English; yes and yea

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Translinguistic Communities of Interpretation in the Stanzaic Life of Christ

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Abstract

The late fourteenth-century English *Stanzaic Life of Christ* was probably compiled at St Werburgh's Abbey, Chester. Drawing primarily on Jacobus a Voragine's *Legenda aurea* and Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon*, it follows the Church year in a *compilatio* of Latin-to-vernacular Christological knowledge-control brimming with thematic divisions and citations from Latin authorities. Its commissioning layman wants to understand in English what he cannot access in Latin. He is accordingly instructed to note the rationale behind each teaching and to heed the references to originals, generously quoted in Latin. This coexistence of Latin and English brings a translinguistic community into being: 'lettert men' in the audience able to go back and forth across the Latin-vernacular boundary are interpellated to confirm the verity of renderings to those lacking Latin.

Though the *Stanzaic Life* is energetically compendious in labelling sources, translating them openly and checkably, it also gives itself remarkable latitude in reworking the ultimate *fons et origo*, Scripture. For example, it presents the (non-scriptural) 'Testament of Christ' as authentic biblical speech. Purportedly delivered at the Crucifixion by the Son of God in his own suffering voice, the Testament is cited from 'the Passion' as if 'the Passion' were an actual text. In manipulating the parabiblical, the *Stanzaic Life* edits, here and elsewhere, the re-memorialisation of biblical narrative alongside intelligent preacherly matter. It thereby distinctively shapes not only a community of sources but also a community of Latin and vernacular users newly enabled to wear Scripture as a loose but firmly fastened garment. It also actively reinvests shareable biblical and devotional memory in the routines of the Church year, befitting both personal piety and religious education.

Keywords: Stanzaic Life of Christ; compilation; translation; Bible; life of Christ

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William Caxton and Educational Literature in Late Medieval England. A Reassessment

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Abstract

In his seminal essay on William Caxton, N. W. Blake (1991) provides evidence against the widespread conviction that the printer's activity was subject to the whims of his noble patrons and that he had no interest in printing and publishing classical and humanistic texts for university students; in fact, apart from "treatises on heraldry, hawking, and the game of chess, [...] romances of fabulous knights and legends of more fabulous saints" (Gibbons 1814: 563-4), Blake highlights Caxton's publication of Lorenzo Traversagni's *Nova rhetorica* and its *Epitome* (respectively, in 1479 and 1480) and Pope Sixtus IV's *Sex epistolae* (in 1483), coming, however, to the conclusion that it was not Caxton's, but Traversagni's initiative to have his works published for his students (Blake 1991: 7). This observation marks the end of any investigation of Caxton's role in the educational panorama of his times, which has led to the shared conclusion that his entire activity as a printer was guided by economic speculation (see, among others, Payne 2016).

However, this attitude alone does not explain Caxton's monetary, but also intellectual, investment in the publication of works he himself had translated from French. A number of them, such as *The Book of the Knight of the Tower* (1483), are obviously educational in content and are not ascribable to any alleged act of patronage unlike, for example, Margaret of Burgundy for the *Book of the History of Troy* (1474) or Earl Rivers for the *Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers*.

The aim of this paper is to reassess the role of Caxton in the educational system of late medieval England through a closer investigation of his production and publication of texts that, given their moral and didactic content, were obviously not addressed to university students but, far from delivering mere entertainment, served the edification of his most lucrative and affectionate audience – the gentry.

Keywords: William Caxton; education; print; publication; gentry

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Rare Temporal Subordinators in Middle English: al-sone and al-what

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Abstract

Although temporal conjunctions in the history of English have been the focus of attention of many a scholar, e.g. Pasicki 1987, Molencki 2007, Rissanen 2007a, 2007b and Sorva 2007, to the best of our knowledge there are no studies devoted to little known ME temporal subordinators *al-what* and *al-sone*. Even Pasicki (1987) in his meticulous study of temporal adverbials in Old and Middle English fails to mention either of them. Both are however given separate entries in the Middle English Dictionary where several examples are cited spanning over the Middle English period.

(1) He ðolede..ðe pine of helle..al hwat Crist him liesde wið hersumnesse.

'He suffered hellish pain until Christ released him from service.'

a1225(c1200) Vices & V.(1) (Stw 34)7/20

(2) Alson be mone be-gan to schynne, bare come a grete multitude of scorpyons.
'As soon as the moon began to shine, there came a great multitude of scorpions.'
c1440 PLAlex.(Thrn) 70/5 (MED)

Both subordinators contain the *all*-element in their structure which has so far been associated with concessive markers such as *albeit* and *although* (cf. Sorva 2007: 117). The following research questions will be investigated in the present study:

(i) How advanced is the grammaticalization process in the case of each subordinator?

(ii) Can we talk in these two cases about incipient grammaticalization in the sense of Mair (2010) whereby a grammaticalized construction turns out to be an infrequently used item available for a long period of time, often for centuries.

