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Records of Real People

Linguistic variation in Middle English local documents

EDITED BY
Merja Stenroos
and Kjetil V. Thengs

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Records of Real People

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Over the last three decades, historical sociolinguistics has developed into a mature and challenging field of study that focuses on language users and language use in the past. The social motivation of linguistic variation and change continues at the forefront of the historical sociolinguistic enquiry, but current research does not stop there. It extends from social and regional variation in language use to its various communicative contexts, registers and genres, and includes issues in language attitudes, policies and ideologies. One of the main stimuli for the field comes from new digitized resources and large text corpora, which enable the study of a much wider social coverage than before. Historical sociolinguists use variationist and dialectological research tools and techniques, perform pragmatic and social network analyses, and adopt innovative approaches from other disciplines. The series publishes monographs and thematic volumes, in English, on different languages and topics that contribute to our understanding of the relations between the individual, language and society in the past.

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Volume 11

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Edited by Merja Stenroos and Kjetil V. Thengs

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Stavanger, 23.05.2020
Merja Stenroos and Kjetil V. Thengs

Note on the cited texts and conventions

Most studies in this volume are based on MELD version 2017.1; however, Chapters 6 and 8 are based on a slightly earlier working version, 2016.1. Individual documents are referred to by the MELD code, preceded by the abbreviated county label when appropriate, e.g. Staffs D2041. The full archive references and dates of the documents referred to are provided at the back of the volume. A catalogue of the entire corpus is available on the MELD website.

In Chapters 1–10, citations from the corpus are provided in the "readable" format, which corresponds to a traditional diplomatic edition. It should, however, be noted that the "expansions" in italics are not based on editorial judgments of what abbreviations "mean", but each combination of letters corresponds to a specific visual form (for example, *per*fect always represents ꝑfect, while p*er*fect stands for pˤfect). A special case is the treatment of the final flourishes that Parkes (1979: xxix) characterized as 'additional strokes which in a Latin text would indicate an abbreviation, but which may or may not do so in English', and which accordingly should neither be ignored nor treated as abbreviations. Following Parkes, we indicate such flourishes with an apostrophe.

In Chapter 11, the citations are given in a format which reproduces abbreviations and flourishes iconically (e.g. pˤfect), as their visual form is crucial for understanding the working of multilingual texts. This format (based on the "Diplo" version of MELD) uses the Junicode font with additional glyphs designed by Geir Bergstrøm and Kjetil V. Thengs.

Chronological patterns are usually presented according to quarter century, using the century-half-quarter style: 15a1 is the first quarter of the fifteenth century, 15a2 the second, 15b1 the third, and so on.

PART I

Approaches to Middle English local documents

CHAPTER 1

Local documents as source material for the study of late medieval English

Merja Stenroos and Kjetil V. Thengs
University of Stavanger

1.1 Introduction

The focus of linguistic studies of historical English has changed in recent decades. Sociolinguistic and pragmatic approaches have transformed the field, with implications not only for the research questions and methods, but also for the kinds of material and the linguistic features studied. Sociolinguists and pragmaticians have tended to turn to the Early and Late Modern periods in search for useful materials: correspondences and diaries, court records and log books, which may be connected to real people and placed in a historical context. The Middle English period has so far received somewhat less attention from scholars with an interest in language use and context, presumably because suitable materials have been seen to be less abundant and certainly less easily available. The purpose of this book is to help address this gap through the study of a hitherto underresearched source of linguistic evidence: late medieval English local documents.

The term "local documents" is here used to refer to texts that are connected to real, historical people and places, and that relate to the kind of literacy that Parkes (1973: 555) termed "pragmatic": administrative and legal writings and letters, usually held in local archives and consulted by local historians. This type of texts were described as follows in the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* (McIntosh, Samuels and Benskin 1986, henceforth LALME):

> Local documents constitute the one large body of texts whose origins are in most cases either explicit or readily deducible. "Local documents" is, of course, merely a convenient label for a quantity of texts of very diverse origins, such as personal correspondence, the records of manors and municipalities, the records of courts, secular or ecclesiastical (though the latter are commonly in Latin), and legal instruments – depositions and indentures, conveyances and arbitrations. Most of these can be expected to contain indications of their local origins, and in general they can be trusted to attest a form of the written language, if not precisely of the stated place, then of somewhere near to it. (LALME I: 9)

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Because of their connections to specific places, local documents played an important role in the method of localization used in LALME (see p. 73). However, as with most studies of Middle English language, the main focus of LALME was on literary texts as far as available: manuscripts containing works of Chaucer, Langland, the Gawain poet and numerous less well known poets, as well as a range of religious writings, chronicles, treatises and the like.[1]

Scholars have for the most part preferred literary texts as material for the linguistic study of Middle English. Apart from their intrinsic "worth" as specimens of creative writing, such texts have the advantage that they are often long and tend to provide a large vocabulary. Literary texts – at least the "best" manuscripts of them – are also readily available in editions, which can be accessed easily and studied without the need to acquire the specialist skill of reading medieval handwriting.

At the same time, Middle English literary texts are problematic in that most of them are difficult or impossible to place in a specific historical context. Only a few authors are known by name, and even for these, biographical information is often meagre or altogether lacking. In addition, most surviving literary manuscripts were produced by scribes copying from exemplars, and may be the product of a long history of copying, during which the language may have been considerably transformed. The scribes are for the most part anonymous, and seldom provide information about where and when the manuscript was produced.

The literary material provides, accordingly, abundant evidence of linguistic variation, but few external variables to which it can be related. This problem was addressed by the LALME compilers through an ingenious methodology that made it possible to reconstruct a geographical dialect continuum through "localizing" texts in relation to each other on the basis of their linguistic forms (see further p. 72–73; see also Benskin 1991a). This methodology, known as the "fit-technique", makes it possible to identify the most likely dialectal background of a text: for example, the dialect of BL Cotton Nero A x, or the Gawain manuscript, was placed in Cheshire. However, such localizations cannot, and were not intended to, provide information of the actual historical and geographical context of texts. They are therefore of limited use for studies where historical or social contextualization is central: where the actual scribe or community that produced the text matters.

1. For the LALME compilers, literary texts were strongly preferred as evidence: the Introduction states that "only the literary works can provide us with anything approaching an adequate sample of language" (LALME I: 10). However, it should be noted that the LALME mapped material for the far North (Cumberland, Westmorland, Northumberland and the northern parts of Yorkshire) consists overwhelmingly of administrative documents, as the localization of literary texts in these areas proved difficult (Benskin 1991b: 211).

At the same time, the development of historical sociolinguistics has led to a greater overall emphasis precisely on historical and social context, and to the realization that living language does not necessarily conform to regular linear patterns, nor fall into neat categories such as "local dialect" and "standard". The central question becomes: "what kind of language was *actually* produced in a particular place?" While this line of enquiry is problematic in the study of literary texts, the situation is very different with regard to documentary texts. Local documents may, to a large extent, be related directly to specific historical contexts: people, locations, institutions and communities. Unlike literary manuscripts, they are also for the most part precisely dated, or may be dated with some confidence in relation to people and events.

