



Universität
Zürich^{UZH}



Swiss National
Science Foundation



Swiss Academy
of Humanities
and Social Sciences



ICOME-14

14th International Conference on Middle English

Travel and Travelling

3 – 6 June 2026

Book of Abstracts



<https://www.icode2026.uzh.ch/en.html>



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Images:

Banner: Detail from the Short Psalter, produced in the early 14th century at Malmesbury Abbey (St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek)

Background: Illustration from B MS fr 2810, fol. 188v, containing an early 15th-century copy of John Mandeville's *Le livre des merveilles* (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France)

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Plenary speakers

Prof. Margaret Connolly (University of St Andrews) – From Hand to Hand: Movements of Middle English Manuscripts

From the very moment they were created by the hands of medieval scribes, Middle English manuscripts have been on the move. Some movements from owner to owner or place to place were deliberate whilst others have been accidental, but all have influenced the texts we now read and the physical formats in which those texts survive. Drawing on examples from a wide range of Middle English manuscripts this lecture will reveal how the form of the medieval book has been shaped by the hands of readers, collectors, antiquaries, book dealers, scholars, and librarians. It will also consider why awareness of this process of transformation is important for our understanding of medieval literature.

Dr. Judith Huber (University of Munich) – Verbalizing Motion and Travel in Middle English

This talk focuses on the linguistic expression of travelling and moving in Middle English and explores the outcomes of the contact between predominantly satellite-framing Middle English (the type *sail across the Channel*, with ‘path’ expressed outside the verb and the verb often carrying manner information) and predominantly verb-framing medieval French (the type *traverser la Manche*, with ‘path’ expressed in the verb). Anglo-Norman as a contact variety is particularly interesting in this regard. Based on the analysis of dictionaries, thesauri, and selected Old and Middle English texts, the lecture investigates the lexical material and the syntactic patterns used to talk about motion. We will see, for instance, how *go* is generalizing from its specific meaning ‘go on foot’ (still e.g. in *Ne ganninde* [Otho: *goinde*] *ne ridinde* (c1275(?a1200) Lay.Brut (Clg A.9)1582)) to supersede *fare* as the most frequent motion verb next to *come* (cf. OE *þe to mynstre cumað, oðþe fram mynstre farað* (BenR 53.83.8) vs. ME *when þai ga and when þai cume* (a1425 Ben.Rule(1) (Lnsd 378)) and how more and more verbs are drawn into intransitive motion readings, such as *hie*, *travel*, both originally meaning ‘to exert oneself’, or *walk*, originally meaning ‘to roll, toss about’.

Dr. Daniel Sawyer (University of Oxford) – Teaching Middle English Poetry Now

Middle English is in some senses a niche interest: a tongue that found limited use in its own time, now experienced by some (not all!) students as an obligation. But since the end of its era Middle English verse has also travelled further and found wider readerships. Today, Middle English persists within a variety of different higher education contexts. I will survey this landscape and consider the hurdles facing Middle English poetry teaching alongside the field's strengths, old and new. Some starting points for discussion will emerge from my experience both of teaching and of writing a teaching book in the 2020s. The session will then move to group discussion, and finally convene to share problems, resources, and expertise.

Prof. Sebastian Sobecki (University of Toronto) – The Travels of Middle English

Global medieval travel writing is not a self-explanatory concept. 'Global' stands for the 'forces that globalise' as opposed to 'all-encompassing', whereas 'medieval' loses its purchase beyond Europe and the Middle East. The period referred to as 'medieval' saw European and Middle Eastern forces globalise the world culturally and politically, militarily and ideologically. The early history of global travel writing therefore cannot be told without prioritising the cultural expansion of Christianity and Islam, the enslavement of Africans and Asians by European and Middle Eastern peoples, and the enmeshing of ever larger swathes of territory in transnational economies. In this vastly expanded world, what was the place of Middle English writings, crafted in a local language that was not even the code of choice in its home polities? How did Middle English texts report, shape, and participate in the world of global travel? This lecture will engage with several literary and pragmatic texts and examine their material contexts.

Panel 1: Historical Pragmatics and Stylistics

Asián Caparros, Marina (University of Zurich) – Semantic Nuance and Stylistic Function of Norse Loanwords in *Havelok the Dane*

The integration of Norse elements into the English lexicon remains a complex and only partially explored field, one that demands attention not only in terms of the identification of borrowings but also in connection with the linguistic and social mechanisms through which they were integrated into English. Of particular relevance are the patterns of regional and social distribution and the semantic and stylistic relationships these Norse-derived items established with their native or near-synonymous counterparts. Literary texts, and verse compositions in particular, provide a valuable arena for examining such interactions. Within the constraints of metre and alliteration, poets were frequently required to balance formal demands with semantic precision, causing them to often opt for a Scandinavian loanword rather than a native near-synonym.

While significant advances have been made in recent decades, most notably through studies such as Sara Pons-Sanz's *Norse-Derived Terms in the Ormulum: A Reappraisal* (2024) and "The Lexico-Semantic Distribution of Norse-Derived Terms in Late Middle English Alliterative Poems: Analysing the Gersum Database" (2025), the extent and nature of Norse lexical influence continue to invite further exploration. The expanding range of digital and lexicographic resources, particularly the *Middle English Dictionary* (MED), the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), and the *Historical Thesaurus of English* (HTE), now enables more precise investigations into semantic stratification and the relationships between native and borrowed vocabulary.

The present study draws upon the HTE's classificatory framework to undertake a lexico-semantic analysis of Norse-derived vocabulary in the thirteenth-century poem *Havelok the Dane* (Bodleian Library, Laud Misc. 108, entry 3, MS A). The initial stage of analysis involves the identification of Norse-derived terms in the poem and their classification within broader lexical-semantic domains. Then, this study seeks to shed light on how Norse-derived and native vocabulary interact within the poem's stylistic and semantic framework, showing that, in most attestations, these Scandinavian loanwords appear in rhyming position and many of them have very specific semantic nuances that differentiate them from their native counterparts. The selection of Norse-derived terms such as ME *slengen* 'to throw forcefully' (ll. 1923, 2435) and ME *rippe* 'basket for carrying fish' (l. 893), among others, illustrate that the poet chose these Norse borrowings not only for stylistic reasons but also for their distinct semantic value, a choice further shaped by the poem's composition in an East Midland dialect, where Scandinavian influence was particularly strong.

Bartnik, Artur (John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin) – Changes in Middle English Left-Dislocation

Left-dislocation—a common structure throughout Early English—underwent several changes in Middle English (ME). Pragmatically, pronominally headed structures began to be used for generic reference, as part of a broader development involving the increased use of personal pronouns in a generalizing function (Allen 2022). In Old English (OE), only demonstrative pronouns fulfilled this role. The ME innovation is illustrated in (1). Interestingly, this change is not attested in resumptive pronouns, which consistently occur in left-dislocated structures. In fact, pronouns have always been more common in such constructions (cf. Traugott 2007; Allen 2022, among others). Grammatically, we observe a gradual reduction in the complexity of the fronted material, since in OE most left-dislocated nominals were modified by relative or adverbial clauses. This change is already evident in Early Middle English (EME), especially between 1150–1250 (see example 2). Finally, object left-dislocations, which decrease in number and are primarily attested in EME, become less associated with topic shift. This is due to the marked decline in demonstratives, which are traditionally connected with that function (example 3 featuring a more common object pronominal resumptive).

(1) Hie ðe is clane maiden on likame, and ðese mihte ne hafð on hire zepanke...

she that is clean virgin in body and this virtue not has in her thought...

hie nis naht maiden to-foren gode.

she not-is not virgin before God

‘She who is a clean virgin in her body and does not have this virtue in her thought...

she is not a virgin in God’s sight’

(Allen 2022: 122) (CMVICES1,131.1627)

(2) Richt hont **þt** is godwerc.

‘right hand, that is good works’

(CMANCRIW-1,II.117.1465)

(3) Se ðe luueð ðese world, ðes fader luue god-almihtines nis naht an **him**

He who loves this world, the father love god-almighty not-is not in him

‘He who loves this world, the love of the Father, God Almighty, is not in him’

(CMVICES1,41.473)

The aim of this talk is to trace the changes in left-dislocated structures in Middle English, with special attention to textual, dialectal, and temporal variation. The investigation is based primarily on the Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Middle English (Kroch & Taylor 2000).

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Critten, Rory (University of Lausanne) – Representing Speech in the Auchinleck *Seven Sages of Rome*

The *Seven Sages of Rome* was translated from French prose into English verse in London, c. 1300; the earliest surviving copy of that translation survives in the Auchinleck Manuscript (London, c. 1330). One of the alterations operated by the *Seven Sages* translator concerns the text's handling of speech. At several moments, the translator introduces slipping between indirect and direct speech where the French source more clearly demarcates these levels of discourse. This paper proposes that slipping is introduced for dramatic purposes; speakers voices are thereby shown suddenly to emerge in moments of tension or excitement, as when an emperor orders the return of his son to Rome, for example, or when the emperor's baronsexpress outrage at the son's subsequent arrest.

This paper argues (1) that the translator's modifications help prepare the work for oral performance, a standard mode of transmission for Middle English romance, and (2) that the introduction of slipping is representative of the translator's attempts to mobilize the full potential of multilingual London English. Slipping has English precedence, for sure, but it is also a feature of Old French romance, and has been found in Latin writing too. This demonstration of the care that the translator takes to enhance their source is part of a larger argument that finds a "philological sensibility" in evidence in the Auchinleck Manuscript's texts. While the language of the manuscript's poems has not garnered much praise, I see its poets innovating in thoughtful ways that demonstrate a keen awareness of the repertoire of options available to them in their time and place.

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- Pons-Sanz, Sara M. "Speech Representation in Robert Mannyng's Handlyng Synne as a Pedagogic Tool." *Viator* 53/1 (2022): 77-110.

See Sophie Marnette, *Speech and Thought Presentation in French: Concepts and Strategies*. Amsterdam, 2005.

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Jucker, Andreas and Annina Seiler (University of Zurich) – “Knights, nu ze reste one while, ef zou leste”: The Origin of Courtesy Request Markers in Middle English

The courtesy request marker *please* is a relatively recent innovation of the English language. It was only in the second half of the nineteenth century that it replaced the earlier courtesy request marker *pray*. But both these forms have long phrasal histories that go back to (Late) Middle English, when *please* was used in phrases such as *if it please you*, and *pray* in phrases such as *I besek zowe & pray zowe*. In Middle English, they were only two out of a whole range of elements that could be used to turn a command into a polite request. *If it please you* co-existed with such forms as *if ye list* or *if it like your sovereign*, which are presumably adaptations of Old French *vous/tu plaît/plaist* (Waltereit 2015), the forerunner of Modern French *s’il vous/te plaît*. And *I pray you* was one of a whole range of explicit performatives, such as *I desire you* and *I beseech you*. These forms have correspondent forms in Old French, such as *je vous proi*, *je vous requier* or *je vous conjur* (Denoyelle 2014). Both in French and in English, these forms were compositional and syntactically fully integrated into a complex sentence structure rather than fixed and parenthetical as they are today. Based on data from the *Helsinki Corpus* and the *Parsed Corpus of Early English Correspondence*, we want to explore the origins of these courtesy request markers in the Middle English period and analyse how they developed from the early courtly literature in Old French to a more diverse range of genres in Middle English.