This corpus-based study, while making use of data taken from the Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse, looks into the grammaticalization of *al-what* and *al-sone* and the competition with more frequently used subordinators such as *until* and *as soon as*, respectively. Tentative results suggest that *al-what* and *al-sone* failed to receive a frequency boost expected from grammaticalization and, after remaining an option as temporal subordinators for a few centuries in ME, were ultimately given up by language users.

Keywords: temporal subordinators; grammaticalization; frequency; corpus-based study

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Middle English Adjectives and Adverbs in -līch(e)/-ly

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Abstract

All through the history of English, the suffix $-l\bar{i}c/-ly$ has been used to form adjectives from nouns or other adjectives (PDE *friend* > *friendly*, *blue* > *bluely*; cf. German *freundlich*, *bläulich*). In a development specific to English from late Old English onwards, however, $-l\bar{i}che/-ly$ has also been employed to mark de-adjectival adverbs (cf. *drive slowly*), a use not found in the other Germanic languages.

While the formal developments in the emergence of the English adverbial suffix -ly by re-analysis into monomorphemic $-l\bar{i}ce$ (from originally adjectival $-l\bar{i}c$ + adverbial -e) are well understood (cf. *OED* s.v. -ly, suffix²), the functional reasons for its emergence have not received sufficient linguistic attention.

In this talk, I will focus on semantic aspects linking adjectival and adverbial -ly and suggest that it was the specifically figurative and subjective meanings of OE/ME adjectives in $-l\bar{i}c(h)$ (e.g. OE *biterlic* 'painful' vs. OE *biter* 'having a bitter taste'; cf. Donner 1991) which paved the way for adverbial -ly and its diverse subjective uses (most evident in PDE stance adverbials such as *clearly* or *potentially*; cf. Swan 1989, Lenker Forthcoming).

Such a link is suggested by the subjective uses of *opeliche* 'obviously (lie)' and *li3tliche* '(bring) easily (to God's kingdom)' (vs. *open* 'without obstruction' and *li3t* 'having little physical weight'; *MED* s.vv.) in the *Owl & Nightingale*:

Ac hit is alrewndermest / Þat þu darst lige so **opeliche**. / Wenest þu hi bring so **ligtliche** / To Godesriche al singinge? (852-855).

In order to test this suggested link, I will compare the semantics and functions of adverbs in -ly with those in $-e/\emptyset$ in early Middle English texts, i.e. texts from the period crucial for the emergence of adverbial -ly (among them *Ormulum*, the two versions of La3amon's *Brut*, *Owl & Nightingale*, *King Horn*, *Floris and Blauncheflour* and *Havelok the Dane*).

Keywords: adverbial suffix *-ly*; adjectival suffix *-ly*; early Middle English texts; subjectivity

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Locative Inversion: A Diachronic Study. From Old English into Middle English.

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Abstract

A grammatical construction resembling Present Day English Locative Inversion is already found in Old English (Dreschler 2015, López Martínez 2019), with a fronted Prepositional Phrase prompting V2 word order, both in main and subordinate clauses. Said construction can also be found in Middle English:

(1) for the book seith that 'in olde men is the sapience, and in longe tyme the prudence.'

for the book says that in old men is the knowledge, and in long time the prudence

'for the book says that knowledge is found in old men, and prudence in long time'

(CMCTMELI,223.C1.235)

It has been demonstrated that several discourse-related factors influence the positioning of the fronted locative, the finite verb and the subject in this type of clauses (López Martínez, 2019). One of the aims of the present paper is to study the distribution of the Locative Inversion construction in Old English and its evolution into the Middle English period, focusing particularly on subordinate clauses. The data for this study was obtained from the *YCOE* in the case of Old English, and from the *PPCME2* in the case of Middle English, being analysed using Corpus Studio and Corpus Search, respectively.

The queries show a clear decline in the productivity of the Locative Inversion construction in the history of English subordination. These results will be compared with those for main clauses, and discourse-related factors such as PP-anaphoricity or subject type will be analysed to find the motivation for this decline. The relevance of the OV/VO reanalysis in this phenomenon will also be discussed to show how this change in the positioning of the finite verb in the history of English may have had an influence in the decrease of the locative inversion construction, predominantly in subordinate clauses.