As Middle English local documents provide potentially highly valuable material for the study of linguistic variation in relation to external variables, one might wonder why – with the exception of correspondences – relatively few linguistic scholars have so far studied them in their own right; important exceptions include Benskin (1977, 1989, 1992, 2004), Fernández Cuesta & Rodríguez Ledesma (2004) and Wright (2000b, 2005, 2010a, 2010b, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2017).[2]

One reason for this relative lack of interest is undoubtedly that local documents are more difficult to get hold of than literary texts: relatively few administrative documents have been edited or digitized, and even getting an overview of what is available is a considerable task. Even though an increasing number of local documents are now listed in searchable online catalogues, at the time of writing most catalogues are still paper ones – printed or handwritten – available for consultation at the archive, and many local archives still have boxes of uncatalogued documents in their strongrooms.[3]

In addition, local documents have had some perceived shortcomings as evidence, such as their formulaicness and comparatively restricted vocabulary. Some scholars have also held that documentary texts were the first to become standardized and are therefore of less interest as evidence for linguistic variation (see Chapter 5).

The view presented in this volume is that such evaluations, while often understandable in a specific context, give a misleading picture of the material as a whole. Documentary texts certainly contain formulaic elements, but they also provide us with the rare glimpses we have of actual, recorded speech. Similarly, even though

2. Correspondences form the only type of late medieval local documents that have been both edited and much studied by linguists (select examples include Bergs 2005, 2018; Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003; Conde-Silvestre 2013, 2016; Rutkowska 2003); for a list of editions see p. 50, note 6.

3. An added difficulty is that relatively few catalogues state the language of documents (cf. p. 15).

administrative texts may be the first to adopt many later "standard" features, it is also the case that local documents often reflect strikingly local language, and handwritten documents eventually resist standardization far longer than printed books. Late medieval local documents, in fact, provide extremely rich materials for the study of linguistic variation; however, as will be shown in what follows, this is a different kind of richness from that found in literary texts.

1.2 The present approach

1.2.1 Basic principles

The studies presented in this volume arise from a four-year project that resulted in the compilation of a Corpus of Middle English local documents (MELD), consisting of transcriptions of more than 2,000 local documents from the period 1399–1525. The aim of the volume is to consider how this material may encourage us to think differently about the study of linguistic variation in Late Middle English. Rather than sifting out data in order to study reconstructed "local dialects", or focussing on an assumed process of standardization, the contextual evidence available for the present material allows us to study linguistic variation in relation to a range of variables, and combining different viewpoints both at micro- and macro-levels; such a "multi-pronged" approach makes it possible to build up a more complex picture than that allowed either by traditional dialectology or by the study of "standardization".[4]

This approach, which we might call "sociopragmaphilological", is based on two basic principles:

a. the study of early historical linguistic variation should, as far as possible, take into account both the individual text, with its textual and historical context, and the entire corpus available
b. the material should be studied on its own terms: research questions and categorisation should reflect the characteristics of the material

The first principle addresses one of the central problems in the use of early historical materials as the basis of larger-scale studies: since the survival of texts is limited and uneven, corpora will generally consist of heterogeneous materials that make generalizations problematic. Every individual text presents its own challenges, which should be taken into account when comparing it to other texts: any patterns that emerge from the material should be related to the kinds of text involved. It is,

4. Cf. the idea of "layered simultaneity" discussed by Nevalainen (2015).

of course, not practicable to carry out detailed individual studies of every single text included in a large corpus. A corpus of documentary texts can be provided with a range of metadata that makes it, at the very least, possible to sort texts according to basic categories such as geography, date and function. Even so, it is held here that case studies should always form a complement to large-scale surveys.

Conversely, given the variability of Middle English texts, a sensible interpretation of an individual text requires some knowledge of the larger picture: which other texts does it pattern with, and how does it fit into the overall framework of linguistic variation? Here it must be borne in mind that the survival of early historical texts is non-random (in the sense that some text types are more likely to survive than others) and large areas of language use are irrevocably lost to us. Consequently, no corpus can be said to represent "Middle English", and given the lack of contextual information for many text types, the study of linguistic variation in Middle English as a whole is a highly problematic aim (cf. Herring, van Reenen and Schøsler 2000: 3; see also Fleischman 2000). Instead, the study of variation should relate to sets of texts that are comparable in some sense: texts that may be said to form a constellation or a community about which generalizations may be made.

This last point leads to the second principle: the data should, in the first instance, be studied with reference to those parameters for which information is available. An attempt to relate linguistic data from medieval texts to the traditional categories of present-day sociolinguistic studies (age, gender, class and ethnicity) will for the most part be unsatisfactory, as we seldom know the identity of medieval scribes and consequently have no information on these points.[5] On the other hand, as Herring, van Reenen and Schøsler (2000) point out, there are numerous parameters for which the texts themselves provide information and which allow us to produce sensible generalizations. For local documents, such information allows us to reconstruct much of the historical context, even if the identity of scribes eludes us (see Chapters 3 and 4).

1.2.2 Written and spoken language

Taking the material on its own terms also has to do with the kind of linguistic evidence we expect to find. Labovian sociolinguistics has largely focussed on the reconstruction of informal spoken language – the "vernacular" – and has tended to target historical materials that may be expected to be as close to the spoken form as possible. The potential of such studies has been shown, among others, by Culpeper and Kytö (2010), who combine several kinds of dialogue texts, including

5. Correspondences, again, form a major exception, as the gender and class, sometimes even the age, of the sender (if not necessarily the scribe) is usually known.

drama, letters and manuals, in order to approach the informal registers of early modern speakers. At the same time, it may be argued that informal speech is only one of many registers worth study: it is increasingly accepted that written registers are of interest for linguistic enquiry, and, unlike spoken ones, can be studied directly in historical texts. The implications of the last point are, however, still controversial and need to be briefly addressed.

The idea of writing as a mere record of, or substitute for, speech, as held by the early structuralists (e.g. Bloomfield 1933: 21), dominated mainstream linguistics throughout the twentieth century, making spoken language the only legitimate object of enquiry for linguistics. An alternative view was, however, formulated early on by Vachek (1945–49 [1976]: 132), who pointed out that writing does not simply mirror speech: "[w]riting is a system in its own right, adapted to fulfil its own specific functions, which are quite different from the functions proper to a phonetic transcription". The view that writing, just like speech, produces orderly linguistic variation that can and should be studied – both in its own right and in relation to spoken patterns – was argued by McIntosh (1956, 1963) and underpins historical sociolinguistic studies such as Romaine (1982) and Bergs (2005, 2018).[6] It is also the view taken in the present volume. While it will often be relevant to make inferences about the spoken mode, the main goal of the study is not to reconstruct speech, but rather to make sense of the historical and social embedding of the variation we observe in the written texts.

1.2.3 The formulaicness of documentary texts

Studies that focus on the reconstruction of spoken language often dismiss historical documentary texts on the grounds that they are "formulaic" and consequently of no interest. As formulaicness is undoubtedly typical of the kind of material studied in this book, it is worth considering briefly from the outset what this means for its use as linguistic evidence.