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Pons-Sanz, Sara (University of Cardiff) – Identity, Agency, and Speech in Medieval English Romances

As the most popular secular literary genre from the twelfth to the sixteenth century, romance is a central means by which the period ‘represents itself to itself’ (Cooper 2004: 6). As such, it offers fertile ground for the exploration of the interaction between identity construction (as represented by various intersectional categories such as gender, age, social class, religion, etc.) and agency. While there have been some studies on this matter, they have tended to focus on specific texts / authors (e.g. Wyatt 2016), thus leaving unaddressed vital questions of how identity construction manifests itself in different subgenres and evolves in response to societal changes (e.g. increasing social mobility and economic independence for women that followed the Black Death).

This paper will be able to provide such an overview by relying instead on an annotated corpus including fifty-three medieval English romances, from different centuries and cycles (Matter of Britain, France, etc.), and with different textual histories (original compositions vs translations). Given the central role of dialogue in this genre, agency will be analysed by investigating how characters’ speech is represented and which speech acts they carry out through their words. Speech representation will be analysed on the basis of the taxonomy put forward by Leech and Short (1981), as adapted to medieval texts by Pons-Sanz (2019 and 2022). The second edition of the ISO standard 24617-2 for dialogue act annotation (International Organization for Standardization 2020), with adaptations for specific speech acts prevalent in medieval romances (e.g. prayers), will be the theoretical framework used for the classification of the speech acts.

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Timofeeva, Olga (University of Zurich) – The Knight's Speech: Status and Pronominal Address in Late Middle English Romances

This paper investigates the use of honorific pronouns in four Middle English romances – *Sir Eglamour of Artois*, *Sir Tryamour*, *Sir Amadace*, and *Sir Cleges* – composed after 1350 in the North and North-west Midlands. All four texts are of English origin, without known French sources, and display comparable normalised frequencies of honorific V-address (*ye/you* with singular referent). Together they form a coherent dataset for examining how pronominal choice reflects social hierarchy, situational status, and speech-act function in late medieval dialogue.

The analysis is based on 544 tokens of singular pronominal address forms (i.e. both T and V), classified by speaker–addressee relation and discourse context. Across the dataset, the correlation between social rank and pronominal choice is consistent: superiors receive V, inferiors T. Switches between forms occur where the social order is challenged or temporarily inverted – through emotional outburst, disguise, or a reversal of dependence. Requests, petitions, and other face-threatening acts typically elicit V forms, while confrontations, refusals, and emotionally charged responses favour T.

The romances provide detailed evidence of how linguistic politeness interacts with social mobility and narrative function. *Sir Eglamour* and *Sir Tryamour* display the highest frequency of pronominal alternation, corresponding to scenes of courtship, supplication, and royal negotiation. *Sir Amadace* and *Sir Cleges* extend the pattern to non-noble speakers, showing how perceived rather than actual rank determines address: a merchant's ghost or a destitute knight may be treated as an equal or an inferior depending on appearance and context. Across all texts, formulaic discourse (salutations, farewells, blessings) strongly favours V, confirming the conventionalisation of honorific forms in ritualised speech.

These findings indicate that, by the later fourteenth century, the T/V contrast had become a stable resource for marking social relations and pragmatic nuance in English. The expansion of V forms was now driven less by external French models than by internal interactional pressures visible in vernacular writing: the need to index deference, emotion, and shifting social alignments within dialogue. The romances thus document a stage in which the Middle English pronominal system reached functional maturity, reflecting both the hierarchy and the volatility of late medieval society.

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Panel 2: Navigating the Lexicon

Ayed, Rihab (University of Zurich) – Travelling from one Semantic Field to Another: Overlapping Lexical Items in the Semantic Fields of MEDICINE and RELIGION in Middle English

Previous studies that focused on the intersection of religion and medicine (Bishop 2007; Yoshikawa 2015) have shown that with regards to matters of the body and matters of the soul these two fields were inseparable in the Middle Ages. If that is true in terms of practice and diagnosis – illnesses were often perceived as punishment for an immoral behaviour (Langum 2013) – as well as in terms of textual genres – medical and religious texts were closely linked (Yoshikawa 2015) – it is also true in terms of language: the semantic fields of RELIGION and MEDICINE have a non-negligible number of lexical items in common. The *Middle English Dictionary* (MED) contains dozens of words that can be linked to these two semantic fields.

This paper investigates this lexical intersection and aims at giving an overview of the different scenarios possible in terms of language and semantic field of origin. Some words appear to be in use in one field before operating a semantic shift towards the other, such as *leche*, which went from meaning ‘one who heals’ during the Old English period, to ‘one who heals soul and spirit’ in the Early Middle English period (Sylwanowicz 2013), or *heresie*, which was borrowed from Old French and/or Latin and is attested in the early thirteenth century with its religious meaning of something in opposition to Christianity, but was also used in the early fifteenth century by Guy de Chauliac to point at a man’s false opinion on a medical matter (MED, s. v. *heresie*, n.). Other words appear to have already been used within both fields in Old English or in Old French and /or Latin before being borrowed within Middle English, as it is the case with words such as *siknesse*, or *tunicle*.

The description of the different scenarios will then be followed by an analysis of the lexical relationships within the intersection of these two fields and a comparison to previous findings within these two fields regarding the presence of French loanwords being more attested at a hypernymic level than at a hyponymic one (Sylvester et al. 2025; Vogelsanger 2025).

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Kern-Stähler, Annette and Mary Flannery (University of Bern) – Searching for a Lost Language: Building a Middle English Lexicon of Disgust via Medieval Travel Writing

In our current collaborative project, we are interested in detecting how Middle English devotional literature, satire, and travel writing are aesthetically invested in repugnance and revulsion. Even though the term 'disgust' only entered the English lexicon in 1598 (Robinson), Middle English is replete with disgust-related terms that have either disappeared from modern English (e.g. *wlatesomenes*, *squaimous*, *unlovelich*) or changed meanings (see e.g. *ugli*, meaning 'morally offensive' c. 1300). Retrieving this emotional vocabulary (Rosenwein 2006) will enable us to access the affective and sensory discourse on which medieval disgust's conceptual architecture is built. In this paper, we aim to present preliminary findings of our Middle English lexicon of disgust, followed by a case study that focuses on the use of disgust's mingled appeal and repulsion in travel writing.

Mambelli, Gloria (University of Verona) – Language Mixing and Lexicography: A Journey into the Technical Lexis of the Manorial System

Late medieval non-literary evidence shows that individuals working in professional environments such as estate management, architecture, and trade were competent multilingual speakers of the three languages of post-Conquest England (i.e. Anglo-French, Medieval Latin, and Middle English) well into the fifteenth century (Ingham & Marcus 2016). Business records attest to the mixing of these languages through code-switching and orthographic practices that contributed to the blurring of language boundaries (Trotter 2009; Wright 2000).

Mixed-language attestations are recorded in the dictionaries of the three medieval languages, i.e. the *Anglo-Norman Dictionary* (AND), the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* (DMLBS), and the *Middle English Dictionary* (MED); however, their treatment is inconsistent (cf. Wright 2013). The difficulties in distinguishing single-word code-switches from lexical borrowings, along with the differing editorial policies of each dictionary, make such inconsistencies perhaps inevitable. Nevertheless, the inclusion of these attestations in historical dictionaries is crucial for an accurate representation of the linguistic situation of the period.

This study focuses on the Middle English technical lexis of the manorial system, within which multilingual professionals were responsible for producing accounts and inventories (Ingham 2009). Terms belonging to this lexical domain were used as keywords to extract quotations from the MED, which were subsequently compared with those in the AND and DMLBS. Through the analysis of these quotations, this study aims to assess the extent to which medieval language-mixing practices are represented in these lexicographical resources and to consider ways in which they might more accurately reflect this distinctive feature of late medieval business writing.

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Merencio, Sandra (University of Alicante) – Lexical Borrowing in Middle English Medical Writing: A Case Study on *The Sekenesse of Wymmen*

Fifteenth-century England saw a significant rise in the production of vernacular writing on medicine and health, yielding a number of Middle English (ME) medical texts six times greater than that of the fourteenth century (Singer 1919, 102). These writings oftentimes have a multilingual nature, mixing ME with Latin and Anglo- Norman, and derive from the efforts to translate Latin medical discourse into the vernacular (Jones 1999, 434). Prior studies have investigated the lexicon of ME medical writing—one example is Norri's work which culminated in the publication of the *Dictionary of Medical Vocabulary in English, 1375–1550* (2016). However, research on the specific processes of lexical borrowing in this genre of ME writing remains scarce—a notable paper dealing with lexical borrowing and competition in medical writing is Sylvester, Tiddeman and Ingham's (2022) multi-domain examination of lexical borrowing in ME. This study attempts to fill such a gap by directing its attention to the fifteenth-century *The Sekenesse of Wymmen* (henceforth *Sekenesse*), the most widely circulated gynecological text in late medieval England (Green 1992, 72). The objective of the study is threefold: (1) to assess the prevalence of borrowings over Old English- inherited lexemes in the medical terminology of *Sekenesse*, (2) to identify the typology of the borrowed lexical

units, and (3) to establish potential patterns in the text as regards the selection of foreign lexical items when Old English-derived alternatives existed in the lexical stock of ME. To achieve these goals, the medical- and health- related lexicon in *Sekenesse* was divided into five subfields: body parts, bodily fluids, diseases, physiological responses to disease, and pharmacology and medicinal ingredients. The borrowed lexemes were then classified following Haspelmath's (2009) taxonomy of lexical borrowing mechanisms. Subsequently, the borrowings were matched to equivalent forms as listed in the *Historical Thesaurus of English*. The results show a significantly higher number of borrowings in the two subfields of diseases and pharmacology, of which around eighty percent is made up of foreign lexical items. Likewise, loanwords are far more common than other types of borrowings—such as loan translations—with very few exceptions. Finally, there appears to be a tendency towards employing Old English-inherited lexemes instead of foreign ones whenever they are available, which becomes particularly apparent in the subfield of pharmacology.

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<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1360674321000113>

Rose, Madeline (Trinity College Dublin) – Middle English Homography and Word Frequency at Scale: Challenges in Lexical and Semantic Tagging Across Corpora

The overall goal of the current project is to facilitate a systematic description of homography in Middle English, for the purpose of developing efficient, high-recall approaches to the disambiguation of homographic terms in keyword search. To this end, initial tests of various search algorithms indicated that, alongside syntactic categories, the presence of homographs and the absolute frequency of a given term significantly ($p < 0.05$) impact search performance. However, the calculation of lexical frequency, due to the high rate of

homography and spelling variation, for Middle English corpora requires word-sense disambiguation, and thus relies on corpora with text tagged with lemma or other lexical-semantic features. In order to describe lexical frequency for Middle English completely, a corpus that is tagged with lexical-semantic features and covers the Middle English whole period is required. Because such a corpus does not currently exist, the alignment of multiple corpora for lexical-semantic research on Middle English is needed.

The aim of the proposed paper is to present immediate- and possible long- term solutions for the alignment of Middle English corpora for lexical-semantic research. I begin by discussing the current state of the field for lexically-tagged Middle English corpora, and the practicalities of aligning the Linguistic Atlas of Early Middle English (LAEME), and the Chaucer-Gower Glossorial Concordance to Middle English. Beyond immediate solutions to the alignment of these corpora, I will discuss further avenues in both Middle English corpus design and alignment tools relevant to Middle English lexical research.

Wallis, Christine (University of Westminster) – A Web of Words: Glosses for Weaving Vocabulary in John of Garland’s *Dictionarius*

John of Garland’s *Dictionarius* is a text designed to teach Latin vocabulary by taking readers on an imaginary walk through Paris, describing various traders or manufacturers and their wares. In addition to the main text, many surviving manuscripts contain a commentary giving grammatical and etymological information, and/ or vernacular glosses explaining the vocabulary of the original text. This supplementary material provides a valuable insight into how the *Dictionarius* was used to teach Latin, and how it was received by its audience (Wallis, Seiler & Pagan 2024).