Keywords: Locative inversion; subordinate clauses; Old English; Middle English

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Preparing the Parish Priests to Preach Properly? The Tremulous Worcester Scribe's Pastoral Work

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Abstract

The Tremulous Worcester scribe, working in the first half of the thirteenth century, has attracted considerable scholarly interest, but aspects of his endeavour remain puzzling, and have not been fully elaborated. What caused him, for instance, to break off glossing the Hatton 20 version of the Pastoral Care? Why did he largely abandon his glossing work in Middle English? Why and when was much of this work erased, and for what reason? The approach taken here seeks to contextualise the Tremulous Hand's glossing work within other copying activity of homiletic material in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries along with the strong vernacular tradition of Worcester and its environs, and includes discussion of the state of the library at the Cathedral priory during this period. I argue that the Tremulous scribe was engaged in preparing bilingual notes of sermons for parish priests in the Worcester diocese. As such, the approach he takes is different from and more flexible than that of those responsible for compiling the Trinity and Lambeth homilies earlier, and responds to new modes of preaching current in Worcester. Alternatively (or also) he may have been using the same materials to help fulfil episcopal duties in relation to preaching and visitations as mandated by Lateran IV, canon 10.

Keywords: Middle English language; vernacular preaching; manuscript study

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BEAUTY in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: From Affect to Aesthetics, a Lexical and Contextual Analysis

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Abstract

While Cognitive Science has systematically been applied to the analysis of Medieval English lexis over the last decades, it has only recently begun to illuminate our analyses of Medieval literature (see Harbus 2012). These theoretical frameworks have underpinned the potential of literary texts to both represent and trigger affective and aesthetic experience (see, for instance, Carruthers 2013) not only in terms of vocabulary, but also in terms of textual motifs that are consistently found across Medieval literature. The Middle English poem Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (SGGK) has been analysed from many different angles, but even though research on aesthetic categories in Old and Middle English (see Minava 2021; Steinberg 2021) has certainly shed some light on the role of beauty and ugliness in particular genres and textual contexts, no such analysis has been carried out on SGGK. This being so, the purpose of this paper is to analyse the notion of BEAUTY and its vocabulary in this Middle English poem, with the aim of determining to what extent this aesthetic category is relevant in this textual framework. Additional aims include closely analysing the Pearl poet's usage of this lexical domain, paying close attention, on the one hand, to the semantic evolution of native English terminology, from Old English into Middle English, and, on the other hand, to the French and Norse loanwords that might be present in the poem. This analysis suggests that beauty is indeed central to this Middle English romance, and that this lexical domain occurs in particular positions and contexts, evidencing, not only interesting patterns of semantic evolution, but also sociolinguistic and idiolectal issues.

Keywords: Medieval English lexis; medieval literature; beauty; Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

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The Middle English Pluperfect: Anteriority vs. Counterfactuality

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Abstract

The periphrastic construction consisting of the *have* and *be* auxiliary + the past participle of transitive and intransitive verbs respectively is attested in Old English and its usual function was to express anteriority. However, the occurrences of *habban* also with intransitive verbs are found in the Old English corpus, especially when some kind of accomplishment is meant. In Early Middle English one can observe interesting manuscript variation in this respect, which shows the instability of the perfective construction. From Late Middle English onwards *ben* was becoming recessive for all intransitive verbs, including verbs of motion. This might have been caused by formally perfect forms gradually marking aspect rather than tense, the heavy functional load of *ben* (e.g. now used in passive and progressive verb constructions) and the general tendency to use analytic structures resulting from the loss of inflexions.

A new function of the pluperfect tense (originally the pluperfect subjunctive) expressing counterfactuality arose in Early Middle English. Although most scholars note that in such contexts *haven* was the rule (e.g. Mustanoja 1960: 502), in the *Orrmulum* (c1180) one can find examples with clearly contrary to fact sense that still have the auxiliary *ben* for intransitives, e.g. *3iff be Laferrd haffde wrohht Him fode onn3æn hiss hunngerr; ba wære he burrh be deofless croc I gluterrnesse fallen* 11633. In later Middle English in such contexts the auxiliary *ben* is not attested, which may have contributed to its replacement in other uses of the pluperfect, as well. In the paper I will discuss the factors that influenced the occurrence and the form of the past perfect expressing anteriority and counterfactuality in the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse*.

Keywords: pluperfect; auxiliary verb; anteriority; counterfactuality; manuscript variation

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A Continuation: The *punctus* and the *virgula*

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Abstract

This talk will continue the discussion raised during ICOME-12 (Nedelius 2022) on the interchangeability of historical punctuation marks, focusing on the *punctus* and the *virgula*.

The *punctus* and the *virgula suspensiva* are considered two of the most common marks in the punctuation inventory of the later Middle Ages (see Parkes 1992; 42, 46). Consequently, they are regularly found in late Middle English (ME) manuscripts and are often thought to have been largely interchangeable during the period (see Parkes 1992: 46). However, the preliminary study presented at ICOME-12 does not seem to support the traditional assumption, suggesting that the two marks rarely occur interchangeably within the same manuscript extract. Instead, the two marks appear to be in nearly complementary distribution, thus challenging the conventional belief of the two marks' interchangeability in late ME. Further, the supposed interchangeability is also questionable in light of early printers' treatment of the two marks: Parkes (1992: 46) suggests that printers appear to have perceived "an existing convention" in the use of the marks, whereby the virgula indicated "a medial pause (especially a minor one), and the punctus, a final one." However, the preliminary study suggests a reversed relationship in the perceived functions of the two marks by modern editors, whereby the virgula suspensiva comes to be more commonly represented by a sentence-ending punctuation mark, the semicolon or the colon than the *punctus*.