Legal documents tend to be formulaic as a direct consequence of their functions. A lease performs a specific function that is different from that of a grant or a quitclaim; conventionalized formulae relating to such functions both assure the legality of the document and save time and effort both for the scribe and the document user. Medieval Latin documents may be recognized in an instant from their introductory formula: *sciant presentes et futuri* introduces a gift or grant, *noverint universi* a bond and *pateat universis* a letter of attorney, all translating approximately as 'let all people know'. Medieval English documents often translate such

6. For a highly useful model of writing and speech as autonomous but interacting media, see Samuels (1972: 6); cf. also Bergs (2005: 16) and Smith (1996: 15–17).

formulae, but with much more variation in phrasing, as conventions have not yet been fully established (see Example (3.8), p. 60–61). An attestation, for example, is often introduced with the formula 'since it is meritorious to bear witness of the truth', but its precise form varies considerably:

(1.1) a. Jn as muche as hyt ys medefull And behofull to bere wytnes and record in maters of trouthe (Shrops D0074, 1465–66)
b. for als mykell as hyt ys meritory & & nedefull to bere wittenes to ye truthe (Ches D0079, 1458)
c. Sith it is meritori to wyttenes yo trwth (Notts D2029, 1456)

Some types of short document such as receipts may be extremely formulaic, consisting only of a conventional frame into which names, sums and dates are inserted. However, even such documents may vary considerably both in their spelling and morphology and in the precise phrasing of the formulae. The use of formulaic phrases may even be an advantage for the study of linguistic variation, as it ensures comparable data from a large number of short texts (cf. the phrase "fourth floor" elicited in Labov's (1966) New York department store survey).

Moreover, the use of formulaic phrases does not preclude the inclusion of distinctly individual voices and colloquial turns of phrase, especially where reported speech is involved. Court records, which begin to appear in English in the later part of the period, are a well-known source of colourful recorded speech:

(1.2) by godd*es* bones & by the goode lord*es* soull thye fath*er* & moder kepith no oþ*er* in ther house but hores and thefes (Kent D2788, 1514)
'by God's bones and by the good Lord's soul, thy father and mother keep no other people in their house but whores and thieves'

However, individual voices may turn up virtually anywhere, reflecting the close relationship between legal documents and the real-life actions and events to which they relate. The following attestation from 1426 illustrates this relationship well:

(1.3) J John Shymmyng of walden' beyng at Clare the wednesday neest affter the Feste of Saynt George the yeer of the Reigne of kyng herry the sexte the feerthe in the presence of Thom' Derh*a*m Styward of Clare […] and other / sey and wytnesse that wyll*a*m Clopton' the Sone of Edmond Clopton' yaf and graunted and be his chartre confermed to John howard […] and to me John Shymmyng forsaid his Maner of Newenh*a*m in Asshdon' […] be vertu of which dede the same wyll*a*m Sone of Edmond yaf me Seisyn and ther J took openly seisyn in the name of me and alle my felas be that tokene that the sayd wyll*a*m Sone of Edmond sente to the Alehows for ale and ther was noon and than J seyde it was the dryest Seysyn that euer J was at (Suffolk D2454)

> 'I, John Shimming of Walden, being at Clare the Wednesday next after the Feast of St George in the fourth year of the reign of king Henry VI in the presence of Thomas Derham, Steward of Clare […]and others, declare and witness that William Clopton, the son of Edmond Clopton, gave and granted and by his charter confirmed to John Howard […] and to me, the aforesaid John Shimming, his manor of Newenham in Ashdown […] by the virtue of which deed the same William, son of Edmond, gave me seisin and there I openly took seisin on behalf of myself and all my fellows, by the token that the said William son of Edmond sent to the alehouse for ale, and there was none, and then I said that it was the driest seisin that I had ever attended'

Here, the text begins with a long formulaic account describing a legal transaction, but moves into a colloquial mode as the account is verified by the recounting of a practical detail, the lack of ale, and the declarer's own comment "I said that it was the driest seisin that I had ever attended". The transfer is marked linguistically: the phrase *be that tokene that the sayd wyllam Sone of Edmond sente to the Alehows* represents a formal legal register, with an embedded subordinate clause and the formulaic use of "the said", but it is followed by two coordinate clauses introduced by "and", typical of an oral style: ***and** ther was noon **and** than J seyde it was the dryest Seysyn that euer J was at*.

The use of formulae and repetition is, consequently, entirely compatible with colloquial language and individual voices. This is also the case with regard to fifteenth-century private letters, which Fludernik (2007: 242) has referred to as "extremely formulaic in structure and form": the conventional and often elaborate greetings and concluding phrases that are characteristic for this period may combine with startlingly colloquial intervening content (see e.g. Stenroos & Mäkinen 2011: 93–97). In addition, the lack of formal standardization makes the formulae themselves of interest for the study of linguistic variation (cf. Thengs 2015).

1.2.4 Formulating research questions

The limitations of the material clearly depend on the questions we wish to ask. Not all legal documents contain good material for the reconstruction of informal spoken syntax, even though some of them certainly do. However, even the most formulaic documents provide excellent material for the study of orthographic and morphological variation (and, based on the orthography, phonological variation). Some types of documents are of considerable interest for the study of lexical variation within specific lexical fields (see Chapter 8), while many other types provide good material for pragmatic studies in research areas such as speech acts and greetings (see e.g. Rütten 2013).

Local documents are also of interest because of the roles they play in the late medieval and early modern language shift from Latin to English and as part of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century levelling processes traditionally referred to as "standardization" (cf. Benskin 1992, 2004; Rissanen 1999, 2000). English administrative writings appear from the early fifteenth century onwards, and gradually become more common; however, the spread of English does not take place uniformly either with regard to text type or geography, and Latin still remains dominant as the language of documents in the early sixteenth century. During the same period, written English gradually becomes less variable; however, strongly local forms of English appear well into the sixteenth century and seem to fill particular functions (Stenroos 2013; Stenroos & Smith 2016). A corpus of English local documents makes possible a detailed study of both these developments, which will be dealt with throughout this volume.

Finally, as local documents represent the everyday literacy practices of late medieval writers (and speakers) of English, they form a crucial body of evidence for the study of vernacular literacy and text production in this period. It is held here that such a line of study is a necessary prerequisite for any serious sociolinguistic enquiry into medieval text materials, in the same way that a study of social networks and speech communities is fundamental for present-day sociolinguistics. While the studies in this volume deal with various aspects of linguistic variation in local documents, they all relate to two main research questions, which form the central line of enquiry: "what kind of language was produced in which area, and for what purposes?" and "how does the linguistic variation relate to processes in the society and to text production, literacy and scribal networks?" The remainder of this chapter provides an introductory presentation of the material, as well as a brief overview of the structure of the volume.

1.3 The material: Middle English local documents

Documentary texts are here defined as follows:

- They have a pragmatic function, as opposed to, for example, a didactic, aesthetic or devotional one
- They belong to, and are relevant for, a specific historical context, whether the details of this context are known to us or not

Pragmatic function might be defined as a concern with the specific, individual case or matter: the ownership of a particular piece of land, a contract between specific individuals, a vow of chastity given by a specific person, valid in a temporal framework that often (if not always) begins with the date of the document.[7]

By definition, functions that are not pragmatic involve generalizations: even if many didactic or religious texts, for example, are produced with a specific event in mind (such as a sermon for a particular Sunday) their contents have to be generally applicable in order to make sense as didactic or religious. A documentary text, on the other hand, is always concerned with the specific, even though it may include minor generalizing elements, especially in formulae such as that cited in Example (1.1).