The vocabulary described in the *Dictionarius* includes sections devoted to *instrumenta mulieribus* (‘instruments belonging to women’), namely implements for weaving, spinning, carding and other activities related to textile production and use. In a group of 8 manuscripts (from Bruges, Cambridge, Dublin, Lincoln and Oxford) this ‘women’s vocabulary’ contains a comparatively high level of Middle English glosses, alongside more frequent French glossing. For example, *trahale* (‘a skein-winding reel’) is glossed six times with the English *rel* (‘reel’). A more puzzling term is *calotricatorium* (‘?smoothing iron’ (DMLBS)), which is glossed with a variety of words (*redelere*, *sclikebred*, *ridlingbred*, *ridilbred*), several formed with the English -*bred* (‘-board’), but none of which appear in resources such as the *AND*, *MED* or the *Lexis of Cloth and Clothing* database.

My paper explores the following research questions: 1. Do the textile glosses travel as a group from one manuscript to another, or are they *ad hoc* reader responses? Do the English and French glosses behave in similar or different ways? 2. Why are so many English glosses associated with textile work in the *Dictionarius*? 3. What evidence is there for these ‘women’s words’ in other texts/ lexicographic resources from the Old and Middle English periods?

This investigation focuses on social aspects of the textile glosses, such as a) the extent to which this vocabulary may have been under-recorded because of its association with women’s work, and b) the relationship of these glosses with French and continental Germanic languages, given recent evidence from the *Bilingual Thesaurus* that loanwords could make

significant contributions to technical registers (Ingham et al 2019). The study also contributes to a wider investigation of the relationships between the main text, commentary and glosses as the *Dictionarius* moves through time and space in its different manuscript iterations.

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AND = Anglo-Norman Dictionary <https://anglo-norman.net/>

DMLBS = Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources
<https://www.dmlbs.ox.ac.uk/web/index.html>

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MED = Middle English Dictionary <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/>

The Bilingual Thesaurus of Everyday Life in Medieval England <https://thesaurus.ac.uk/bth/>

The Lexis of Cloth and Clothing Project <http://lexisproject.arts.manchester.ac.uk/index.html>

Wallis, Christine, Annina Seiler, & Heather Pagan. 2024. 'Multilingual Glossing and Translanguaging in John of Garland's *Dictionarius*: The Case of Bruges, Public Library MS 536.' *Lexis* HS 3. <http://journals.openedition.org/lexis/8693>

Panel 3: Spiritual Journeys

Burns, Dermot (University of Galway) – Traversing the weye: Movement, Encounter, and the Poetics of ‘Ye that pasen by the weye’

The anonymous Middle English lyric “*Ye that pasen by the weye*” offers a remarkable meditation on suffering, witness, and spiritual movement within the devotional Christian culture of medieval England. This paper situates the poem within the conference theme of *Travel and Travelling* by examining how its personal address to the passerby transforms physical passage into a mode of affective and spiritual journeying. The lyric’s opening injunction: “Ye that pasen by the weye”, positions the reader or listener as a traveller in transit, whose encounter with the suffering Christ becomes both a moment of moral ‘beholding’ and a transient journey of inward, spiritual pilgrimage.

Drawing upon theories of mobility and affect, this paper argues that ‘Ye that pasen by the weye’ constructs travel not only in a geographical, physical sense but also as an experiential and transcendent crossing between worldly and sacred realms. It concerns not just travel in this life, but the journey from mortal existence, through death, to eternal life via ‘the weye’: a phrase which functions on several levels, but most pertinently here as a self-appointed label used by Christ himself (John 14:6). The poem’s compact structure and use of direct address invite an intimate form of participation: the passerby’s travel along the “weye” mirroring the soul’s progress through sin, compassion, and redemption. Through close reading, this paper explores how the poem’s affective language functions as a rhetorical waypoint, or station, that transforms the act of looking into an act of empathetic movement, specifically through its use of key verbs, ‘beholdet’ and ‘abidet’. The lyric thus recasts the notion of travel as an interior, spiritual journey, prompted by sight, contemplation, and sorrow – maybe even a measure of guilt. By invoking both biblical mourning (Lamentations 1:12) and vernacular immediacy, the poem stages a devotional encounter that reimagines the everyday path as a site of revelation and sacred passage.

Ultimately, ‘Ye that pasen by the weye’ exemplifies how medieval lyric poetry reconfigures travel as a religious and affecting practice. The poem’s imagined traveller, simultaneously mobile and momentarily paused, embodies the tension between motion and contemplation that informs religious experience. This paper thus provides a close reading of the lyric, positioning it as a microcosm of medieval pilgrimage’s dual nature: the physical movement of bodies through landscape toward a holy shrine and the motion of souls toward divine understanding, redemption, and eternal life by following ‘the Weye’, that is Christ.

Cui, Chen (University of Lausanne, Ca' Foscari University of Venice) – Polycentric World System and Christian Universalism: Restless Echoes between John Mandeville and Janet Abu-Lughod

The ‘journeys’ undertaken by the historically unidentifiable Sir John Mandeville, an English knight purportedly hailing from St Albans, partake of distinct duality. Sometimes, the

Mandeville-author's travels are portrayed as embodied and narrated with ample references to pre-circulating encyclopedic and intellectual historical works, hence characterized by realism and factuality. But under most circumstances, the journeys unfolding here can be highly devotional (especially in the episodes revolving around Jerusalem), grounded in either sympathetic or ideologically manipulative imagination, which foregrounds the tension between the interlaced physicality and spirituality in this generically fluid late medieval *opus magnum*.

This essay approaches *Mandeville's Travels* through the influential framework of Janet Abu-Lughod's theory of the late medieval world system. Her groundbreaking model, which challenges Eurocentric narratives by mapping a pre-modern, polycentric global economy, offers a compelling lens through which to reassess the *Travels*. It is argued that the *Mandeville*-author's depictions of geographical interconnection (especially through waterborne routes) and their portrayals of commercial prosperity, intellectual flourishing, and the symbolic richness of imperial material culture – notably the use of gold and pearls at the Mongolian courtly *habitus* – systematically resonate with Abu-Lughod's account of a culturally and economically interconnected Eurasian world of the later Middle Ages. By drawing connections between the symbolic role of gems in the *Mandeville*-author's descriptions and their meanings in Chinese sources and European lapidaries, the essay further affirms Abu-Lughod's insistence on transregional analysis and the value of crossing linguistic and cultural boundaries. Ultimately, reading *Mandeville's Travels* alongside Abu-Lughod's legacy not only deepens the historical grounding of the text but also foregrounds its participation in a sophisticated narrative vision of global entanglement. In doing so, the essay emphasizes the enduring relevance of Abu-Lughod's work for reconsidering medieval literature and history within a genuinely global, polycentric frame. It also explains how the dual discourses – respectively of global multicentered interconnectedness (in terms of historical writing) and Christocentric universalism (in terms of the historiographical agenda underlying the *Travels*) stand both in tension and in harmony in this text which is largely comparable to a spiritual travelogue.

Denissen, Diana (University of Lausanne) – 'I got back to my own little place': Travel, Monolingualism, and Homesickness in *The Book of Margery Kempe* and the *Sister-Book of Master Geert's House*

This paper will discuss the themes of travel, monolingualism, and homesickness in lives of late medieval religious women from the Low Countries and England, whose experiences were described in spiritual (auto)biographies. The sister-book of Master Geert's House is a Middle Dutch text, containing sixty-four biographical sketches or *vitae* of the women who lived in a semi-religious community of Sisters of the Common Life, in the period between c. 1390 and c. 1460. It is one of several sister-books that existed in the German and Dutch vernaculars. Contrary to what one might expect, the sister-book of Master Geert's House contains descriptions of (international) travel, because women from this semi-religious community went from one convent to another 'sister-convent', or because they had to maintain contacts outside of their religious community. Comparably, the Middle English *Book of Margery Kempe* (1373-1438) also describes Kempe's many travels. Reading both texts in parallel highlights the

importance of understanding the *Book* and its travel narratives outside an Anglocentric framework. It illustrates that the spiritual and textual vernacular landscape that Kempe encountered on her travels through the Low Countries and Germany was broader and more varied than has so far been acknowledged in most studies of the *Book*.

This paper will examine the different ways in which these late medieval women have described moments of language contact, linguistic confusion, danger, and feelings of 'otherness' or displacement during their travels. The examples that I will discuss portray a constant tension between the wish or need to travel, the challenges of travelling, and a desire to go back home. One could, therefore, argue that an implicit question that these devotional texts bring up is the following: is travel beneficial for spiritual growth, or not? To conclude my paper, I will attempt to answer this question.

Karáth, Tamás (Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Budapest and Comenius University, Bratislava) – 'Tyme, stede, and body' in the *Cloud*-author's Spiritual Work and Richard Methley's Reinterpretation

'For tyme, stede, and body, thees thre schuld be forgeten in alle goostly worching.' Thus, the anonymous author of the most outstanding Middle English writing of apophatic mysticism, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, urges his disciple to forget time, space, and body in the spiritual work directed to the cloud of unknowing in chapter 59. Musing over the ascent of the soul heavenwards, with references to Christ's Ascension, the climactic chapters 59–61 ultimately erase directionality and the sense of topographic homeliness:

And therefore beware that thou conceyve not bodely that that is mente goostly, thof al it be spokyn in bodely wordes, as ben thees: *up* or *doun*, *in* or *oute*, *behinde*, or *before*, *on o side* or *on other*. For thof al that a thing be never so goostly in itself, nevertheles yit yif it schal be spoken of, sithen it so is that speche is a bodely werk wrought with the tonge, the whiche is an instrument of the body, it behoveth alweis be spoken in bodely wordes. (*The Cloud of Unknowing*, chapter 61)

As suggested by the *Cloud*'s theorisation of language and words, expressions of directionality such as 'up' and 'down', 'above' and 'beneath' are merely instruments of the body, and as such, doomed to oblivion in the process of unknowing. However, in the chapters that previously locate the contemplative below the cloud of unknowing and above another cloud of forgetting, the *Cloud*-author reasserts the necessity of spatial referentiality. The first part of the paper will explore the ambiguous dynamic of space and ascent in the language of the *Cloud*-author.

The second part of the paper will turn to Richard Methley, himself also a Carthusian monk thriving almost a century after the *Cloud*-author, and translator and commentator of the *Cloud*. Methley reframed the threefold oblivion of time, space, and body in his own spiritual experience. While Methley appears to have invested much effort in commenting on the concept of ascent and spatial erasure in chapters 59–61 of the *Cloud*, the autobiographic

episodes of his spiritual diaries boldly establish a novel consciousness of one's own body and perceptions of temporality and spatiality in mystical rapture.

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Kelly, Anne (Independent researcher) – Scots *Eneados* (1513), Connection to *De Consolatione Philosophiae*

This paper examines the theme of the spiritual journey in Gavin Douglas's Scots *Eneados* (1513), the first known complete translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* into any form of English. The *Eneados* in many ways aligns with an emergent humanism in later medieval Scotland, most obviously in its explicit commitment to a faithful rendering of the classical text and its implicit and extensive engagement with the poem's scholarly tradition. Douglas's humanist bent is likewise suggested from his overt elevation of the Scots vernacular, as is the inclusion of original prologues to each book of his translation, a move connecting the *Eneados* to the learned commentaries surrounding Virgil's epic poem.

