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(eds.)

The Use and Development of Middle English

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Introduction

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The fourteen essays presented in this volume study the Middle English language to various ends and with a range of outcomes. Some researchers are interested in how the language developed from Old English, others want to know about innovations during the period, and others track the loss and abandonment of certain words and constructions. A common consideration is Middle English variation and variability – dialectal, social, temporal, stylistic and idiolectal. Much work here fits under the heading of historical pragmatics: what could or couldn't be said in specific discourse situations. And some researchers use language as a means to a cultural end, shedding light on everyday life and customs during the period.

One of the most striking things about these fourteen essays on Middle English is the extent to which searchable computerized corpora have become the backbone of the discipline in the early twenty-first century, with researchers both trawling publicly-available corpora and also creating new corpora to their own specifications. Although people have been transcribing and printing Middle English texts for centuries, most linguistic researchers still need to go back to the original manuscript, as critical editions largely regularize away the very things that linguists are interested in. Recent corpus-building projects are becoming more and more faithful to the manuscript, with fewer and fewer editorial interventions. The art of tagging Middle English text is still, at present, laborious, although it seems likely to become more of an automated process in future.

The chapter by Javier Calle Martin and David Moreno Olalla (*Body of evidence: Middle English annotated corpora and dialect atlases*), describes an ongoing Middle English project based at the University of Málaga, developed in cooperation with the Universities of Oviedo and Glasgow. Calle, Moreno and their assistants have built an annotated corpus, the *Málaga Corpus of Late Middle English Scientific Prose (1350–1500)*, and they present here an analysis of a Middle English translation, found in Glasgow, University Library, MS Hunter 497. They use the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* to locate the dialect in which the text was written, but rather than comparing the text with *LALME* manually, the authors demonstrate how to do it electronically. Their chapter points out the advantages of comparing a text with *LALME* electronically in this way (that is, implementing the fit-technique by comparison with a questionnaire of linguistic features found in anchor texts), and explains the design of the corpus, which currently amounts to over 800,000 words. Calle

and Moreno conclude from this exercise that GUL Hunter 497 was written in the Essex/London area, but, as is so common with late fifteenth-century London writing, some "out of area" features are found to be present – in this case, features usually ascribed to the northern and western dialect areas.

Another corpus which includes Middle English texts is being compiled at the University of Seville. Julia Fernández Cuesta, Luisa García García and J. Gabriel Amores Carredano (*Compilation of an electronic corpus of northern English texts from Old to Early Modern English*) introduce the *Seville Electronic Corpus of Northern English Texts* (known as SCONE) and explain the corpus in detail: how texts are chosen, how and why they are tagged as they are, and the kinds of analysis that result. A short fifteenth-century legal text from Hull is used as a demonstration, revealing the considerable variation behind the simplified text-book descriptions of northern phonology, morphology and lexis. SCONE allows a far more nuanced understanding of Northern Middle English dialectology by highlighting the patterning of variables in specific parts of the North, and by uncovering more variables than are traditionally considered northern. Like the *Málaga Corpus of Late Middle English Scientific Prose*, SCONE is a work in progress.

Gabriella Mazzon (*Now what? The analysis of Middle English discourse markers and advances in historical dialogue studies*) uses dramatic texts as presented in the *Middle English Compendium* corpus in her study of the many ways in which the lexeme *now* was used in Middle English dialogue. She reviews recent progress in the fields of historical pragmatics and historical discourse analysis, weighing up recent work in Interactional Sociolinguistics, Politeness Theory and Social Network Theory as it applies to Middle English. She pulls together forms of address, modality markers, performative verbs and pair sequences as being typical of dramatic dialogue and looks at the many roles played by *now* in the *York*, *Towneley* and *N.Town* plays, as contrasted with its use in other texts, including Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* and *Astrolabe* and *Vices and Virtues*. *Now* is found to be frequent, occurring often in initial position, as a discourse marker, adverb, turn-initiator, emphasizer (particularly with imperatives), utterance-launcher, topic-changer; and as questioning *now*, expressive *now*, challenging *now*, supportive *now*, narrative *now*. Such multifunctionality does not seem to be becoming any more specialized over time, as many of the functions identified by Mazzon are still in use.