Documentary texts are found in virtually all domains. In late medieval England, they include eccleasiastical, episcopal, governmental, manorial, mercantile, monastic, municipal and private records. They span an array of different functions ranging from private letters and receipts to royal decrees. To qualify as "local" for the present purpose, they have to be connected to a specific place or area, rather than representing central government. What falls outside the definition of "local" are, then, centrally produced texts such as royal writs or parliamentary rolls, as well as copies produced centrally, such as Chancery copies of petitions. This is not to say that the latter kinds of material are not worth study, nor even that they cannot be used for the study of geographical variation; however, they belong to a different kind of context and should be studied separately from local texts.

Most documentary texts are relatively short. The great majority are between 100 and 1,000 words in length, although the MELD corpus contains texts ranging from nine to over 3,000 words. The shortest documents, such as receipts, may consist of a single formulaic clause of the type "X has received [sum] from Y on [date]". Other kinds of document, including surveys, wills and marriage articles, may be of a considerable size, and local cartularies may provide hundreds of pages of text written by a single scribe or by few scribes.

While often short, documentary texts are extremely plentiful compared to any other text type. Because of their status as legal evidence, many kinds of local document have had a relatively good chance of being preserved. A notable case of survival is the enormous correspondence of the Paston family, preserved with meticulous care over several generations from the fourteenth century onwards; however, many family and legal archives contain large collections of medieval documents relating to land holdings, and innumerable boxes of court rolls are

7. Parkes (1973: 555) describes "pragmatic literacy" as "the literacy of one who has to read or write in the course of transacting any kind of business"; while this is an apt description of much of the activity behind documentary texts, it does not cover all the material included here. Parkes' paper explicitly deals with *lay* literacy, and it is therefore not concerned with the administrative texts produced by episcopal, monastic and ecclesiastical institutions.

preserved in local archives. Altogether, hundreds of thousands of local documents survive from the later Middle Ages, relating to the lives and concerns of ordinary people, aristocratic families, villages, towns and religious houses.

The production of administrative texts in late medieval England was dominated by men. It built on two basic skills in which women were normally not trained: Latin and physical writing skills. Business and legal writing were taught at schools to which only boys had entry, and was controlled in the larger towns by all-male guilds. This imbalance does not, however, make women absent from the local documentary materials: on the contrary, their presence is considerable even if they seldom held the pen. Women appear habitually as the authors of letters and as the givers of various kinds of written statements, such as wills and abjurations; in most cases, the documents were physically written down by male scribes, but occasional examples of women's writing also survive.[8] In addition, women play a not inconsiderable role as parties to legal documents, whether on their own (in the case of widows) or as part of a married couple; addressing these roles and their relation to linguistic variation is an important line of study that can only be briefly touched upon in the present volume (see p. 245 and p. 263, note 9).[9]

Most of the medieval documentary texts were written in Latin, and contain only onomastic material in English (see Kristensson 1967, 1987, 1990, 1995, 2001a, 2001b). However, documents in English begin to appear in the late fourteenth century and increase in number during the course of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries (see p. 262). The ratio of Latin to English texts is difficult to estimate, as it varies greatly between document types and also from one archive to another; in addition, it changes over time. The Jervoise family collection held at the Hampshire Record Office, studied by Schipor (2018; see also Chapter 11) has a relatively high proportion of English texts, averaging as much as 20% during the entire period; however, the average for all archives and subperiods may probably be estimated as closer to the order of 1: 100.

French, which is found in a similar ratio to Latin in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, is rarely used in local documents after the fourteenth century (see p. 263). Judging from the materials searched by the MELD team, there is little overlap between the use of French and English in documentary texts; it rather seems that one vernacular replaced the other in the early fifteenth century. This change was presumably connected to the replacement of French by English as the medium of introductory school education, which according to Trevisa took

8. A private letter from Elizabeth, Duchess of Suffolk, to John Paston III, written 1479–83 (BL Add. 34390 fol. 42r) is a remarkable example, showing an unprofessional but fluent handwriting.

9. The results of a preliminary survey of the roles and presence of women in MELD are being prepared for publication; see Stenroos 2019b.

place after the Black Death.[10] English texts become increasingly common during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; however, in some types of document, such as the recovery and the final concord, Latin remains in use until the eighteenth century (see p. 61).

The study of multilingualism in historical texts is a relatively recent development, and it is still to a large extent carried out as a specialized area of research, rather than being integrated into the mainstream of language disciplines. Accordingly, many researchers of historical English language are likely to limit their study to monolingual English, leaving out Latin or French elements as a matter of course. While this may make good methodological sense for the linguistic analysis itself, the interpretation of findings generally requires access to the entire text as well as its context, including elements in other languages. On a broader scale, making sense of the development of English writing – including questions such as standardization and formulaicness, as well as the application of concepts such as the community of practice – certainly requires a view of the whole picture.

Acquiring such a view involves practical problems, relating both to the scholars' own competence and to the available research tools. As regards the latter, the compilation of multilingual corpora is clearly a desideratum (cf. Nurmi, Rütten & Pahta, 2018). While it may be difficult to fund and produce multilingual corpora that would faithfully reflect the reality of text production in the late medieval period, bearing in mind that, in most archives, over 90% of the material will be in Latin, multilingual corpora based on more even samples will clearly be useful as well. In addition, for a basically English-language corpus such as MELD, it would be desirable to include all occurring multilingual elements within and immediately surrounding the texts, making possible the study of multilingual patterns and practices in "English" writing, as well as a more complete understanding of the texts and their context.[11] For the moment, however, the transcription of Latin elements is on the whole restricted to such short stretches that are integrated within the texts.

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10. This maner was moche y-used tofore the furste moreyn, and is siththe somdel y-chaunged. For John Cornwal, a maister of gramere, changede the lore in gramer-scole and construccion of Freynsch into Englysch 'this method was common before the Black Death but things have changed since; because John Cornwall, a master of grammar, changed the language of teaching and study in grammar schools from French to English' (John Trevisa's translation of Higden's *Polychronicon*, cited from http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/canttales/rvt/dialect2.html)

11. A version of the MELD corpus including full multilingual contexts has been planned virtually from the start, and some work has already been done; however, such a project has turned out to be difficult to fund.

The MELD team have collected and catalogued over 5,000 documentary texts in or containing English, relating to locations throughout England. Of these, more than 2,000 are included in the first version of the corpus (MELD 2017.1, see Section 1.4). It is difficult to estimate what proportion this represents of the total number of surviving documentary texts in English: catalogues seldom list the language of a text, and not all texts have been catalogued. Some archives we have certainly exhausted; others (such as the British Library collections, where searchroom restrictions have precluded a large-scale collection) have only been lightly sampled. All in all, we assume that the materials so far collected represent a considerable, but not nearly exhaustive, proportion of what is likely to be available.