While remaining far from comprehensive, this talk will provide further insight into the interchangeability of the two marks by presenting their use as found in *The Middle English Grammar Corpus* (Stenroos et al. 2011). While currently a work in progress, current results appear to support the indications of the preliminary study, and the talk will thus also discuss this seeming shift in the marks' perceived function from ME to Present-Day English.

Keywords: punctuation; historical; interchangeability; Middle English

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Middle English Lyrics Under the Lens of Environmental Materialism

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Abstract

This paper aims at revising the short and mostly anonymous corpus of Middle English Lyrics under the lens of the new materialisms that have emerged in recent times, inside the field of environmental humanities. This theoretical movement basically purports to reconnect -through deconstructing and reconstructing literary and cultural materialshuman animals with their habitats, at once belittling and sizing appropriately our role on Earth. Thus, apart from highlighting in academic research the presence of nature (mineral, vegetal or animal), the study will delve into the relevance of invisible connections extant among human and more-than-human species. Following notions like Alaimo's "transcorporeality," Tuana's "viscous porosity," Braidotti's "becoming" and Haraway's "sympoiesis," and terms such as permabodies and ecotones, a modern critical rereading will revolve around several questioning starting points: To what extent medieval citizens were aware of their being-in-nature condition? How were they, as humans, inscribed in the biosphere of their times? What level of natural colonization did they feel in their various milieus, in a pre-Renaissance era that was popularly coined as a dark age, when the Anthropocene debate has been opened? To what degree the natural elements were filled with anthropocentric metaphors and pathetic fallacy devices in the lyrics? And, lastly, was the aural component of the singing performance in consonance, or else at odds, with their spatial sense of place and belonging (Tuan's geography of perception), or so to say, due to this orality was there a closer identification with their loci vivendi? For the analysis, famous texts will be scrutinized, such as "Sumer Is Icumen In," "Alysoun," "Erthe," "Ubi Sunt," "Bryd One Brere," or "Of a Rose Synge We," among others. The results will not only help to clarify the reasons for our paradoxically precarious environmental situation in the digital age, but also, and more importantly, they could give us new seeds for changing our relationship with the planetary habitat.

Keywords: Middle English Lyrics Revisited; New Materialisms; Environmental Interconnectedness; Interspecies Dialogue; Resituating Anthropomorphism.

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On the Continuity between Old and Middle English Alliterative Verse

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Abstract

Nicolay Yakovley, in his 2008 Oxford DPhil dissertation, put forward a new theory for the evolution of alliterative verse from Old to Middle English. This new theorical model, which was very well-received by a number of critics (see, for example, Weiskott 2016 and Cornelius 2017), is characterized by the ease with which it accounts for the transition from Old English to Early Middle English metre. Scholars have often found that the prosody of a work like La₃amon's *Brut* is too variable to be systematized, and that it cannot therefore be easily derived from the orderly metrical system of Old English (e.g. Fulk 2004). Yakovlev's take on the issue is that derivation is possible if changes are made to traditional Old English metrical theory. Among the chief innovations introduced by Yakovlev are the notions that alliteration in Old English verse is a non-metrical ornament, that the metrical system is based mainly on morphology, and that there are only two levels of metrical stress (2008: 24, 74). It has been argued that some of Yakovlev'siconoclastic departures from traditional metrics are problematic and show his theory to be incompatible with the textual evidence (Pascual 2017, 2018; Neidorf and Pascual 2020). More recently, however, new arguments have been made in support of Yakovlev's model of metrical evolution (Weiskott 2022; O'Neil 2022). The aim of this paper will be to assess these new arguments, with an eye to showing that Yakovlev's changes to Old English metrical theory are empirically unwarranted, and that the Brut is not the intermediate link between Old English verse and Late Middle English poetry of the so-called Alliterative Revival.

Keywords: metrics; Old and Middle English alliterative verse; Alliterative Revival

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Mapping the Provenance of Middle English Scribes: The Case of Hand A in Manchester, Chetham's Library, MS Mun.A.3.127