The continuities between the medieval and humanist periods increasingly and rightly prioritised by modern scholars is evident in the Boethian echoes of the *Eneados*. These point to Douglas's additional engagement with the use of the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* as a lens through which medieval commentators read Virgil's *Aeneid*, and vice versa, wherein both texts' male protagonists are seen to undertake a deeper spiritual journey. The Boethianism of the *Eneados* comes, moreover, to be refracted by its author's reading of Chaucer – more specifically, of *Troilus and Criseyde* and *The Knight's Tale*, the allusions to which in the Prologues point to their influence on the translation's framing of its hero's quest. The *Eneados* also nods in a way that has not fully been appreciated by modern readers to Douglas's near contemporary, Robert Henryson, whose poem, *Orpheus and Eurydice*, is deeply Boethian.

This paper begins by examining new evidence for the use of the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* as an interpretative frame for the spiritual journey of Aeneas in the *Eneados*, focusing on the Prologues, the authorial persona of which undertakes a commensurate voyage of his own.

Boethius's influence on the translation is also manifest in a way that has never been considered, namely in Douglas's striking use of different verse forms in the Prologues to the *Eneados*. This paper argues that this formal mixture represents an updated reworking of the prosimetrum as it occurs in Boethius's treatise, where it assists the reader in making a philosophical ascent. The *Eneados* therefore, in a manner further indicative of its author's reading of Henryson's *Orpheus*, is deeply concerned with the topic of the spiritual journey, not just its allegorical potential within the *Aeneid*, but also as a process which is actively made available to the poem's reader.

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Lancaster, Sarah (University of Nottingham) – A Big Ball of Wibbly Wobbly Timey-Wimey...Stuff! Navigating Providence in the *Cursor Mundi*

For Augustine, the ceaseless movement of time lies at the heart of human experience:

You, my Father, are eternal. But I am divided between time gone by and time to come, and its course is a mystery to me. My thoughts, the intimate life of my soul, are torn this way and that in the havoc of change. And so it will be until I am purified and melted by the fire of your love and fused into one with you.¹

The time-bound human being lives among a dizzying flux of intangible and fallible sense perceptions, which dart past in the blink of an eye. Yet from the perspective of eternity, time is ordered and static in its providential completion. There is a season for all things, and all things are beautiful in the fullness of time (Ecclesiastes 3).

The *Cursor Mundi*, a sweeping chronicle of Biblical and eschatological events, seeks to approximate a God's-eye view of history through its treatment of the time-travelling Wood of the Cross. Wood of the Cross narratives relate the series of adventures whereby wood derived from the Tree of Life came to be used in the Holy Rood. Unlike ordinary objects, bound by

diachronic processes such as growth, movement, and decay, the Wood acts providentially within the *Cursor*, traversing history not by natural causation, but by divine will. By interspersing Wood of the Cross episodes across its historical narrative, the *Cursor Mundi* presents a vision of time as teleological, providentially ordered, and organised around the Passion. To borrow the parlance of a 2007 episode of *Doctor Who*, it offers temporary emergence from the ‘wibbly wobbly timey-wimey stuff,’ and a glimpse of the ‘big ball’ of time in its fullness.

When reminded by an irascible priest that Christ is ‘ded long sithyn’, Margery Kempe famously replies ‘Sir, hys deth is as fresch to me as he had deyed this same day.’² This paper argues that the *Cursor Mundi*’s handling of the Wood of the Cross narrative anticipates such devotional perspectives, positioning Christocentric prayer as a mode of transportation into the eternal present of the Passion.

¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. by R. S. Pine Coffin (London: Penguin, 1961), XI.29.279.

² Barry Windeat (ed.), *The Book of Margery Kempe* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004), I.60.286.4963-65.

Onuma, Yu (Doshisha University) – *Mandeville’s Travels* as a Guide to Mental Journey

This paper examines *Mandeville’s Travels* (c. 1357) as a guide for late medieval Europeans undertaking a mental journey toward self-knowledge and spiritual development. While the text is often discussed for its fantastical marvels and portrayals of otherness, this study focuses on its instructive dimensions. The work employs exotic descriptions of the world not merely for entertainment or wonder, but to pursue a Christian aim: the cultivation of a better life through moral and spiritual reflection.

Often regarded as one of the most famous examples of medieval travel narrative, *Mandeville’s Travels* presents itself as the memoir of a seasoned traveller. Yet in reality, it is a literary patchwork, drawing from diverse earlier sources. Rather than a factual travelogue, it is an imaginative construction designed to prompt readers toward a spiritual journey—through depictions of biblically significant locations such as Jerusalem and the Earthly Paradise, interwoven with the marvels of the East.

Composed during a period of both secular and religious upheaval, the text has been interpreted as containing elements of Crusade propaganda. This dimension can be intertwined with its encouragement of Christian self-reflection. The work invites readers to embark on an inner pilgrimage: its marvels promote acceptance of global diversity, while its miraculous accounts reaffirm the rewards awaiting Christians who return to proper conduct. By portraying the world’s vastness and complexity, the text fosters objectivity and introspection, prompting readers to recognize their own limitations. In pursuit of a better Christian life, the work thus employs an innovative—and at times seemingly contradictory—relativistic perspective.

Ultimately, *Mandeville’s Travels* serves as a vehicle for enlightenment. Through the act of reading and mentally traversing distant lands, the text guides Christians toward deeper self-

awareness, urging them to become more spiritually attuned and more generous in their understanding of the world's diversity.

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Renevey, Denis (University of Lausanne) – In (Spiritual) Transit? Andrew Boorde's Equivocal Journeys to Santiago da Compostella and Jerusalem

Andrew Boorde (c. 1490-1549) entered the Carthusian order under age and worked as a scribe in the London Charterhouse, where he copied in around 1520 *The Book of Priue Counselling*, a sequel to *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Temporarily freed from his monastic vows in 1529, Boorde went abroad to study medicine. After a brief return to England, he continued his studies at several European universities. Boorde was also embroiled in the complex English Reformation and had to negotiate very carefully his allegiances, first to his fellow Carthusians, then to Thomas Cromwell and Henry VIII, and finally Henry's daughter Mary, from his marriage with Catherine of Aragon.

This paper first considers the politico-religious context that forced Boorde to tread carefully. It then introduces briefly one of his works, *The Fyrst Boke of the Introduction to Knowledge*, the earliest continental guidebook. Boorde's descriptions of his journeys to St James of Compostella and Jerusalem reveal the centripetal impact of the genre of medieval pilgrimage literature upon Boorde. They also query Boorde's religious beliefs and suggest that his conscious use of equivocation was his means of surviving in a world in turmoil.

Ruset Oanca, Monica (University of Bucharest) – Experiencing Jerusalem: Pilgrimage and Vision in *Pearl*

The medieval poem *Pearl* conveys not only the sorrow associated with the death of a child, but also a profound sense of spiritual awakening, particularly in its depiction of the extraordinary journey towards the heavenly Jerusalem. The narrator of *Pearl* may be interpreted as a pilgrim progressing through various beautiful landscapes that culminate in a vision of the celestial city. The present paper examines *Pearl* as a lyrical expression of pilgrimage grounded in theological thought, placing emphasis on both the physical sensations and the spiritual elevation experienced by the bereaved storyteller.

Two significant aspects characterise the Christian's pilgrimage depicted in *Pearl*: the first is the poem's richly visual imagery, insightfully analysed by Sarah Stanbury in *Seeing the Gawain-Poet: Description and the Act of Perception*; the second is the spiritual development of the narrator, which is prompted in part by the instruction, or arguably, the preaching, of the young girl. A particularly striking detail is that the girl not only teaches, but also reproaches her older male relative (presumably her father), a dynamic made possible by her presence in the heavenly Jerusalem and the authority she gains from direct experience of celestial beatitude. Despite receiving instruction and being granted a vision of the heavenly city, the narrator impulsively attempts to cross its boundary by force. This act raises questions about the depth of his spiritual transformation, notwithstanding his eventual acceptance of his condition in the poem's final stanzas.

I start from the assumption that the progress of becoming faithful (or recovering one's faith) can be associated with the transformative experience of pilgrimage. Consequently, I would like to examine the way several theological aspects of pilgrimage, such as the pursuit of the miraculous, or the penitential, healing, or supplicatory role of the journey, are reflected in *Pearl*. The crisis of faith experienced by the bereaved father may be associated with the inner conflict that often compels a Christian to embark upon a perilous journey towards a sacred destination. Pilgrimage was deeply embedded in both the theology and the practice of the medieval Church, and my aim is to demonstrate that *Pearl* contains numerous elements which correspond to the concept of pilgrimage as it was understood by contemporary Christians.

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Ruszkiewicz, Dominika (Ignatianum University in Cracow) – Spiritual Modalities in Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Book of the Duchess*

“The Book of the Duchess” contains many indications of the poet’s interest in an individual’s inner life, beginning with reflections on human mortality, motivated by the mournful occasion of the poem’s composition, through the dream vision form, to the scene of hunting for the hart (with a pun on ‘heart’). The inner probing of the grieving individual is effected through a quasi-Socratic dialogue, which may be seen as a ‘spiritual’ practice in the broad sense of engaging an individual’s entire self in the process of transformation. And yet doubts have been raised in the minds of many readers whether the inner journey undertaken by the Man in Black is truly transformative and, if so, what is the nature of consolation that it brings to the grieving man. This paper will argue that in order to make the inner journey complete, the poet introduces another tool of spiritual probing, which consists in an organized and chronological inquiry into an individual’s life and which is reminiscent of early biographies, such as Augustine’s “Confessions”. I will show how these two spiritual modalities, the dialogic and confessional, work together to heal the trauma of loss by bringing the past and future into the present moment. Immersed in the present, the grieving man not only encounters his own self, but also comes close to encountering the divine as he experiences a moment of authentic presence and begins to see his life as a whole, which in turn makes him “hool” [healthy, whole] (*BD*, l. 553).

Silec-Plessis, Tatjana (Sorbonne Université) – “thret is unthryvande in thede there I lende”: Carnal and Spiritual Matters in the *Continuations* of Chrétien de Troyes’ *Perceval* and in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

The present study examines how Gawain’s startled reaction to lady Bertilak’s suggestion that he could do with her as he wished – “thret is unthryvande in thede there I lende” (l. 1499; “threat is not considered worthy where I come from”) – should be seen as a metafictional reference that was meant to alert the poet’s audience to the ways in which courtly literature in general, and Arthurian romances in particular, had gone astray over the centuries on the topic of love and sex. Where early works such as the *Roman de la Rose* articulated lofty spiritual ideals that combined courtly and divine love, something the Gawain-poet emulated in *Pearl*, the *Continuations* of Chrétien de Troyes’ *Perceval*, despite their emphasis on the role of faith and chastity in the quest for the Grail, presented spiritual matters as being the province

of a chosen few, leaving ordinary knights and ladies free to pursue their carnal desires as they saw fit. We argue that Sir Gawain and the Green Knight was devised as a corrective to what the poet-theologian, who had devoted a whole verse sermon to the theme of purity, saw as alien, sinful notions.

Simonin, Olivier (University of Perpignan) – Spiritual Knightly Itineraries: Comparing Percival's Desert Island Trials and Gawain's Moral Testing in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

In the *Queste del Saint Graal*, Percival ends up marooned on a desert island, where he undergoes a series of spiritual and moral trials (whose significance is helpfully spelled out by a holy man), before embarking on the ancient vessel that will lead him, along with Bohort and Galaad, to full completion of the quest.

This paper uncovers echoes of this episode and of the vulgate Grail quest in SGGK, using this perspective as a fruitful heuristic with which to illuminate the spiritual component of the English poem, as the *Queste* is ostensibly concerned with what it refers to as *celestial chivalry*. Percival comes out as a foil to Gawain in SGGK, let alone the French Gawain in the *Queste*, providing a helpful interpretative benchmark.