1.4 A Corpus of Middle English Local Documents (MELD)

The present version of A Corpus of Middle English Local Documents (MELD 2017.1) consists of 2,017 documentary texts dated to the period 1399–1525. This period encompasses the reigns of the Lancaster and York kings, as well as the first forty years of the Tudor period. It transcends the traditional limits of "Middle English" in including the early sixteenth century; this makes it possible to follow the linguistic development of documentary texts well past the initial, exploratory phase of document production in English. The cut-off date is arbitrary in detail (nothing particularly relevant happened in 1526) but was chosen to keep the available material within manageable limits. It also avoids the changes to the framework of document production that followed the Reformation, and allows for an even chronological division into quarter centuries.

Figure 1.1 shows the distribution of precisely datable documents in MELD according to quarter century. While there are very few texts from the first quarter century, the following three subperiods are relatively even; texts from the last subperiod, however, are considerably more plentiful.

It might be noted that, for the northern area, the diachronic pattern is somewhat different, with the largest number of texts being dated to the mid-fifteenth century (Figure 1.2).[12] This discrepancy reflects the relatively large number of available early English texts from the North, collected and transcribed before the team was aware of the pattern for the rest of the country; a later version of the corpus will, it is hoped, include more late-fifteenth and sixteenth-century texts from the North.

12. The North is here defined as consisting of the pre-1974 counties of Cumberland, Durham, Lancashire, Northumberland, Westmorland and Yorkshire.

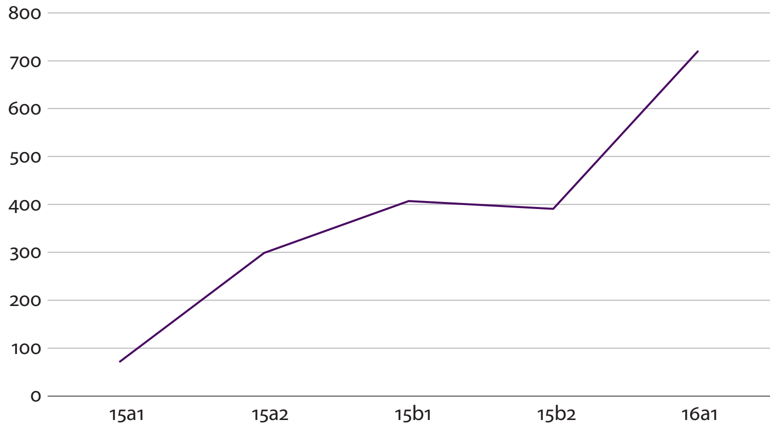

Figure 1.1 The chronological distribution of documents in MELD, by quarter century (absolute figures)

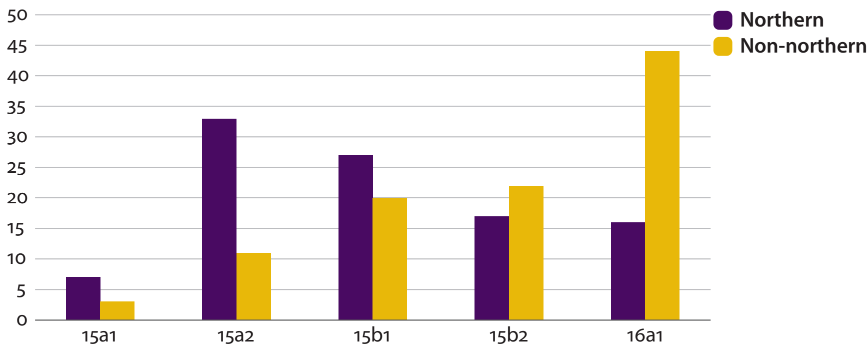

Figure 1.2 The chronological distribution of documents in MELD, by quarter century (percentages): Northern vs non-northern texts

The geographical scope of the corpus was originally planned to include both England and Wales; however, in view of the abundance of material it was decided to focus on England, and only a small number of texts from Wales have been included so far. The aim has been to produce a reasonably even geographical coverage of England. However, there are considerable local and regional differences in the number and kind of surviving or accessible texts, and a completely even coverage in any respect has not been achievable.

The project operates with the county boundaries of the pre-1974 division, which are for the most part near-identical to the administrative boundaries of late medieval England; they also formed the basis for the geographical organisation of the material in LALME. Figure 1.3 shows the density of coverage per county in relation to its approximate area, while Figure 1.4 relates the coverage to approximate

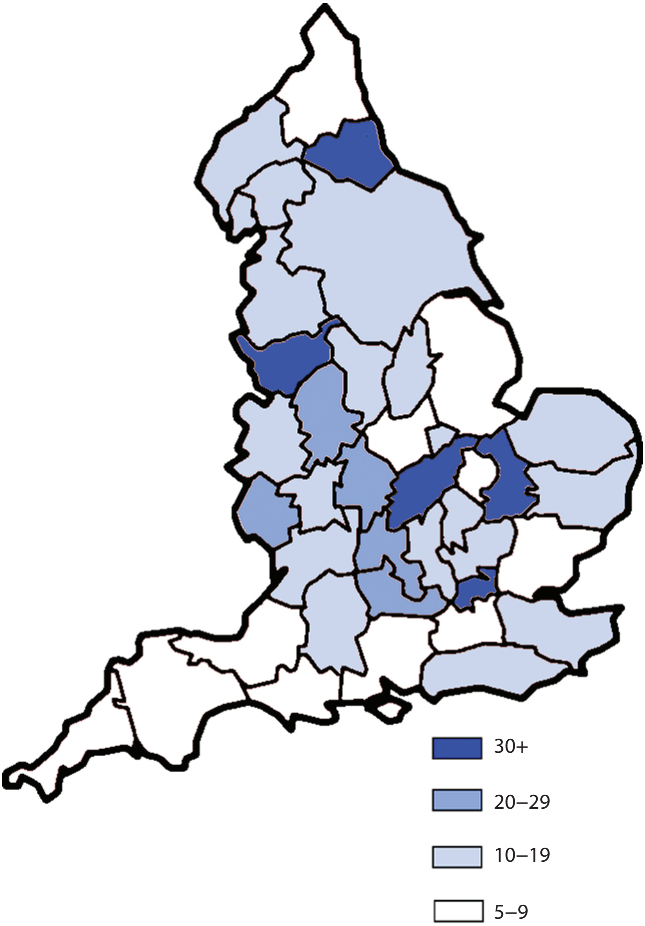

Figure 1.3 The coverage of pre-1974 counties in MELD in relation to area (texts per 1,000 km^2)

medieval populations based on the 1377 tax returns (Broadberry et al. 2015: 8). It may be noted that Cambridgeshire, Cheshire and Durham are among the counties showing the densest coverages on both maps; this partly reflects intensive archive collection for PhD projects (Cambridge and Cheshire), partly unusually rich surviving English documentary materials (Cheshire and Durham). Only four counties are represented with fewer than 20 texts: Leicestershire (19), Surrey (12), Huntingtonshire (6) and Rutland (4).