Another user of the *Middle English Compendium* corpus is Hans-Jürgen Diller (*Ssoong on Ifaluk, ANGER and WRATH in Middle English: Historical Semantics as bridge-builder*), this time to semantic ends. Diller draws on recent work on words for the semantic field of anger in the language spoken on Ifaluk, one of the outer islands of the State of Yap in the Federated States of Micronesia, Western Pacific. In that language, the word *ssoong* means 'justified anger';

that is, when an offence has been committed against the social order, anger is justi-fied. Thus drunken disorder arouses the chiefs' *ssoong*, and they punish the perpe-trators accordingly, so that the social and moral order is upheld. Diller suggests that something similar was at work in medieval England. In earlier research he found that experiencers of the lexeme *wrath* tended to be of higher rank than experiencers of the lexeme *anger*, and that *wrath* correlated with social values such as dignity and rank, whereas *anger* correlated with violation of private values. In this chapter Diller refines this distinction further, analysing Middle English *wrath* as a response to a disregard for status, and *anger* to a blocking of goals, with *wrath* outnumbering the newer *anger* tokens almost four to one during the period. Diller then provides a case-study from Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*, and cautions against too neat a semantic division.

Cynthia Allen, looking at a syntactic construction that did not outlast the pe-riod (*The Poss(essive) Det(erminer) construction in Early Middle English writ-ings*), searches the *York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose* and the *Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Middle English 2*. Allen tracks the demise of the [possessive + determiner + adjective + noun] construction (as in *my the red gloves*), which was common in much Old English writing but which disappeared in early Middle English. She posits an "adjective constraint", whereby there was an actual requirement that an adjective as well as a deter-miner be present in such phrases (this correlates well with Modern colloquial Danish, which also has this construction and constraint). Allen suggests that the function of the determiner supporting the adjective was to add emphasis, noting that it was always optional and never categorical, and she pinpoints the aban-donment of the construction around 1100. A small number of counterexamples occur, and Allen considers the possibility that they are errors, made after the time when the construction had fallen into disuse. Not finding any obvious trig-ger for the abandonment of the determiner in the adjective phrase, she suggests that a gradual decline in use led eventually to a critical generation who simply did not hear it frequently enough to acquire it in the first place. Allen ends by warning that English writing in twelfth-century manuscripts should be carefully distinguished as either having been composed then, or having been copied (from a text composed earlier) then: in other words, not all twelfth-century writ-ing is evidence of twelfth-century usage.

Ewa Ciszek's corpus searches include the *Helsinki Corpus*, the *Dictionary of Old English Corpus in Electronic Form* and the online *Middle English Diction-ary*. Her chapter (*The suffix -ish: Its semantic development and productivity in Middle English*) treats the subsequent history of the Old English suffix *-isc*. This is a relatively unexamined affix, only treated briefly so far in the literature and historical dictionaries. It was used in Old English to form adjectives from nouns, with the predominant meaning of 'of a certain nationality/origin' (as in

Lindisfarneisc 'of Lindisfarne'). At this early period it already carried the meaning 'language of (a group)' (as in *Denisc* 'Norse'). By Early Middle English *-isc* was used to form adjectives from proper and common nouns, with the meaning 'characteristic of', and was attached to words of foreign as well as native origin. In Late Middle English *-isc* was used increasingly with common nouns in the semantic fields of people and animals, as in *womanish*, *coltish*. When attached to adjectives, *-isc* carried the meaning 'somewhat', as in *yellowish*, and the addition of *-isc* to colour terms in general seems to have become productive in the late fourteenth century. In the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries *-isc* was attached to a wider range of adjectives, and began to be suffixed to parts of verbs. Ciszek speculates that the reason that *-isc* was used in a limited capacity in Old English and Early Middle English is because there were several competing French suffixes, as well as the *of* + noun construction. By contrast (and contrary to the conclusions of some previous discussions), *-isc* is found to have been plentifully productive in Late Middle English, with the new phenomenon of forming adjectives on adjectives, possibly developed due to reanalysis of the wealth of colour term *-isc* derivatives.