Similitudes between Gawain's adventure and Percival's on his island are striking: both knights are tempted by devil-inspired figures (or devils?) and could succumb to the all-important sins of greed, lewdness, sloth and pride; in both texts, the Old Law and the New Law are contrasted (in SGGK, this is epitomized by Gawain's shield with Solomon's pentangle on one side and the Blessed Virgin on the other); Hautdesert evokes a hermit's religious *desert*, which Percival's island effectively is, i.e. a place where temptation is not unlikely to occur; finally, each protagonist benefits from the help of a religious figure that he meets on several occasions.

Nonetheless some of those parallels could also be attributed to the common use of then current *topoi*, and major differences should not be de-emphasized: the rhetorical double portrait of two ladies whose appearances contrast sharply is used for distinct purposes; Gawain is being tested unwittingly, in what superficially seems to be a challenge for his courtesy; his tutelary protector is Mary while the successful Grail knights are explicitly said to be guided by the Holy Spirit; he sports his shield and his alleged perfection to the world, only to find himself falling short of his own initial self-representation. Gawain's journey and path of initiation substantially differs in kind from that of Percival and his fellow knights, presumably owing to its strong penitential component.

This leaves open some interesting questions: does anyone actually gain anything with Gawain's (partial?) failure, and what is the spiritual significance of his adventure (a question that would have been particularly weighty for a religious writer like the *Gawain* poet)?

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Whitehead, Christiania (University of Lausanne) – Setting Aside Reason in Deguileville's *Pilgrimage of the Lyfe of the Manhode*

This paper will revisit *The Pilgrimage of the Lyfe of the Manhode*, the celebrated early fifteenth-century anonymous English prose translation of Guillaume de Deguileville's thirteenth-century Cistercian allegorical poem, *Le pèlerinage de la vie humaine*. Often treated as something of a misfit within fifteenth-century English religious literature, turning the courtly dream vision to much more serious and ethical ends, this paper will suggest that it may be possible to view the *Pilgrimage* as a potential participant in the Middle English apophatic tradition, noting the dismissal of the allegorical figure of Reason in favour of GraceDieu part way through the pilgrim's journey toward the New Jerusalem. It will set this dismissal in relation to an equivalent manoeuvre in the twelfth-century theological writings of Richard of Saint-Victor, replicated in Middle English within the corpus of the *Cloud*-author and Middle English *Benjamin*.

The paper will discuss the *Pilgrimage*'s substitution of the standard mystical ascent, often aligned with Moses' ascent of Mount Sinai, with a *lateral* itinerary through an allegorical landscape. It will also examine the ways in which the teleology and strong visuality of this spiritual journey are paradoxically pressed into service to indicate a divine beyond visualisation, spatial co-ordinates, and language. Finally, it will consider the implications of A.I. Doyle's assertion that the scribe of the copy of the *Pilgrimage* in St John's College, Cambridge, MS 189 (G.21) is the same as the scribe of the remarkable 'Amherst' miscellany (British Library, MS Additional 37790), which aligns the short text of Julian of Norwich's *Revelations*, and the Middle English translations of Jan Ruusbroec's *Sparkling Stone* and Marguerite Porete's *Mirror of Simple Souls*, in an apophatic and textual tour-de-force. Could this identity suggest a Carthusian milieu of readership for the *Pilgrimage*?

General sessions

Alban-Barcia, Sara (Centro Universitario de Defensa, Zaragoza) – *Sere, virtue and pomp: Foreign Lexicon in *Prick of Conscience**

Prick of Conscience, a fourteenth century religious poem, is one of the most transmitted texts of the period, extant in over 130 witnesses. This poem compiles materials from other texts such as the Psalter or the Bible and it was intended to teach the main precepts of Christianity to the *lewd* “illiterate” man. This study undertakes a comparative lexical analysis of the Prologue of the poem as it is extant in five different codices (MS D.5, English MS 90, MS e Mus. 76, CCA- DCC/LitMs/D/13 and MS Dd.12.69) representing the five main Middle English dialects. The main objective is to assess the degree of influence exerted by regional dialect on scribal lexical choices.

Adopting the quantitative and qualitative methodological framework established by Carrillo-Linares (2010) and Carrillo-Linares (2016), the analysis differentiates between intra-verse lexical use (line level) and prologue-wide distribution (text level). The folios under examination here were not included in the research by Carrillo-Linares. The preliminary study has revealed foreign lexicon from seven different origins: Latin (Vezzosi 2012), French (Skaffari 2012), Old Norse (Dance 2012), Hebrew, Italian and Greek. The origin of the word is determined by the information provided in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) and the Middle English Dictionary (MED).

Given that it may become difficult to distinguish Latin and French borrowings, they will be classified according to the evolution of the word and the information in the forementioned dictionaries. The presence of Hebrew and Greek vocabulary is noteworthy, lexicon which is usually attested due to the mention of characters from the Bible or Mythology (i.e. Noah).

The preliminary results suggest an unexpected lack of relation between the origin of the foreign lexicon and the dialect. Consequently, French vocabulary is always the most frequent, a clear consequence of the imposition of Norman-French as the language of the realm and the assimilation of Anglo-Norman vocabulary by English population. The second most frequent origin varies between Latin and Old Norse, being the latter not the second choice in the manuscript of the North, but in the one from the East Midlands (under Scandinavian influence) and Southwest. The remaining lexical origins seem to be marginal, primarily limited to specific nominal forms. Further analysis will reveal at what level these dissimilarities are documented: intra-verse or prologue- wide.

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Bhattacharyya, Syamantak (Ramakrishna Mission Residential College (Autonomous), Narendrapur) – Clouds, Darkness, and the Divine: Mystical Ascent in The Cloud of Unknowing and the King James Bible

This paper examines *The Cloud of Unknowing* as a Middle English articulation of mystical ascent in which the spiritual journey is structured through apophatic practice and interior withdrawal. Composed in the late fourteenth century, *The Cloud* presents the contemplative path to God as a movement into darkness that requires the suspension of intellectual knowledge sensory perception and discursive language. The paper addresses the research

question of how *The Cloud of Unknowing* conceptualises spiritual journeying through the deliberate negation of cognition and expression and how this Middle English model of mysticism continues to shape later English religious language.

The first part of the paper offers a close reading of *The Cloud of Unknowing* with particular attention to its recurring metaphors of cloud darkness and ascent. Drawing on the apophatic tradition associated with Pseudo Dionysius the Areopagite, the paper demonstrates how the text adapts negative theology for a vernacular audience and redefines spiritual progress as an inward movement governed by affective intention rather than intellectual comprehension. The contemplative journey is framed as a disciplined practice of unknowing in which love functions as the primary means of approaching the divine.

The second part of the paper briefly considers selected passages from the King James Bible, especially the Psalms and the Book of Job, as a later point of reception rather than as a primary focus. It argues that the King James Bible retains a vocabulary of divine hiddenness longing and darkness that resonates with earlier Middle English mystical discourse. By foregrounding *The Cloud of Unknowing* as the central text, this paper situates the work within a longer continuum of English spiritual writing in which mystical journeying is defined by negation desire and the limits of language.

Keywords Mysticism, apophatic theology, Middle English spirituality, The Cloud of Unknowing, King James Bible, spiritual journey, negative theology, darkness and divine absence

Bin Sheik Alaudin, Muhammad Hameem (All Souls College, University of Oxford) – Sainly Vernacular Doggerel: The Case of Kenelm and its Unkenneled Verse Form

The story of Saint Kenelm features a celestial white dove dropping a scroll onto the Pope as he is saying Mass in Rome. This miraculous scroll apparently contains words in English identifying the location of the martyred saint's beheaded body which the Pope requires assistance with translating in order to recover the hidden saintly relics - words which exist in various medieval versions: circulating independently or as part of prose narratives such as saints' lives and histories or in verse legends, integrated within a text or as a marginal annotation to one, in both Latin and English. These words are usually cited to be in verse themselves and forming a distich, though none of the vernacular variants attested in Middle English evince any sort of regular metrical arrangement, whether according to the synchronic rules of alliterative verse or rhyming accentual-syllabic verse. For instance, in MS Laud Misc.108, the oldest extant manuscript of a text of a South English Legendary, the sequence of rhyming couplets of septenaries is literally interrupted for the doggerel-like distich on Kenelm:

‘In Klent Covbache Kenelm kynges sone

Liith onder ane þorne, is heued him bireued.’ (ll. 187-8)¹

Owing to the chronology of this pre-Norman conquest narrative about an alleged ninth-century saint, the aberrant couplet is often assumed in scholarship to be in Old English.² Yet, the verses cannot be said to bear any straightforward resemblance to canonical OE metre either, since there are too many and too few alliterating positions in the first and second lines given above respectively, and the internal rhyme of *heued* and *bireued* has more in common with ME poetic form than OE, despite the absence of end-rhyme. Bennet & Smithers (1968) assert that ‘the metrical form is in fact consistent with composition in late OE’,³ i.e. non-traditional OE alliterative verse, but this is challenged by other variants such as the oldest witness to this couplet in Cambridge, Pembroke College MS 82:

In clench qu becche under ane þorne
liet kenelm kinebern heued bereued⁴

Beyond local effects of alliteration and internal rhyme, there is little here in the way of a consistent OE alliterative design.

This paper explores the relationships between the various Latin and Middle English versions, and the two processes of translation involved – the translation of linguistic and literary forms alongside translation of saintly relics – and both kinds of relics: bodily and textual.

¹ Bennet, J. A. W. & G. V. Smithers, with a glossary by N. Davis (Oxford, 1968), *Early Middle English Verse and Prose* (2nd edn.), p. 104.

² *Three Eleventh-Century Anglo-Latin Saints’ Lives: Vita S. Birini, Vita et Miracula S. Kenelmi, and Vita S. Rumwoldi*, ed. and trans. Rosalind Love (Oxford, 1996), p. cxvii; Bennet & Smithers, p. 97.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *Three Eleventh-Century Anglo-Latin Saints’ Lives: Vita S. Birini, Vita et Miracula S. Kenelmi, and Vita S. Rumwoldi*, p. cxvii.

Čermák, Jan (Charles University Prague) – *Obsolescent Derivational Morphology and Incipient Typological Change in the 12th Century Variants and Annotations to Homilies by Ælfric: The Case of Masculine n-Stems*

The paper proposes to explore some of the structural/typological tendencies operative at the derivation/inflection interface and in the competition of suffixes as reflected in the 12th century variants and annotations to homilies by Ælfric. The focus of the paper will be on the use of masculine n-stems, situating their development within the broader history of nominal and adjectival n-stem declensions from Proto-Indo-European to Middle English, a trajectory characterized by cyclical reanalysis.

The paper will trace masculine deverbal, denominal, and deadjectival n-stems of transparent derivational structure and agentive or stative meaning. Contrasting the respective forms in Old English homiletic texts with their counterparts in the 12th century variants and annotations, the paper aims to construct a typology of their developmental scenarios during a period of large-scale phonological erosion, deflexion, and analogical restructuring. This typology includes five potential outcomes: 1) preservation of the n-stem word structure without change; 2) addition of an agentive suffix; 3) replacement by a native synonym; 4) replacement by a synonymous loanword; and 5) replacement by periphrasis. Additional parameters, such as stem allomorphy and typological fusionalty, will be considered as well.