The corpus has been compiled from all the major county archives in England, as well as from numerous other archives and collections in England, Wales, Germany, Japan, Norway and the United States. All the county archives have been visited and searched by members of the MELD team, and, wherever possible,

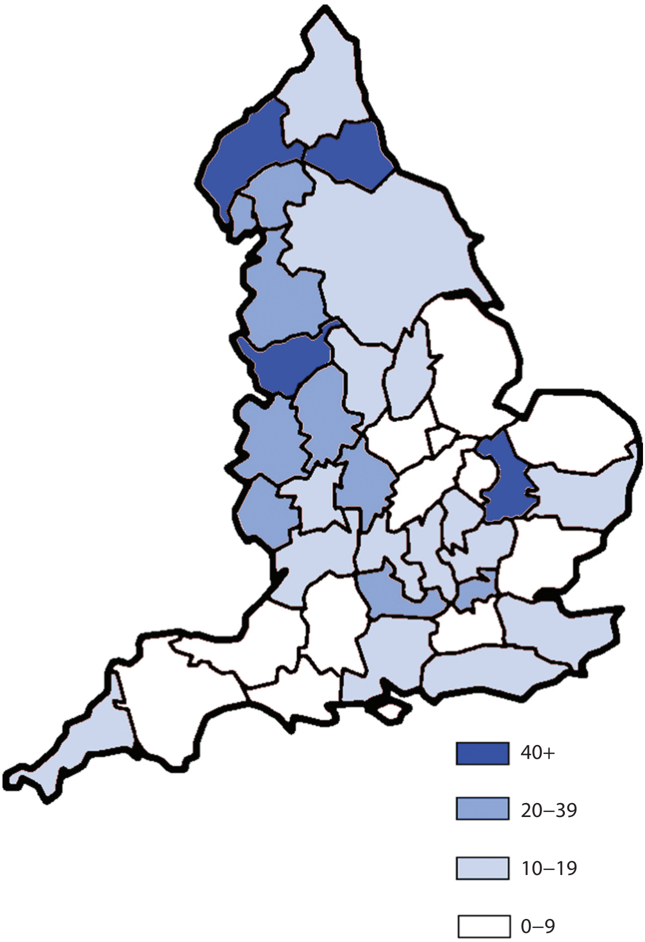

Figure 1.4 The coverage of pre-1974 counties in MELD in relation to the estimated population in 1377 (texts per 10,000 inhabitants)

images have been been acquired of all identified texts dating to the period and containing English. For the most part, the texts have been photographed by the team; however, where self-service photography has been restricted, digital or hardcopy images have been provided by the archives. In a few cases, texts have been transcribed and proofread at the archive.

The transcriptions represent the text at a rich diplomatic level, including punctuation, line division and some allographic information. They are first produced in a "base version", using only the basic ASCII character set (characters 32–126) and including a large amount of annotation, mainly relating to the visual aspects of the text. This version, which is designed to be compatible with virtually any digital environment, is used as a basis for producing three further versions of the corpus for different uses. These include a searchable version for use with a concordancer or other corpus software, as well as two reading versions: a "readable" version which corresponds to a traditional diplomatic edition, and a "diplo" version which shows abbreviations, symbols etc. iconically.

As used in the present book, the term "text" usually refers to the "scribal text": a linguistic entity as it appears in a specific physical context. The scribal text is here defined strictly as a functionally continuous piece of writing – an utterance – produced, as far as we can tell, by a single scribe. Occasionally an utterance is produced by more than one scribe: it still remains a single "text" in the functional sense, but from the point of view of linguistic study it contains two or more *scribal* texts, which may differ considerably with regard to both linguistic form and handwriting. Working with documentary texts, it seldom makes sense to refer to the text in the abstract sense: that of a written composition, or "work" (*Piers Plowman*, Chaucer's treatise of the Astrolabe; see Chapter 2 for a fuller discussion). Most documentary texts are inseparable from their physical context, whether they were produced in one or more copies.

The transcriptions are accompanied by a large amount of contextual and descriptive data, organized both in conventional catalogue entries with content summaries and as metadata entered into a relational database and linked to the linguistic data. The categories of extralinguistic data include the textual parameters deemed most relevant for the study of linguistic variation in the material: geographical location, date, function, domain, institutional connection, physical format, script and material (see further Chapter 3 and the MELD Introduction). Both the conventional catalogue and a spreadsheet containing most of the metadata are made available together with the corpus.

1.5 The structure of this book

This volume is organized into three main parts, moving from more general and theoretical chapters to investigations of specific aspects of the material. The studies are the result of a process where the material itself – the local documents – has determined the direction of enquiry, in the same way that present-day sociolinguistic and pragmatic methodologies and research questions are based on the physical and social realities of spoken interaction. Because of the gaps in our knowledge of the context of early materials, it was suggested in 1.2.1 that a "multi-pronged" or holistic approach is required in order to make sense of the materials. Accordingly, throughout the book, corpus searches are combined with studies of individual texts, and the studies focus on different aspects of the material, including orthographic, morphological and lexical variation, the use of punctuation, formulae and multilingual practices. The variation is related to diachronic change and geographical location as well as to the function of the texts and to text communities.

The first part outlines the theoretical and methodological principles behind our approach to the documentary materials. The first two chapters focus on the question of categorization: how do we group Middle English local documents, and how do our categories shape the ways in which we view linguistic variation? Mäkinen (Chapter 2) sets out the theoretical framework for the categorization of historical documentary texts that underlies the remainder of the studies. He proposes a dynamic definition of the text category, seen as the sum of potential sets of criteria for establishing proximities between texts, or topologies. The criteria may include both text-external and text-internal features, and they may take into account both formal and functional aspects; there can be no absolute "genre" classification as the constellations change when the criteria are rechosen.

The classification of texts in MELD does not, accordingly, make use of a general concept of genre, but instead works with a large number of parameters, linked to six basic textual contexts. In Chapter 3, Stenroos, Bergstrøm and Thengs outline the principles of categorisation applied to the corpus and discuss their implications. This chapter provides an empirical application of Mäkinen's framework, as well as an overview of the functional, social, multilingual, material and textual constellations within the corpus, to which most of the following chapters relate.

Geography is usually seen as the main factor of linguistic variation in written Middle English. At the same time, relating medieval linguistic data to locations on the map is problematic. In MELD, geographical location is defined strictly on non-linguistic grounds, either on the basis of localizing clauses or of references to people, places or institutions. All texts included in the corpus have been localized at the level of a town or village, even though some of the localizations may be considered more reliable than others, and some texts may belong to more than one place. In Chapter 4, Stenroos and Thengs outline the principles of localization in the MELD corpus and problematize the concept of localization, relating it to changing conceptions of geography and dialect as well as to the specific problems of historical materials.