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Abstract

Manchester, Chetham's Library, MS Mun.A.3.127 is a Late Middle English manuscript written by up to fifteen different hands that includes medical recipes and charms to cure illnesses. This paper focusses on Hand A, the main hand in the codex that corresponds to 'Richard Wermyncham Spens', a scribe believed to come from Cheshire (Chetham's Library n.d.), since the 'Wermyncham' surname may refer to Warmingham, a village in that county (Powell 2018: 81; Survey of English Place-Names n.d.). The objective of this paper is therefore to localise this hand geographically so as to establish a likely place of origin for the scribe. In order to do that, the model proposed on the electronic version of A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English (eLALME) (Benskin, Laing, Karaiskos and Williamson 2013) has been followed where different stages have to be considered. First, a survey questionnaire has been completed in order to devise a linguistic profile (LP hereafter) of this hand, and the well-known "fit-technique" (McIntosh, Samuels and Benskin n.d.) has been applied. Once the LP has been obtained, the dot and user-defined maps have been used to offer a possible localisation. The information gathered has been contrasted with other LPs included in eLALME to confirm the provenance obtained. After having carried out this process, it may be concluded that Hand A may come from the border between southern Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, Rutland, Northamptonshire and Leicestershire, rejecting thus the origin proposed by Chetham's Library.

Keywords: dialect; provenance; Middle English; eLALME; linguistic profile

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The Transmission of Italian Through English Ports. A Lexical Investigation in Late Medieval Period (15th century)

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the analysis of Anglo-Italian contact during the late medieval period. The role of Italian as language of influence has been mostly neglected prior to the Early Modern Age, because of the prestige of Italian Renaissance culture; however, the considerable presence of Italian merchants in England in the late Middle Ages left some traces in texts produced in the mercantile field. Our purpose is to examine the transmission of lexical elements from Italian to English and to investigate their long-term effects on the history of English. A number of Italianisms introduced into English through this channel have been identified (Foster 1963; Rothwell 1999; Trotter 2011; Tiddeman 2016); however, the dynamics of interaction with the languages used in texts, Latin, Anglo-Norman, and Middle English, have not been unanimously defined. Our investigation proposes an in-depth analysis of the account books of the port of Southampton (Studer 1913; Quinn 1937-1938; Cobb 1961; Foster 1963; Lewis 1993), multilingual texts which testify the contact between Italian and English merchants in the late Middle Ages. We will identify Italianisms referring to elements specifically related to commercial activity, trying to interpret their lives as culturally related to Italian reality or as lexical English alternatives. By examining the main lexicographical sources devoted to Medieval and Modern Italian, and to the languages of medieval England (Latin, Anglo-Norman, and Middle English), we will attempt to delineate the chronology of the spread of such terms in English. Finally, the comparison with modern dictionaries of English will allow us to assess the persistence of Italianisms over time. Through the formal and semantic study of the lexemes as well as the investigation of the historical and cultural background of the texts we will be able to better understand the dynamics of the contact between Italian and English.

Keywords: Italianisms; English; interaction; port books; late Middle Ages

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Orrm's Norse-Derived Terms: A Study of Integration

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Abstract

While scholars commonly belittle the literary qualities of the early Middle English text whose own author calls Ormulum (ed. Johannesson and Cooper 2023), its linguistic value has been recognised for a long time, mainly in connection with its idiosyncratic spelling system and the heavy Scandinavian influence that it exhibits, particularly as far as its vocabulary is concerned. Thus, the identification of its Norse-derived terms has attracted much scholarly attention since Erik Brate's doctoral dissertation (Brate 1885); however, the level of integration of the terms into the text has not been explored in the same level of detail. That will be the focus of this paper. After briefly classifying the terms that have been suggested to be Norse-derived since Brate's work in relation to the Gersum taxonomy (Dance, Pons-Sanz and Schorn 2019), the paper will turn its attention to various ways in which we can explore the impact that these terms had on Orrm's lexicon, such as their semantic distribution, the semantic and stylistic factors that influenced Orrm's lexical choices and the extent to which Norse-derived terms express a particular concept instead of their near-synonyms. The Norse-derived terms will be classified semantically with the help of the Historical Thesaurus of English, which allows for cross-study comparisons as well as a comparison with the semantic distribution of the Middle English lexicon as a whole. This classification will in turn be the basis for the exploration of the extent to which the various Norse-derived terms express a particular concept, as opposed to native or French-derived near-synonyms. The data from the Ormulum will be compared with those from near-contemporary texts from the same dialectal area to investigate to what extent Orrm's lexical choices are as idiosyncratic as his spelling system.

Keywords: Ormulum; Norse-derived terms; Early Middle English; Semantics; Stylistics

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The Green Knight and the Wild Man

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine the relations the Green Knight entertains with the figure of the wild man in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Ever since Frederick Madden gave the title *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* to the poem, the knight in green has been compared to the traditional figure of the green man, but not to that of the wild man, even though he has more in common with the *Wodwos* who dwell *in the knarrez* (1. 721) he emerges from near the Green Chapel than might appear at first sight.

Hairiness, shape-shifting, irrationality and wayward behaviour (if not downright folly) seem to apply to the Green Knight at Arthur's court and at the Green Chapel. With a beard like a bush, a height almost that of a half-giant's (while Bertilak is not as tall), he represents – as a wild man – the primitive and savage nature of man and stands for the very opposite of the ideals of knighthood, courtliness and civilisation.