We come now to authors who have analysed families of manuscripts. María José Carrillo-Linares and Edurne Garrido-Anes (*Lexical variation in late Middle English: selection and deselection*) have analysed fifty-nine manuscripts of the *Prick of Conscience*, drawing on other data where possible, in order to present a word-geographical study of two lexemes, *souchen* and *trowen*. The authors investigate the spatial and temporal distributions of these items, taking careful account of the complex textual relationships of manuscript witnesses. S*ouchen* 'to suspect', of Anglo-Norman derivation, is only attested in the Middle English period, and does not appear to have outlasted the fifteenth century, even in dialectal use. The authors discover that it was geographically widespread in the fourteenth century, although low in frequency, and that it started to die out in the fifteenth. *Trowen* 'to have faith in' and 'to know', of Old English derivation, was a higher-frequency item. *Trowen* 'to know' was used throughout the country in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and survived into nineteenth-century dialect usage, whereas *trowen* 'to have faith in' seems to have been more geographically and temporally limited. The authors are interested in scribes' avoidance of certain lexical items and replacement with synonyms, possibly indicating that such words were either foreign to the scribes' own idiolect or becoming archaic. This leads to an historical dialectal word-map, and is part of the authors' ongoing study of Middle English word geography.

Anna Wojtyś examines seven Chaucerian manuscripts in her study (*The prefix y-: grammatical marker or meaningless appendage? A contrastive analysis of selected manuscripts of Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales*). She tests the hypotheses that metre and grammar played an important part in Chaucer's (and

subsequent scribes') choice of *y*-prefixing on past participles in various functions. Possibilities examined are that *y*-presence or absence depends on position in a metrical line (with line-initial and line-final positions being favoured and line-medial position being disfavoured); that *y*-prefixes occur as a reinforcing device in the government of split passives and split perfectives; and that *y*-prefixes prevail in verbal uses rather than adjectival ones. Wojtyš tests these hypotheses against seven of the earliest manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales* and finds considerable variation. Neither metre nor grammar have full explanatory power, and do not seem to have prevented scribes from adding or deleting *y*-prefixes (although the hypothesis that the *y*-prefix belongs to verbal use is upheld, in that Wojtyš finds no tokens at all premodifying nouns).

Joanna Esquibel searches Dan Michel's manuscript of the *Ayenbite of Inwyt* (*Gratter cost, more grat zenne, þe more gratter torment: Comparison in Dan Michel's* Ayenbite of Inwyt), looking closely at his way of forming comparatives, in order to determine whether his unusually large proportion of periphrastic constructions is due to their being calqued on French originals (the *Ayenbite of Inwyt* being a translation from French). She finds that 84% of comparative adjectives in the *Ayenbite* are of Old English etymology, and that adjectives of foreign origin (which are more likely than Old English ones to be polysyllabic) are indeed more prone to periphrasis. Esquibel analyses the constituents of comparative adjectival phrases, in particular the comparative adverb *more*, and finds that *more* functioned as a grammaticalized introducer of a comparative clause, and as a modifier within a periphrastic construction, with the phrase *the more* used for emphasis. Those adjectives that take both suffixation and periphrasis are found to be mainly native mono- or disyllabic words. Esquibel concludes that the basic function of Dan Michel's periphrastically-graded adjectives was essentially one of emphasis.

We come now to authors who detect information about social and cultural life via linguistic study. Carole Hough (*Names in Chaucer's* Nun's Priest's *Tale*) considers the names *Malle*, *Malkyn* (the farm worker), *Chauntecleer* (the cock), *Pertelote* (his hen), *Russell* (the fox), *Colle* (a dog), *Talbot* (a dog) and *Gerland* (a dog), all being named characters in the *Nun's Priest's Tale*. She considers the effect of the high register of the Latinate names, and the elevated terms of address – Madame, Dame, Sire – used between the cock and his hens, in contrast with the farmyard setting. She offers a brand new interpretation of *Pertelote*, suggesting a set of meanings 'attractive appearance, beautiful paramour, little beauty'. She also speculates about the relationship between the name *Talbot* and the inn named *Tabard*, wondering whether *Talbot* might not have been the name of a room at the *Tabard*. As garlands were used as a tavern sign, Hough suggests that there may also be a link between the names of the dogs and of taverns.