The remainder of the book consists of a series of empirical studies applying the principles outlined in Part I to the MELD corpus and related materials. Part II focusses on the geographical dimension of Late Middle English linguistic variation. In Chapter 5, Stenroos addresses the question to what extent late medieval English local documents may be said to show a high degree of supralocalization or "standardization" compared to other types of text from the same period. Bergstrøm (Chapter 6) and Thengs (Chapter 7) both carry out detailed studies of specific text communities, based on surveys of morphological and orthographic features. Bergstrøm presents a study of the documentary materials of late medieval Cambridge, relating the variation both to the scribal community and to its linguistic context in the Eastern Counties, showing that the linguistic usage of Cambridge was both relatively homogeneous and different from that of the surrounding areas. Thengs compares two Cheshire townships, Knutsford and Nantwich, which present very different linguistic patterns despite their relative closeness; the differences are related to the kinds of social networks and degrees of external contact that characterize the two communities. Finally, Stenroos (Chapter 8) explores the possibilities of land documents – those documents directly dealing with the description and definition of land holdings, such as field surveys and boundary disputes – in the study of word geography. This chapter outlines a research agenda for the study of lexical variation within the semantic fields relating to location, and presents a preliminary survey of lexical items in land documents in MELD.

Part III, finally, contains three chapters that focus on pragmatic and social parameters in the study of Middle English documents. In Chapter 9, Smith addresses the pragmatics of punctuation in documentary texts. Using examples from the MELD corpus, this chapter considers the use of punctuation in linguistic interactions, showing how patterns of usage change and how the changes may be linked to wider socio-cultural developments. Solberg-Harestad (Chapter 10) studies formulaicness in heresy abjurations, given by women and men usually of modest rank and generally assumed to provide no opportunities for an individual voice; he questions this assumption, discussing the colourful and often very long non-formulaic contents in a corpus of abjurations from five different dioceses.

Finally, Stenroos and Schipor (Chapter 11) consider multilingualism in late medieval documentary texts, in particular with regard to multilingual events in English and mixed-code texts both in MELD and in three entire archive collections at the Hampshire Record Office. This chapter provides a categorisation of written multilingual events and examines the uses of Latin and mixed code in different types of multilingual texts. It also relates the patterns of code selection in the material to the late medieval language shift from Latin to English, and thus places the preceding studies in their multilingual context.

These eleven chapters do not, of course, provide an exhaustive overview of the potential of Middle English local documents as source material for linguistic study. Rather, they are intended as a starting point, exploring some aspects of the MELD corpus and pointing at further directions that await exploration. In this regard, their main aim is to suggest an approach to Middle English, based on materials that allow us to relate linguistic variation to at least some of its social and historical context, and enquire into what this perspective may contribute to our understanding of this formative period.

CHAPTER 2

Grouping and regrouping Middle English documents

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2.1 Introduction

Documents document, do they not? That is to say, to their users, documents vouch for actions that have taken place earlier in time, and, in that, they are physical manifestations of acts that have granted, leased, and agreed upon rights, land and contracts. The contemporaries and users of the documents did not necessarily identify them as such, but perhaps as affidavits, leases, accounts and so on. However, from our point of view, as we are trying to make sense of the maze that is early English linguistic variation, "documentary texts" share certain crucial characteristics: they relate to a specific historical context – actual people at a specific time and place – and they represent the kind of literacy that Parkes (1973: 555) referred to as "pragmatic". It is these characteristics that make the texts interesting for us, and therefore make the category "documents" a useful one.

At the same time, the category of documentary texts is a vast and heterogeneous one: a receipt is very different from an ordinance, and both differ from a court roll in several fundamental ways, including function, phrasing, physical format, and even the preferred language (court rolls are mostly written in Latin). The conventional categories (such as genre and register) are, at times, too narrow in their scope to allow an approach that does not discard the wealth of features available for categorizing documents. Therefore, for the studies on MELD, a more flexible and versatile system of grouping texts must be devised.

Texts can be classified according to two kinds of criteria: text-internal and text-external. In some models these two come together, while in others one tends to choose one over the other (Virtanen 1992: 294). In the study of Middle English documents, two obvious variables present themselves quickly to the interested scholar: the text-external purpose of writing (i.e. the text or discourse function for which the text was composed), and the text-internal spelling variation; however,

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the number of possible variables that can be drawn upon to classify documents is potentially infinite.

The aim of this chapter is to investigate different feature sets that are involved in the grouping of texts, with particular focus on the classification and categorization of late- and post-medieval English documentary texts. Including text-internal features, e.g. linguistic co-occurrence patterns of documentary texts, in the apparatus will provide new possibilities for regrouping texts. Also, the analysis of text-external features into their constituents will provide new features: for example, in a *grant* one can see the communicative purpose and act of granting, the interactants in the communicative situation, their social roles, the chosen textual strategies, and so forth, at play. The application of the more fine-grained feature sets will help in the triangulation of data and corroboration of findings.

This chapter will discuss the concept of "text category" in relation to documentary texts such as those included in MELD and extend the idea of categorising and grouping texts, both theoretically and methodologically. Even if documents self-evidently document, this chapter will venture to explore what more different ways of grouping texts can tell us about them.

2.2 Basic concepts: Text, scribal text and document

A text is an entity deliberately composed to carry a meaning or a message, and it is realized by means of language, either in sounds or signs on a medium. It is always situated, i.e. it is composed by an author, to be received by an audience, for a particular purpose (cf. Swales 1990). According to this definition, a text is always meant to be delivered to its audience, i.e. it is intended to fulfil its communicative purpose. A text can appear in different modes to its users: it can be delivered orally or in writing and can therefore be considered a separate entity from a document and a scribal text, which always have a material aspect to them. Nevertheless, for the remainder of this book, the term "text" will always be used in the specific sense of a physical written text, unless otherwise indicated.

The documents collected for MELD function as evidence of past events for us, and at times they may have been the events themselves. As the documents in MELD are all physical entities that have survived to our days, they provided an opportunity for their users to present them in situations where a documented verification of the event was needed, even for texts that were originally oral.[1] The

1. Some of the texts in MELD were intended to be recited orally, e.g. abjurations and vows. Nevertheless, the texts that survive to us are written ones and are treated as such.

material characteristic of documents is therefore elemental to the texts as they were used and as they survive to us.[2]

A scribal text, finally, is a text or part of a text written in one hand; in MELD, a document written in one hand makes up one scribal text, whereas a document written in two hands contains two scribal texts, even if this renders one scribal text less than the communicative purpose of the text it is part of. Therefore, the text of a document and a scribal text may denote the same passage of text, but do not necessarily do so. As the scribal text is the unit represented by the text files in MELD, it follows that a single physical text may at times be contained in more than one file, when many scribes cooperated in the production of a document.[3]

2.3 Categorizing texts: Genre, text type and textual dimensions in earlier literature

Earlier discussion on text categories has concentrated either on the purpose of writing and its interaction with and reverberations on authors and audiences (e.g. Jauss & Benzinger 1970, Fowler 1982, Swales 1990, Martin 1992), or on the linguistic realization of texts (e.g. Görlach 1992, Biber 1988). The term "genre" has been used for the former approaches, and "text type" or "register" for the latter. Sometimes the two terms are used interchangeably. For the purposes of this chapter, the term "text category" will be used, as it is neutral and does not comment on the categorizing criteria. Thus, genres and text types are text categories, but not the only possible ones.

The following discussion aims to give a brief outline of the development of theories on text categorisation and how the role of texts in human interaction has been regarded over the last 60 years. Eventually this discussion will lead to implications for the approach argued for in this chapter.