However, the notion of the Green Knight being a wild man is fraught with ambiguity: he rides a horse wearing rich clothes (though his feet are bare), is fully articulate, and acts as if he revered God. These characteristics should preclude a strict identification with the wild man, yet the *Gawain*-poet arguably had in mind, not just the symbolic (or ideal) wild man, but rather a specific literary version of that creature: the knight who has gone wild or pretends to be wild (i.e. mad). Of particular interest for this question are the two *Folies Tristan*, in which the hero adopts the appearance and manners of a wild man to see Iseult again, as well as the French romance *Ipomedon* which takes up, in a slightly different form, the same motif (works that the *Gawain*-poet probably knew).

Keywords: Sir Gawain and the Green Knight; Wild Man; Fool; Ipomedon; Folies Tristan

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Dialect and Local Convention in Late Medieval English Bishops' Registers

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Abstract

The proposed paper is a study of dialectal features and scribal strategies in the English writing of late medieval Bishops' Registers, with particular focus on the chastity vow: a highly formulaic text type which provides intriguing material for the study of late Middle English linguistic variation. The language of episcopal administration was Latin, with English only appearing in specific types of texts: most commonly the statements of individuals, given before the episcopal court, and letters from people outside the church administration, including the Crown. Such texts, which form a small minority of all the register texts, are often highly formulaic. This is particularly true of vows and oaths, which, unusually for Middle English documents, seem to show the use of ready-made, vernacular models.

Despite their formulaicity, the English texts found in Bishops' Registers are of considerable linguistic interest. As the registers contain multiple texts produced by a single scribe, the bishop's registrar, sometimes over long stretches of time, they make it possible to study scribal behaviour and development. Precisely because of their formulaicity, the texts provide excellent material for the study of dialectal variation at the levels of orthography and morphology; in addition, the formulae themselves vary dramatically over time and between institutions and orders.

The paper presents a detailed study of English vows of chastity in the registers of three episcopal sees, Hereford, Lincoln and Salisbury, in the period 1420–1520. It compares the output of several different scribes, both with regard to dialectal features and formulae, and addresses the question to what extent the different dioceses might have formed a shared text community with regard to English text production, and, conversely, to what extent the individual administrations or even registrars built up their own vernacular conventions.

Keywords: Bishops' Registers; scribal variation; dialects; chastity vows; formulae

Semantic Integration of Loanwords Borrowed in the Middle English Period

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Abstract

The issue of what constitutes an embedded loanword is a focus in the literature on borrowing. Haspelmath and Tadmor (2009: 12) sought to include "only established loanwords that were felt by the contributor to be part of the language's lexicon", noting that this distinction was often difficult to make. Backus (2012: 6) and Johns and Dussias (2021: 377) state that the repeated use of loanwords over time leads to their entrenchment. It is difficult to arrive at an answer to the question of the embeddedness, or otherwise, of the loanwords borrowed in the Middle English period, but we need to engage with it if we are to understand the development of the English vocabulary.

This paper outlines our methodology: the application of text type labels to all citations for each loanword sense attested in Middle English in our corpus (110 loanwords and 427 senses in total), and a system of categorising semantic integration based on the number of text types per sense. This serves as a proxy for conventionalisation and dissemination within the recipient speech community. Preliminary results show that 40% of senses are non-integrated in the recipient language (1 text type only), 54% are integrated (2-4 text types) and only 6% are highly integrated (5+ text types). Obsolescence rates decrease as semantic integration increases. Senses unique to Middle English have lower levels of semantic integration than borrowed senses (senses shared with French/Latin) i.e. the range of text types for loanword senses which develop independently in English tends to be much smaller. Non-integrated senses are cited in a higher-than-average proportion of Instructional Texts. 59% of senses in the corpus have citations from at least one translated text, 41% have none, and obsolescence rates increase overall as the proportion of translations per sense increases. Reasons for this provisional outcome are discussed.

Keywords: loanword; semantic integration; Middle English lexicon

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So are the devils painted: On the Uses of Main Devils' Names in Mediaeval English

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Abstract

Apart from common nouns such as *devil* (OE *deofol* - ME *devel*) or *demon* (OE *demon* - ME *demon*) and various euphemistic expressions such as, e.g. *unclean ghost* (OE *gast unclænæ*) or *fiend of hell* (ME *feond of helle*), mediaeval English texts also refer to evil spirits using proper names. Those include not only widely-known names such as *Satan* or *Lucifer*, but also much rarer ones including Belphegor, Asmodeus, or Mammon. The most important devils have been subject to numerous taxonomies, which typically take under consideration the character of devils, their ranks in the hierarchy and/or their specialized function (Rudwin 1973). The earliest classification in English literature is included in the early 15th century text *The Lanterne of Ligt*, where each devil is paired with one of the Seven Deadly Sins: Lucifer with pride, Belzebub with envy, Satan with wrath, etc.