Data collected from these Updated Old English texts will be discussed with regard to the evidence of the major lexicographic sources (The Dictionary of Old English (A–Le), The Middle English Dictionary, LAEME, HTOED, OED). The typology of scenarios 1)–5) will be shown to testify to small but perceptible beginnings in the intertwined domains of lexis and word-formation of the well-known large-scale typological reshaping of English, at a time when much of the estimated 65–85% loss of Old English lexis (Minkova – Stockwell 2006: 472) was taking place in the structure of the vocabulary that was being transformed, as part of the typological shift, from the associative to the dissociative principle (Kastovsky 1992).

Theoretically, this paper will build on Faulkner’s (2012) typology of lexical replacement, will complement recent sociolinguistic research into Early Middle English vocabulary (Timofeeva 2018; Vogelsanger 2023), and will revive the long-neglected issue of obsolescing derivational morphology as a structural factor in lexical change (Käsmann 1961). Ultimately, the paper will contribute to the broader discussion of the historically shifting inflection-derivation distinction (Haspelmath 2006) and the phenomenon of cumulative exponence involving derivation (Ricca 2005).

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Gonschorek, Korinna (LMU Munich) – Empress – Victim – Secular Saint.
Florence's Journey between Violence and Salvation in *Le Bone Florence of Rome*

Tales of the wrongfully accused queen or wife are the result of a long-lasting tradition in the European Middle Ages. Forced from their positions within the kingdom, the women in these tales frequently undergo hard trials. Within this tradition, the tale *Le Bone Florence of Rome* displays the ordeals the heroine must endure on her journey prominently. Throughout the text, different narrative genres are intertwined: the Middle English romance is at times replaced by structures and motifs belonging to the medieval legend. In *Le Bone Florence of Rome*, it becomes clear that the progress of the narrative following Florence's approaches to self-defence, caused by repeated attempts of rape and physical abuse, reflects the constant interplay of romance and legend. I argue that, through the superimposition of legend writing on the medieval romance, the text reflects on narrating itself and challenges modern conceptions of fictionality and factuality.

At first, Florence appears autonomous and is allowed to choose her own husband. However, when she is falsely accused of adultery by her brother-in-law, she is forced into a circle of violence, treason, and slander. Florence's development from an empress to a marvellous healer is largely made possible by her unmoving trust in God and particularly the Virgin Mary. On several occasions, when men attempt to violate her, she is saved through prayer. However, whenever she eludes the threat through profane means, she is not rescued but stumbles into a situation which is even more perilous. When she violently beats a knight, he retaliates by accusing her of murder, leading to her banishment. Similarly, when she saves a man from the gallows to win a companion and protector, he sells her into slavery. Only her trust in divine intervention makes it possible for her to reach a nunnery and establish herself as a marvellous healer. Florence's journey becomes a test of endurance: she will be saved as long as she trusts in divine intervention while self-reliance causes greater peril. Ultimately, Florence is rewarded with her reputation as a secular saint, which grants her the possibility to both be reunited with her husband and confront her violators. Here, she is put to a final test. She forgives them and heals their afflictions.

Even though *Le Bone Florence of Rome* cannot be placed within the tradition of genuine hagiographical texts with an inherent claim to truth, it becomes clear that Florence's saint-like depiction adds a level of factuality to the genre of romance which can be considered to be a work of fiction.

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Harris, Anthony (University of Cambridge and University of Zurich) – Towards a New Context-based, Configurable Middle English Normaliser

The automated normalisation of historical English spelling, particularly the mapping of variant orthographic forms onto their Present-Day English (PDE) equivalents, has been a recurrent methodological challenge in corpus linguistics and digital humanities for over two decades. Tools such as VARD 2 demonstrated substantial improvements in accuracy when applied to Early Modern English corpora. Subsequent work extended these techniques using statistical machine translation, neural encoder-decoder models, and bi-directional LSTMs. Despite extensive scholarship on Early Modern and Early New High German data, Middle English, with

its far greater degree of dialectal and graphemic variation, remains comparatively underserved by dedicated normalisation software, highlighting a critical gap in research.

This paper presents a new, user configurable, Middle English normaliser whose development was itself helped by the emerging generation of AI-powered coding assistants. The normaliser externalises its entire rule base, scoring parameters, lexicon extensions, and manual mappings into a single, richly commented JSON configuration file (JSONC) editable in plain text by historical linguists. The paper will demonstrate the normaliser on extracts from ‘Sir Gawain and the Green Knight’ and other dialectally diverse Middle English texts and will reflect on the broader implications of AI-assisted coding for the development of bespoke digital tools in medieval studies.

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Kanno, Mami (Kanazawa University, Japan) – Travel, Space, and Sacred Biography: Osbern Bokenham’s Reconstruction of English Saints’ Lives

Osbern Bokenham (b. 1392/3, d. in or after 1464), an Augustinian friar at Clare Priory, Suffolk and the author of the Middle English collections of saints’ lives, *Legendys of Hooly Wummen* and *Legenda aurea*, is known to have travelled to Italy and Spain. His experiences as a pilgrim are reflected in his writing of saints’ legends, as in *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*, where he records having visited the shrine of Saint Margaret, learning about her from local people and texts during his stay in Italy, and composing her *vita* in English upon his return to England. His approach to writing the saints’ lives goes beyond a mere translation of Latin sources into

English: he reconstructs them through the addition of his own experiences, a method also visible in his legends of English and Welsh saints.

Legenda aurea is a Middle English translation of Jacobus de Voragine's hagiographic collection, to which Bokenham added the legends of English and Welsh saints. As he notes in his *Mappula Angliae*, Middle English translation of Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon*, designed to be read together with his legends of English saints, *Legenda aurea* contains the lives of English and Welsh saints, such as Cedde, Felix, John of Beverly, Dunstan, Aldhelm, Botolf, Alban, Wilfrid, Æthelthryth, and Winifred. In these legends, Bokenham similarly reconstructs the lives of English and Welsh saints by incorporating his travel experiences, which suggests that hagiography, including its narratives of *translationes*, can be situated at the intersection of biography and geography. Bokenham combines his geographical and topographical interest, also expressed in his *Mappula Angliae*, with his saints' narratives, and reorganises and relocates the lives and translations of native saints within the spatial memory of the British Isles. This paper demonstrates how elements of travel, geography, and translation are intertwined in Bokenham's narratives of native saints – their lives and the translation of their relics. By examining his engagement with English and Welsh landscapes, I will show how Bokenham reconstructs saints' lives through the interplay of movement, space, and narrative. In doing so, it also engages with the broader theme of travel and travelling, showing how movements, including the hagiographers' pilgrimages, shapes not only Bokenham's texts but also cultural memory in late medieval England.

Kudo, Yoshinobu (Ishikawa Prefectural Nursing University) – Peter Idley's Instructions to his Son for Latin Learning: Bilingual Idley in British Library MS Harley 172

Although it has long been recognized that the main scribes of British Library Additional MS 60577 and Harley MS 172 are identical, any other connection besides this fact between the two late fifteenth-century manuscripts has never been discussed in detail. Moreover, critical investigation has been conducted on Additional 60577 solely, whereas little attention has been paid to Harley 172. To address these critical gaps to some extent, this study examines a text contained in Harley 172 to show its connection to what has been discussed regarding Additional 60577. As part of the presenter's research project on Peter Idley's manuscripts, this paper analyzes the bilingual presentation of Book I of Idley's *Instructions to his Son* recorded in Harley 172 and argues that the ways in which extracts from the Latin original are provided to the Middle English poem attest to the presumable purpose of learning the Latin language by utilizing English translation – the *raison d'être* of this text in this manuscript – and thus fits in the educational program of the Winchester College in the late fifteenth century, as outlined by Alessandra Petrina (2018, 2019) in relation to Additional 60577. This interpretation is supported by other details, such as the title of the text in Harley 172 and the fact that only Book I of Idley's *Instructions* appears in the manuscript. While it shows the common principle of compilation between Additional 60577 and Harley 172, this paper also demonstrates their differences by pointing out the assumable uses of some other texts included in Harley 172, such as a formula for confession. Finally, it considers the variety in the significance of Idley's bilingualism in different reading contexts. It compares the bilingual presentation of Idley's

Book I in Harley 172 with other extant cases – monolingual presentations and bilingual presentations with emphases different from Harley 172 – and positions Harley 172 as a unique reception of Idley's Book I that cherished the moral text's value for Latin learning in a late-fifteenth-century English school environment with the influence of early humanist thinking.

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Lemburg, Flora Sophie (University of St Andrews) – The Balade of the IX Ladies Worthy – Worthy Women Travelling

The ballade 'the ix ladyes worthy' in Trinity College, Cambridge, MS R.3.19 is the longest known and surviving text about the Nine Worthy Women, also known as *neuf preuses*, in Middle English literature. The motif of the *neuf preuses* originated in medieval French literature in the late fourteenth century and quickly became integrated in the *querelle des femmes*, representing one aspect in the larger 'woman-question'. The nine 'worthy' women making up this motif all stem from classical literature and can be categorised as warrior women, most of them being specifically called Amazons in the late medieval period. These women are Sinope, Hippolyta, Deiphyle (who is sometimes exchanged for Marpesia), Teuta, Penthesilea, Thomyris, Lampedo, Semiramis, Menalippe.

This paper analyses this relatively unknown ballade from TCC MS R.3.19 and its manuscript context in order to understand the reception of the motif of the Nine Worthy Women in Middle English literature. The paper will identify possible sources for the narratives recounted in each stanza and show how these are subverted to better present the women as successful female knights of chivalry. This depiction is needed so that the women correspond accordingly to the male version of the same motif, the Nine Worthies. Through a lexical analysis and consideration of the sources, the paper will emphasise the strong influence of Lydgate and his texts, as well as providing a timeframe of composition. Furthermore, the manuscript context of the ballade will be considered to deepen the understanding of the reception of the motif. Its collation together with other texts evolving around the themes of women and courtly love, including among others *The Assembly of Ladies*, *La Belle Dame Sans Mercy*, *The Ten Commandments of Love*, and *The Legend of Good Women*, suggests a deliberate collation of the manuscript at a later point. This also influenced the reception of the ballade in later printed editions of Chaucer, initially included by John Stowe, before it was removed again due to unclear authorship.

López-Martínez, Sergio (University of the Balearic Islands) – A Knight's Journey from Mallorca to England: Caxton's Translation of *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*

This paper deals with *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*, originally composed in Catalan by Ramon Llull in the late 13th century, and its remarkable cross-linguistic and cultural journey from insular Mallorca to late medieval England. Ramon Llull, a prolific Mallorcan philosopher, theologian and poet, managed to propagate his ideas across the continent through his work. His *Llibre de l'orde de cavalleria* was the origin of several French translations, one of which belonged to king Edward IV of England (*Royal MS 14 E II*). It was through these French intermediaries that the book arrived to William Caxton, who translated it and printed his Middle English translation, *The Book of the Ordre of Chyualry* (c. 1484), dedicated to King Richard III. This study will explore how Llull's chivalric ideal travelled across Europe, finally landing in the turbulent context of the War of the Roses.

Beyond its historical significance, this paper pays particular attention to the linguistic aspect of Caxton's late medieval text, following Byle's 1929 edition. The analysis will consider orthographic and morphological features, as well as lexical choices and syntactic patterns to characterise Caxton's London-based dialect, while also probing for traces of French influence resulting from the work's translation lineage. Through a combination of textual comparison, historical and linguistic contextualisation, the paper will shed light on how Llull's moral and philosophical treatise on knighthood was not only transmitted but transformed across languages, courts, and printing presses, travelling from the Mediterranean world to the heart of Plantagenet England.