Nils-Lennart Johannesson (*"Rihht alls an hunnte takeþþ der. /Wiþþ hise ȝæpe racchess": Hunting as a metaphor for proselytizing in the* Ormulum) no-

tices that Orm's hunting metaphors differ from those found in the Latin exegetical literature on which he usually modelled his texts. Orm mentions hunting with hounds, which earlier Latin models did not. There, the metaphors used for the first disciples were as fishers of men with nets (as Peter, Andrew, James and John were fishermen), and as hunters of men's souls. But Orm writes of hunting with nets and dogs to catch deer, where the metaphorical nets represent preaching, the use of words in preaching are represented by the use of dogs in hunting, and the deer stand for men's souls. Using medieval pictorial representations, Johannesson surveys the social practice and conventions of hunting. He finds that there was a distinction between hunting as a noble leisure pastime, and hunting for food. Those who hunted for sport – the nobility – did not use nets. Those who hunted for food – the servant class – did. Orm thus equates the disciples with the servant class, bringing the deer/souls to their lord/Christ. Dogs are absent from Orm's models but were presumably present in real-life twelfth-century Lincolnshire deer-hunts; so Orm translated the metaphor of the disciples saving of mens' souls into an everyday occupation shared by his audience. It might be inferred that Orm was bringing the gospel to those who worked, rather than those who were waited on.

Mayumi Taguchi (*Devotional terms and the use of the Bible in Nicholas Love's* Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ) looks closely at the frequency and distribution of key devotional words and phrases in Love's *Mirror*: the phrase *devout imagination* (often understood as being particularly characteristic of the text), and other words relating to affective and edifying functions, notably *stir* (in the context of rousing intense emotions), *reason*, *open*, *edify*, *profit*, *fruitful*, *example*, *ground(ed)* and their derivatives. Taguchi also looks carefully at Love's use of scriptural references and quotations. The whole survey enables us to understand better the place of Love's text, and its purposes, in the context of the language employed by Lollard and anti-Lollard treatises. Taguchi concludes that Love was more interested in his edificatory goal than his meditative one, and relates his use of "verbal iconography" to a picture Bible, or Book of Hours.

The final two papers in this volume are concerned with metre. Nicolay Yakovlev (*Metre and punctuation in the Caligula manuscript of Laȝamon's* Brut) uses his own recent discoveries about the regularity of the metre of Laȝamon's poem as the basis for a detailed analysis which provides significant new insights into the *Brut*'s textual history. In particular, he identifies how the two scribes of the Caligula manuscript went about punctuating lines and half-lines, showing that various people in the history of the poem's copying must have understood the metrical principles of its composition, and offering more evidence that Scribe B was a *literatim* copyist who carried over features of his composite exemplar.

Ad Putter's chapter (*A prototype theory of metrical stress: Lexical categories and ictus in Langland, the Gawain-poet and other alliterative poets*) is an important contribution to scholarship on the principles of metrical stress. Putter tests the widespread assumption that the placing of stress depended on a hierarchy of lexical classes; in particular, he probes the idea that nouns and adjectives always received stress. He finds, on the contrary, that lexical classes are gradient, and therefore "unreliable as a categorical basis for stress assignment". He applies Prototype Theory (which holds that words at the periphery of a category behave differently from words at the centre), and shows that some adjectives (especially quantifiers) and some nouns (e.g. *way*, *time*, *thing*) are not prototypical of their lexical categories, and instead behave prosodically like function words by not receiving stress. The same is true of nouns functioning quasi-pronominally, where they refer to concepts already introduced in the immediate discourse context.