The study aims at verifying whether the uses of devils' proper names in mediaeval English writings confirm the classification from the *Lanterne of Ligt* or any other used in mediaeval Europe. This requires a thorough examination of texts to identify all instances of names of devils. Once such references have been singled out, we focus on the context of use to specify whether the devils personify a particular sin and/or are assigned attributes associated with such an immoral act. A preliminary analysis has revealed that this is often the case, e.g., Lucifer is frequently present in the context of *pride* or related items (*bright, great*), cf. *bo lucifer stei3 in pride*, Belzebub is found near *envious*, cf. *Belzebub*.^{*} *pat lordip ouer envious*. This shows that sin as an abstract religious concept was personified and discussed with the use of an ontological metaphor A SIN IS DEVIL, which will be subject to detailed analysis.

Keywords: mediaeval lexis; proper names; evil spirit; sin; metaphor

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The Linguistic Composition of the Vernon MS

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Abstract

As is well-known, two Middle English texts may not be identical in spelling even if they are in the hand of a single scribe. Their non-identity may not only owe to their scribe's spelling itself being variable but also to him having reproduced forms from his exemplars. Either way, each text constitutes a sample of a population, each sample differently 'coloured' by these various variables. I have long advocated language modelling as a methodology for reconstructing a population ('a language') from a sample and ultimately as an aid in deciding whether two samples are samples of one and the same population. Language modelling has the advantage over other established methodologies that every single spelling form is considered and that it has a proven track record in other fields: it is, for example, what lies at the heart of statistical machine translation software. Honkapohja et al. (2023) detail its application to Middle English spelling data.

This paper turns to a corpus I have not experimented with before, the +350-folio Vernon manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Poet. a. 1), whose c.370 poetry and prose works are predominantly written in Middle English and nearly all executed in a single scribal hand. A semi-diplomatic transcript of the entire manuscript, produced by Scase (2011), is available for download from the Oxford University Research Archive. I partition the transcript, build 3-gram models of each partition, compute similarity metrics (model entropy), and distinguish populations before attributing the populations to variables such as exemplars, text-type, and numbers of lines to the page. I expect this work, in progress at the time of writing, to throw light on the process of the manuscript's production and patterns of textual transmission.

Keywords: Middle English; spelling variation; manuscript studies; textual studies; Vernon manuscript

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C21 Editions: Working alongside AI to Produce a Teaching Edition of Chaucer's *Pardoner's Prologue and Tale*

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Abstract

One of the primary challenges of recreating Middle English texts for modern audiences is producing an edition that both preserves the manuscript's culture and origin, and acts as a comprehensible, interactive, and engaging resource. Scholarly editions often involve a labour-intensive process of text creation that requires the editor to think critically at every stage. Yet, few editions have incorporated machines to assist in decision-making. Since the launch of generative AI chatbots, wariness surrounding plagiarism has increased at universities, with concerns over research integrity and methodological rigour. Wierdak and Sheridan (2023) state that ChatGPT should be seen as "friend not foe"—students can still define their research questions, critically evaluate sources, and integrate AI methods alongside their own contributions. Thus, could editorial methods be made easier and quicker, without any loss of quality and authority? How might a digital edition utilise AI methods to assist the editor in analysing and interpreting medieval data, and to produce an output that is suitable for undergraduate students?

This paper presents results from *C21 Editions*, a project involving the creation of a digital teaching edition prototype of Geoffrey Chaucer's *Pardoner's Prologue and Tale* from *The Canterbury Tales*. The project aims to enhance the practice of scholarly digital editing by integrating "curatorial and statistical" methods within Digital Humanities, which are often treated as disparate dimensions (Bode 2019). With insights from university teachers and students at the centre of the edition's production, this paper explores how medieval translation and pronunciation, textual annotation, and introductory notes can be produced using state-of-the-art technology, alongside the human editor. By utilising generative AI (e.g. ChatGPT, Google Bard), text-to-speech software, and Application Programming Interfaces, I show that machine-assisted editions offer an opportunity for students to deepen their understanding of the language and context of the Middle English period. In addition, I demonstrate that this type of learning allows students to critically analyse AI outputs, mirroring the role of the editor in creating such resources.

Keywords: AI; Chaucer; digital humanities; editing; pedagogy

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Ah! Exclamative Punctuation in Middle English Manuscripts

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Abstract

The graphic repertoire of Middle English scribes did not include an exclamation mark per se, and those found in editions of ME texts are modern interventions (for a rare discussion, see Langdell on Hoccleve). Nonetheless, medieval scribes working in the vernacular did sometimes mark exclamative language with other forms of punctuation and more often than the almost complete lack of discussion about its presence might suggest (cf. Andrieux-Reix on thirteenth-century Old French prose).