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Moghadassi, Fanny (University of Strasbourg) – Multi-Scalar Mandeville, A Spatial Approach to the *Book of Sir John Mandeville*

Taking its readers to the very confines of the earth, the *Book of Mandeville* combines the features of travelogue, guidebook and proto-scientific treatise with elements of romance and has often been noted for the elusiveness of its genre (Kohanski & Benson). Drawing attention to spatial representation rather than generic definition, this paper will draw on spatial literary studies to delineate the specificities of the *Book's* representation of space. Working with the

Cotton version of the text (British Library MS Cotton Titus C.xvi, edited by Seymour), it will argue that a multi-scalar reading of the text is needed to understand how different medieval approaches to space combine in the *Book* to produce its uniquely complex narrative space.

Mandevillian space will be shown to unite not only proto-geographic, proto-ethnographic or theological discourses and concerns as has often been noted (Deluz, Khanmohamadi, Higgins), but also other types of space. While aspects of the dynamics of Mandevillian space have already been studied (Conklin-Akbari), this paper aims to present a more systematic analysis of Mandeville's narrative space in terms of its various scales. The *Book* presents its readers with the scale of what might be termed enunciative space (Moghaddassi), that is to say the type of space where traveller and reader seem to share the same imagined private conversation in some imagined chamber. On a different scale, the pattern of itineraries, that draw on enumerations, coexists in the *Book* with another linear approach to space, that of romance, where space emerges as the story unfolds (Cooper, Auerbach). The space of adventure thereby created collides in Mandeville with more material considerations akin to a form of mercantile space, characterised by trading considerations, and the notion of networks. The *Book* also furthers spatial representations of a cosmological scale, offering a global and abstract view of the world, reminiscent of *mappaemundi*. Finally, its narrative space opens onto other ontological dimensions of space, where human beings can come into contact with supernatural realities: space proves multi-layered and multi-scalar.

The paper will argue that the conflation of these diverse types of scales of spatial representations in the *Book* defines its specific approach to both world and textual genre. While other approaches to space – aesthetic or sensual – that are common in later travelogues seem to be missing in Mandeville's account of the world, the text's complex approach to spatial representation produces a uniquely dynamic form of space that emerges in and from the constant movement from one spatial scale to another.

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Molencki, Rafał (University of Silesia, Katowice) – The *cyning* > *king* Syncopation in Old and Early Middle English

The word *cyning* 'king' had remarkably numerous orthographic variants in Old and early Middle English, some of which indicate phonetic reductions, e.g. *cynig*, *cinin*. However, most interesting is the syncopation of the second syllable, resulting in the form *cyng/king*. Its first instances are found already in the early manuscripts of Alfredian texts, but the reduced forms do not become common until late Old English/early Middle English. On the other hand, the full two-syllabic form had sporadic occurrences as late as c1250 according to the *MED*.

One of the factors that may have contributed to the change was the high frequency of occurrence of the word: c8000 according to the *DOE* – cf. numerous publications on irregular sound change due to frequency by Mańczak (e.g. 2010). In the paper we will pay special attention to the manuscript variation between *cyning* and *cyng* in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (including the differences between successive scribes), the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* and the translations of *Gospels*. We will also look into the dialectal and stylistic variation in Middle English, the rhythm and metre requirements in medieval poetry and the parallel phonetic developments of cognate forms in the other early Germanic languages, e.g. Old Norse *konongr* vs. *kóngr*.

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Newman, John G. (University of Texas Rio Grande Valley) – The Athematic Root-Consonant-Stem Feminine Noun *neaht/niht* ‘night’ and the Spread of the s-Plural Formative: Analogy, Frequency, and the Maintenance of Zero Plural Marking in Medieval English

The morphology of the medieval English noun *neaht/niht* ‘night’ is intriguing because it is uncommonly variable, but no detailed analysis of the complex of forces behind the variant forms of the noun has been offered to date.

Niht (*Neaht/niht*) is typically classified in Old English as an athematic (root-consonant-stem) feminine noun (Sievers—Brunner 1951: 249; Campbell 1959: 253; Wetna 1996: 31; Hogg—Fulk 2011: 65). However, even in Old English times this noun was showing signs of falling in with the *a*-masculine stems, the *a*-neuter stems, and the *ō*-feminine stems. The noun was attaching the strong masculine and neuter formative *-es* to signal the genitive singular (Wetna 1996: 31), and it was also suffixing strong feminine endings such as the genitive singular *-e* in *nihte* (Sievers—Brunner 1951: 249-250; Hogg—Fulk 2011: 66). Campbell’s statement represents the present level of explanation: “the declension [feminine athematic] was originally identical with that of the masc. [athematic] nouns, but many analogies intervened” (1959: 253). Considering that the attachment of the strong masculine genitive singular marker *-es* was associated with the onset of the regular use of the s-plural (Wright—Wright 1928: 136; Newman 2008: 115) and that the spread of the strong *a*-masculine plural marker *-as* began in Old English and continued to gain momentum in Middle English (Wetna 1996; Newman 2008), we should expect that *niht* would have adopted the s-plural marker as regular by Late Old or Early Middle English times, but available evidence indicates that it did not do so.

This study, unlike earlier investigations, attempts to account for the resistance of *niht* to s-pluralization by assuming frequency of occurrence and lexico-semantic relations to be causal. Employing the usage theory hypothesis that high frequency of occurrence permits forms to resist analogical changes (cf. McMahon 1994: 73; Bybee 1988: 131-132; Bybee 2007: 29), the study observes that *niht* occurred comparatively frequently in Medieval English (cf. Newman 2008: 144; Hogg-Fulk 2011: 66), which should have allowed it to oppose s-plural adoption to a notable extent. Further, it is seen that in the sense of a ‘unit of time’, *niht* was in lexico-semantic relations with other high frequency, zero-pluralizing, and decidedly s-plural-resistant count nouns such as *Ʒear* ‘year’.

Plural forms of *niht* were culled from texts comparatively lengthy, reliable for date and dialect, and inclusive of a significant number of such data. Examples of texts selected include *Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies* and *Leechdoms, Wortcunning and Starcraft of Early England* for the Old English period, and *Lazamon’s Brut* (MS Otho) and documents of the *Middle English Medical*

Texts corpus for the Middle English period. Recourse to *The York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose*, *The Middle English Dictionary*, and Laing (1993) confirmed dates and dialects of manuscripts.

The evidence gleaned suggests that a combination of the relatively high token frequency of *niht*, its lexico-semantic associations with other high frequency nouns denoting ‘units of time’, and its collocation with plural number marking numerals and quantifiers, in addition to its *ō*-stem patterning and perhaps even the noun’s feminine gender itself (Newman 2008: 115), allowed *niht* to be one of the last count nouns to adopt the strong masculine s-plural in Middle English times. In these conclusions, the study supports and contributes to research into frequency effects in morphology, and ultimately into language change at large.

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Pratscher Lehecka, Pia (University of Edinburgh) – The Minim Effect and Its Grapho-phonological Consequences

Orthography is a fundamental resource for reconstructing phonological change in the Middle English and Older Scots periods. A thorough understanding of *littera* and the relationship between grapheme and phoneme is therefore key to tracing phonological changes for these periods. The alternation in use of particular graphemes based on the surrounding graphemic context can affect phonological analyses significantly and complicate the established phoneme- grapheme correspondences.

The minim effect refers to a change in vowel spelling from <u> to <o> in minim-rich environments, i.e. adjacent to the letters <m>, <n>, or <v>, as in the development of OE *wudu* > PDE *wood*. As <u>, <v>, <n> and <m> are distinguished only by their number of minims, <o> is used to break up an illegible chain of single minimal downstrokes. The existence of the minim effect has been mentioned in several Middle English handbooks (cf. Hector 1958, Emerson 1921), but it has yet to receive systematic analysis and a clear definition. It is unclear whether other vowel graphemes than <u> are affected and by which surrounding minim-rich characters.

Additionally, directionality is unexplored as well, i.e. whether the minim effect is anticipatory or progressive. This paper provides a systematic analysis of the extent of the minim effect in Mediaeval texts, focusing on its directionality and scope. In particular, it isolates the minim effect in data from the *From Inglis to Scots* corpus (1350-1500), a collection of Older Scots texts which is grapho-phonologically parsed and searchable by phoneme. For this particular study, Older Scots vowels with both <u> and <o> as part of their typical graphemic profile are analysed, i.e. [u:], [ø:], [ɔ], [ʊ].

The results of this analysis show that there are significant differences in vowel spellings in minim- rich vs. minim-poor environments. The strongest minim effect can be observed in enclosing minim-rich environments (e.g. *month*) and succeeding minim-rich characters (e.g. *hunger*), making it an anticipatory effect. The spellings of the Northern fronting vowel [o:] > [ø:] differ greatly depending on minim environment. In minim-poor environments, <u> spellings rapidly increase, which are traditionally analysed as a front rounded vowel [ø:] (Wright & Wright 1928, Stenbrenden 2016). However, in minim-rich environments, <o> spellings

dominate, which are associated with a rounded back vowel. The analysis of Northern Fronting differs significantly if the minim effect is accounted for or not. As such, it is crucial to understand the minim effect in grapho-phonological analyses and minim-rich environments must be analysed separately to gain an accurate picture of orthographical and phonological developments.

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Ruthenbürger, Carolina (Heinrich-Heine Universität Düsseldorf) – A Matter of Time? Narratological Observations on the Middle English and Low German *Floire and Blancheflor*

Having all the ingredients of a compelling love story, the medieval romance of *Floire and Blancheflor* has inspired an impressive pan-European literary tradition. With various analogues in Arabic and Persian, the European version of the tale survives in 43 copies in numerous languages, including medieval French, Spanish, Italian, Greek, Swedish, German, and English. This particular romance has thus travelled across geographical and linguistic borders, changing significantly in terms of content and style. It is therefore an important testimony to the practice of ‘retelling’, which is characteristic of medieval literary cultures at large and has recently attracted fresh scholarly interest, for instance in the context of the ERC project DERIVATE. The growing field of diachronic narratology offers new methodological avenues for the post-national, interdisciplinary, and comparative exploration of the European *Floire and Blancheflor* tradition. Past scholars have tended to imagine the relationships between different versions of that tradition in terms of hierarchical models such as *stemmata*. Offering categories such as character, perspective, time, and space to guide our analysis of medieval texts, a narratological approach instead invites us to re-examine these relationships based on the narrative choices of individual redactors.

This paper will focus on the category of time to compare the Middle English and Low German versions of *Floire and Blancheflor*. The comparison will be based on the Middle English text in London, British Library, MS Egerton 2862 (late fourteenth century; 1,083 lines, incomplete at the beginning), and the Low German text in Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket, Cod. Holm. Vu 73 (ca. 1420, 1,513 lines). While both these texts are drawing directly or indirectly on a French source and show a tendency towards compression, they differ with regard to how much narrating time they spend on particular events and episodes of the story, for instance by

incorporating different types and amounts of direct discourse, narrator's comments, and ekphrasis. The relationship between descriptive and narrative passages has been of major interest to the study of episodic texts in different medieval philologies. By discussing selected passages that testify to the different timing of the narrative in the Middle English and Low German versions of *Floire and Blancheflor*, this paper will shed new light on how the English redactor adapted the tale for a new audience. In doing so, it will supplement previous studies that have primarily judged the independence of the Middle English version based on its relationship to the French tradition.

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Stenroos, Merja, Fatima Ghasemi, Fredrick N. Hansen, Xinmeng Lu, Takuya Takahashi, Kjetil V. Thengs and Synne Tungland (University of Stavanger) – The Geographical Variation of Forms of THEM in Late Middle English Documentary Texts

This paper forms part of an ongoing, ERC-funded research project (LiTra), which studies the geographical patterns of minority variants ('micro-patterns') in late medieval English. The paper addresses the question to what extent such variation may be taken to reflect earlier historical and sociolinguistic developments such as language contact. It presents an exploratory study of the variation found in a single item: the object form of the third person plural pronoun THEM.