Working with diplomatic editions and availing myself of high-resolution digital facsimiles, this study focuses on exclamative punctuation evidenced by scribes involved in the Vernon (c.1390) and Auchinleck (c.1331-1340) manuscripts. For example, although the functions of the punctus elevatus varies in Vernon texts, elevati were occasionally purposed as exclamative by Vernon's Scribe A; as in numerous examples of the utterance-initial interjection Ah! (i.e. <A[punctus elevatus]>), which may be to do with the mark's associations with rising intonation patterns (Burrows; Williams). The much rarer occurrence of any punctuation in most of the Auchinleck manuscript makes the appearance of what appears to be exclamative punctuation all the more salient there: e.g. in other examples of Ah! with a punctus elevatus, as well as other forms of punctuation, as in *fie! fie!* with puncti (<fi. fi.>).

Using linguistically surer examples (i.e. punctuation marks following interjections that would have taken emphatic intonation in ME) as a base, I will also discuss other examples of punctuation in these texts which might be interpreted as exclamative, including a number of instances where modern prescriptions of punctuation make the transmission of medieval usage awkward (e.g. in modern print editions). In turn, this study serves to revisit and reimagine exclamative punctuation for a transitional period of English writing that predates the advent of the exclamation mark itself.

Keywords: punctuation; pragmatics; manuscripts; scribes; editing

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POSTERS

Valency Patterns in Middle English

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Abstract

The aim of this project is to give an account of the valency patterns of Middle English verbs, as a part of the PaVeDa project (Zanchi et al. 2022). Building on the ValPaL project (Malchukov and Comrie 2015), PaVeDa aims to investigate valency patterns and alternations both across languages and across time. Contributors are given a list of 80 basic meanings, considered representative of the entire lexicon. For each of these, contributors working on ancient languages select a translational counterpart, following three criteria:

- 1) Morphological simplicity;
- 2) Frequency in the corpora;
- 3) Continuity of attestation.

In the manual analysis, carried out in the theoretical framework of Construction Grammar (Fillmore & Kay 1993; Lakoff 1987;) applied to argument structure (Goldberg 1995, 2006), both semantic and morphosyntactic features of the arguments are considered.

Middle English data, collected from a subset of PPCME2 (Kroch & Taylor 2000) and the PCMEP (Zimmermann 2015) treebanks, will constitute the diachronic stages of English, together with Old English (Giarda 2022), allowing a twofold perspective. Synchronically, it will be possible to analyse valency patterns and their alternations across different verb classes (see Levin 1993). Diachronically, this database will show the development of different constructions in time. An example of this, instantiated by the meaning LIKE, is the development of some experiential verbs from a so-called "impersonal" pattern (i.e. non-nominative experiencers) to the nominative-experiencer pattern, shown in the examples below:

1) Old English (lician)

- gif hæt Gode licade ("if that pleases God", cobede,Bede_3:17.232.33.2389)

2) Middle English (liken)

- *Ther every man crieth what that hym liketh* ("where every man cries what he pleases.", CMCTMELI M3,220.C2.129)

- *The kynge lyked and loved this lady wel* ("The king liked and love much this lady", CMMALORY-M4,2.12)

3) Present-Day English

- Pete really likes his PS3. (Goddard 2013)

Keywords: Middle English; valency patterns; valency alternations; PaVeDa

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Rivalry Between and <s> in Third-Person Singular Present Tense Verbs: A Study of Late Medieval Scientific Manuscripts.

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Abstract

During the late medieval period, the coexistence of and <s> endings for third-person singular present tense verbs became prevalent. Some scholars have extensively examined the rivalry between these two inflections, with a particular focus on informal registers, such as correspondence (Conde-Silvestre 2020; Hernández-Campoy 2020). However, little attention has been given to the morphological change within the field of scientific texts.

The aim of this study is thus to analyse the rivalry between and <s> in the context of third-person singular present tense verbs in medieval scientific manuscripts from *The Málaga Corpus of Late Middle English Scientific Prose* (Calle-Martín et al. 2016). Within scientific prose, there is a variety of genres, with treatises and remedy books standing out as different registers. Treatises are usually addressed to expert audiences, whereas remedy books are intended for laypeople (Alonso-Almeida & Carroll 2004; Pahta & Taavitsainen 2004). Hence, factors such as the frequency of use and the linguistic context of verbs are also examined across text-types, as these factors tend to influence the use of and <s> (Kytö 1993).

Consequently, the study focuses on (i) analysing the evolution of the morphological change in treatises compared to remedies and (ii) demonstrating the impact of frequency and context on the choice between the conservative suffix <th> and the innovative <s>. In general terms, we anticipate resistance to the use of <s> as frequency and formality increase (Romaine 2016). In short, the main objective is to shed light on the morphological variation within medieval scientific prose.

Keywords: morphological variation; scientific prose; text-type; verb inflection

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