THEM is one of several short, frequently occurring grammatical words in Middle English that show extensive formal variation (100+ variants in LALME) with distinctive geographical patterns. Some of the variation in THEM may be assumed to reflect an ongoing change well known from textbooks on the History of English: 'th' forms such as *them*, *theim*, *tham* increasing in frequency at the expense of 'h' forms such as *hem*, *ham*. However, beyond the simplified picture of 'th' and 'h' forms, the attested variation includes a very large range of individual written forms, many of which may also be taken to represent spoken variation.

The paper maps the variation in forms of THEM found in A Corpus of Middle English Local Documents (MELD), covering the period 1399–1525. Local administrative and private documents are of particular interest for the study of linguistic variation and change, as they mostly provide precise dating and, on the whole, precise localizations. We will consider the geographical variation of THEM at three levels of analysis. First, we provide an overview of the large-scale geographical variation by comparing the relative frequencies of forms in different areas of late medieval England. Secondly, we consider the question to what extent the distributions of individual variants show geographical variation, and to what extent other parameters, such as social group, genre or institutional background, may be more relevant. Finally, we focus on two or three variants with a clear geographical distribution (such as *homin* in the Cheshire area) and address the question to what extent, and on what grounds, it might be justified to relate these distributions to earlier historical and sociolinguistic developments, in particular in terms of multilingual and multidialectal communities.

LALME = McIntosh, A., M.L. Samuels and M. Benskin. 1986. *The Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press. 4 vols. Newest version: Benskin, M., M. Laing, V. Karaiskos and K. Williamson. (2024) *An Electronic Version of A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* (Version 2.0). Edinburgh: The Angus McIntosh Centre for Historical Linguistics. Available at <http://amc.ppls.ed.ac.uk/elalme/>.

Takahashi, Miwako (Meiji University) – Visuality in English Travel Writings from the Late Medieval Period to the Early Modern Period: Descriptions of Historical Buildings in the Holy Land

Pilgrimage is considered a core theme of the travel narrative genre in medieval European literature. Pilgrimage accounts serve not only as records of Christians' true faith but also as documents of their interest in foreign places and peoples. In the latter sense, they can be linked to the travel writings that emerged in following eras, including accounts of journeys in the Age of Discovery (in the early modern period) and the travel journals of Grand Tours undertaken in the 18th century. Common to all travel writings are the strategies writers employ to help their readers imagine places and people in foreign countries. This paper considers these visualization techniques that developed from the late 15th century to the early 17th century, focusing on texts about pilgrimage and visits to the Holy Land. Especially, it analyzes descriptions of historical buildings, for example the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. This church had already been described in a visually appealing way in medieval pilgrimage accounts such as Bernhard von Breidenbach's text (1484), accompanied by an illustration that provides a whole view of the church. From the Middle Ages up to the early modern period, with the transition from manuscript to printed book form, the representation of the church was transformed, with descriptions becoming clearer and more three-dimensional. For example, in *Informacion for Pylgrymes vnto the Holy Londe* ([1500]), and the pilgrimage account of Sir Richard Guildford ([1511]), the interior space of the church, now the highlight of the journey, is set out clearly. Then, from the 16th century to the 17th century, the descriptions of the interior and exterior progressively acquired a greater sense of reality through more detailed descriptions and illustrations. In *Relation of a Journey* (1615), written by George Sandys, the outside and inside of the Church are elaborately described along with three-dimensional illustrations. By analyzing how the descriptions of historical buildings in the Holy Land, in both text and illustration, changed over time, this paper explores the transformations of visuality in travel writings from the late medieval period to the early modern period, especially in texts written by English travelers. In the process, the paper investigates how the role of historical buildings changed as English travel writings developed, from narrative settings for biblical stories to physical places, both observable and tangible, which could be visited by travelers.

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Thaisen, Jacob (University of Oslo) – Graph Distribution in Late Middle English

Much paleographical scholarship remains rooted in a qualitative tradition, which until quite recently was the only practical means of analysis due to limited access to manuscript materials and time-consuming data collection methods. The standard reference works describe the characteristics of particular scripts and present illustrative specimen texts; yet the relationship between a general tendency and an individual text is not always made sufficiently clear, nor how much each graph contributes to characterisation or even classification, or whether the contributions of different graphs are correlated. While their observations are generally accurate and the works are regarded as authoritative, there remains scope for greater precision. The aim of this paper is to present a cross-section of the Middle English paleographical landscape, based on the Middle English Grammar Corpus [MEG-C] and Middle English Local Documents corpus [MELD] as substantial and representative bodies of texts. For a selection of graphs, the paper counts, separately for each, the number of texts in which it occurs at least once (“prevalence”). It statistically tests the graphs’ in-word distributions reported in standard reference works. The paper then compares the two corpora, proposing potential explanatory factors for the observed differences—such as orthographic development, text-type, geography, and date—without formally testing them. The findings suggest that distributional data for graphs need to be evaluated against the inherent distribution of the corresponding grapheme. They confirm well-known positional preferences, such as for the kidney-shaped **s** to appear in final position and the long **s** in initial and medial positions, while bringing to light less obvious tendencies, such

as a preference of the long **r** and closed **g** for medial position. In the same vein, the data suggest that the positional preferences of the 2-shaped **r** may have shifted during the late Middle English period, and they show that some graphs are not very common. Examples include the v-shaped **r** and the circular **w**, as well as the majuscule **r** and the trailing **s**, even the sigma-shaped **s**, where the prevalence data are statistically robust. Their rarity in the population has implications: They contribute little to classification or characterisation based on presence versus absence, and are peripheral to the typical profile of a class; but when they do occur, they are strong indicators of a class.

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Tichý, Ondřej (Charles University Prague) – Tracing the Development of Countability in English: From Middle to Modern English

This paper forms part of a broader project that seeks to trace the historical development of countability in English, a topic that has never been systematically described. Building on our previous investigation (Tichý 2022) into the formal markers of this category in Old English (Ripl

& Tichý forthcoming) the emergence of the future system in Middle English (Přečková & Tichý forthcoming), we now extend our analysis to (a) verify some of the trends identified in our earlier research and (b) explore developments from Middle to Early and Late Modern English. The first part of the paper focuses on the use of classifiers employed to count semantically uncountable nouns from Middle English to Present-Day English. Its primary aim is to confirm a previously observed trend toward the increasing use of classifiers with substance nouns, using a statistically significant sample. However, the expanded dataset also enables us to bolster our analysis of broader trends in nominal determination, particularly the use of the indefinite article with substance and abstract nouns.

The second part examines formal markers previously analyzed for the Old to Middle English threshold, namely, nominal pluralization, determination, classification, and quantification, by comparing Middle, Early and Late Modern English data. Here, special attention is given to the quantification system, where, during the same periods, *much* loses its meaning of physical size (becoming an uncountable quantifier), while *less* begins to appear as a countable quantifier (attested since the 14th century in the OED and criticized by prescriptivists from the 18th century onward).

Using PPCME2 for Middle English, PPCME for Early Modern English, PPCMBE2 for Late Modern English, and the BNC for Present-Day English and using the KonText and Annis corpus managers, we analyze the formal markers of countability in noun phrases containing a set of high-frequency nouns. These nouns have been carefully selected to ensure relatively high frequency across all the aforementioned corpora and to represent a range of variables, including semantic categories (e.g. concrete, abstract, substance), countability status in Present-Day English dictionaries, and, for nouns surviving from Old English, a range of inflectional classes.

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Volkonskaya, Maria (Higher School of Economics University) – From Armorica to Armenia: Rewriting the Origins of the Britons in the Later Versions of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*

Three later copies of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (MSS D, E, F) open with a geographical description of Britain. Here, the Britons are said to have come “out of Armenia,” a striking divergence from Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*, which names Armorica as their homeland. While often dismissed as a scribal slip, this paper argues that the substitution of Armorica with Armenia reveals broader cultural dynamics of post-Conquest historiography.

Drawing on the *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus* data, this paper first analyzes all the 21 occurrences of the name “Armenia” in Old English sources. For Anglo-Saxon audience, Armenia was a rather imprecise geographical location; it could signify not only a distant land but also a mountain, a city, or a site of sacred memory. The associations of Armenia with Mount Ararat and the Ark of Noah endowed the name with strong biblical and universal resonances.

Placed against this background, the appearance of Armenia in the *Chronicle* prefaces cannot be dismissed as a trivial mistake. All these copies preserve the so-called “Northern Recension” compiled in the early 11th century; the manuscripts themselves are relatively late: MS D was copied in mid-late 11th century, while MSS F and E – in the late 11th and 12th centuries, in the aftermath of the Norman Conquest. Here, the traditional West-Saxon dynastic preface was replaced by a more universal account of Britain’s geography and peoples. By relocating the origins of the Britons to an “exotic” and biblically charged Armenia, the *Chronicle* participates in a broader cultural shift: the displacement of Wessex-centered narratives in favor of a universal framework.

This phenomenon also resonates with wider developments in 12th-century culture. The rise of Arthurian legend required new ways of reimagining the past. The linkage of the Britons with Armenia reflects the creation of a symbolic geography in which origins are displaced to

distant lands, outside the immediate Anglo-Saxon political memory. Moreover, the conflation of Armenia and Armorica later found its way into romance tradition (such as *Sir Tristrem* or *Beves of Hamtoun*). Thus, this “textual journey” of Armenia – from biblical exegesis into historiography and later into romance tradition – illustrates how medieval texts relocated peoples and origins across vast distances, creating new narratives of identity and reshaping cultural memory.

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Wojtyś, Anna (University of Warsaw) – Geoffrey Chaucer’s *A Treatise on the Astrolabe*: Image, Text and Relation Between the Manuscripts

Mediaeval travellers made use of various tools designed to determine the position of celestial bodies and tell the time both during day and night. One of the basic instruments, dating to the ancient times, was an astrolabe. Among the texts on the structure and uses of that instrument, the one that stands out is Geoffrey Chaucer’s *A Treatise on the Astrolabe*, a text presumably written in 1391. As the author states, the treatise was compiled for the little boy named Lewis but its readership must have been quite wide as indicated by the number of surviving manuscripts: Middle English Bibliography lists 32 manuscripts dated to the period between a1400 and a1600, i.e. “more surviving copies than any other of Chaucer’s works, except for the *Canterbury tales*” (Eagleton & Spencer 2006: 238). Several manuscripts contain diagrams illustrating the treatise, which Gunther (1932: 480) claims are so alike that “there can be no doubt that they were taken from the same instrument” (in Eagleton 2007: 304), suggesting that diagrams are based on the astrolabe that was in Chaucer’s possession.

The study looks at *A Treatise on the Astrolabe* from the so far unexplored perspective as it focuses primarily on the diagrams considering the relation between them and the text they accompany. It will examine such issues as (1) a number of diagrams, i.e. which portions of the text are illustrated in various manuscripts and what might be the source of discrepancies discovered; (2) planning of a layout of page, which shows how many diagrams were planned and how they are incorporated in the text; and (3) how important the diagrams are for the comprehension of the text. The analysis sheds new light on some details concerning the

process of organizing the work over the manuscript production, i.e., whether the diagrams were planned beforehand and how proficient were the persons drawing them. Further, the study compares the diagrams present in various manuscripts and answers the question if the surviving diagrams may indeed have one common source and if the manuscripts show traces of copying from one another. Yet another issue is how realistic the diagrams are and whether they truly illustrate the processes they are expected to present.

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