2. This usage differs from that of Marttila (2014), even though the discussion in other respects owes much to his model. In Marttila's terminology, "document" is a wider, but also a more concrete concept than "text", as it can consist of a text or texts that more than one scribe have committed to a medium. Therefore, a document is the physical instance of a text on a medium, and a text is, in a way, a function of a document (Marttila 2014: 17).

3. A document produced in several copies (like the two halves of an indenture) presents an interesting test to the terminology. All the copies are physical, and they are stand-alone texts, therefore they should all be treated as different (physical) texts. Similarly, the original copy of a will is a physical text, and a register copy of the same is another one, with a different communicative function (cf. a more detailed discussion of this phenomenon in Section 2.5).

2.3.1 Genre, text type, and register

In earlier literature, the concept of "text type" is closely tied to the concepts of "genre" and "register", even if not everyone writing on text types uses "genre" or "register" as terms. A good discussion of the correspondences of terminologies can be found in Fludernik (2000); this section explicates the terms in question and shows how they and other textual dimensions are implemented in the concept of "text category".

In a discussion of narrative as a text type, Virtanen (1992: 298) defines text type as the "aggregate of prototypical surface features". This means that (1) a text type can be described in terms of linguistic co-occurrence patterns, but (2) the choice of the actual linguistic features used in realizing a text type is first and foremost the author's decision, even if he or she will strive to meet the expectations of the audience. Virtanen (1992: 298) also defines the relationship of text type and genre as a two-step system, governed by the discourse purpose, and modified by the text strategies at the author's disposal. She does not use the term "genre" herself, but replaces it with "discourse type", which corresponds roughly to a genre label. In her model, the variability of the manifestations of human communication even within one genre/discourse type can be explained by authors deciding which text types best convey the message to the audience. This also explains why the relationship between a genre/discourse type and text types is one-to-many: a text type can lend itself to many a genre, provided that the audience allows it, or chooses to understand the message.

Meeting the audience's expectations plays a role in the conveyance of the message. Audiences' recognition of the generic format of a text (based on text-external or text-internal cues) triggers a "horizon of expectations" that guides their attention, understanding, and reception of texts (Jauss and Benzinger, 1970: 12). In text composition, authors use the information gleaned from knowledge of the discourse type and encounters of earlier texts in the same vein, by anticipating the audiences' expectations that should be fulfilled when composing a text in that discourse type. Hoey (2001) has paraphrased the roles of author and audience as those of dancers who attempt to anticipate each others' steps, i.e. author and audience use their experience of other similar texts in a similar manner as dancers use their experience of other similar dances. Both writing and dancing provide opportunities for personal expression and style, as long as one does not deviate too far from the expected steps. A substantial deviation from the norm may endanger the message and reception of the text, as the audience will need to process something unfamiliar and decide how the deviation actually changes the message.

The expressive leeway in text composition is greater in fictional texts, and lesser in non-fiction, where the message is in focus.[4]

The idea of genre as a communicative matrix is developed further by Fowler (1982):

> Genre-linked features serve not only as information […] but as "instructions" for interpreting other coded information. (23)

> Far from inhibiting the author, genres are a positive support. They offer room, as one might say, for him to write in […] a literary matrix by which to order his experience during composition. (31)

> […] genres have to do with identifying and communicating rather than defining and classifying. We identify the genre to interpret the exemplar. (38)

This model makes genres dynamic actors in the process of text composition and text reception. Genres provide information that both the author and the audience need: the context in which the message is sent and intended to be received, how and by whom the message should be interpreted, and the purpose for composing the text in the first place (this is not an exhaustive list). This information is needed by the author in order to be able to compose a text that meets the needs and competence of the audience, while the audience needs it to be able to take the intended meaning from the text. In this respect, Fowler's concept of genre is not too unlike that of Jauss and Benzinger's: the recognition of the text category by both the author and the audience is required for a successful communication.

The idea of communication is ubiquitous in Swales' (1990: 58) definition of genre, which makes genre a "class of communicative events sharing some communicative purposes." This definition combines the communicative aspect with the purpose of writing/communication, thus implying that labels for the communicative events are functional labels. Furthermore, Swales introduces the concept of the text-producing and text-using community: a discourse community, the members of which will readily identify the category of a text and the category label (Swales, 1990: 26, 58). The identification, again, depends on the author's compliance with the category constraints (in a manner similar to that identified by Jauss and Benzinger, 1970): in a genre, not everything is possible or acceptable, either stylistically or contentwise. Finally, Swales (1990: 58) notes that the texts within one category would be expected to attest to "various patterns of similarity", in which the purpose, structure, style, content, and intended audience of a text

4. The distance between the horizon of expectation and the real horizon is the artistic effect, or the authorial style the texts attest to (Jauss & Benzinger 1970: 14). The deviation from the expected is also partly the force that changes textual categories over time: the current realization of a text may become the norm of future expectations.

play a role. This suggests that the recognition of the genre of a text can at times draw on features that are not text-external, an idea that is also corroborated by Virtanen (1992: 306).

Finally, we arrive at *register*, which has been often been defined by criteria pertaining to the communicative situation (Virtanen 1992: 294; Biber and Conrad 2003: 175). The systemic-functional linguists Martin (1986), and Eggins and Martin (1997) define register (although they use the term "genre" in this sense) as a purposeful social practice which can be divided into field (the topic of communication), tenor (the interactants in the communicative situation), and mode (the manner in which something is communicated: in speech or in writing, in prose or in verse, etc.). As this definition of register includes the interactants as an elemental constituent (i.e. the participants in the exchange of information, the number of them, their identity, their roles in the exchange, their roles in "real" life (outside the communicative situation), their social standing and distance from one another, etc.), it is understandable that a text and its purpose cannot be cut off from its intended audience, nor from the context and culture that produced and used the text. Otherwise, its function cannot be fully appreciated, nor its sense fully understood. All of this has been brought together in Eggins' (1994: 78) notion that language use is always tied to a purpose, a specific situation, and a specific culture.

2.3.2 From genres and text types to text categories

Most of the genre theorists discussed in Section 2.3.1 define communicative purpose as the feature joining the texts in a genre. The affinity between the texts belonging to a genre is therefore often functional. This implies that also the labels by which genres are identified are functional labels, and they reveal the purpose for which the text is written. Texts are often labelled according to their type of communicative task, mutually agreed upon and recognised by the community that produced them. Therefore, a genre is always communicative activity, and it is always a manifestation of a social practice of a specific culture.

Recognition of generic text categories is necessary for text composition and text reception (cf. Fowler 1982). As was noted earlier, no text that is meaningful (Barton 2007: 19, 146) to its users is detached from its socio-cultural context; therefore both authors and audiences draw on their knowledge of text categories when composing and receiving texts, respectively. The implications of this for any modern scholar of historical texts is that they need to "read themselves into" the world of the past. The situation where there is no knowledge available of a culture that produced a text renders the text unintelligible: we need the intertextual and intercultural contact points for the texts studied to be able to interpret them. As these contact points are used for text interpretation, they also lend themselves to text categorization.

As has become apparent in the previous section, texts in a genre may be linguistically varied (even though they need not be), i.e. texts in a genre are not necessarily joined by the linguistic realization of the texts (Virtanen 1992: 303). Thus there are, by necessity, criteria sets that unite texts in a genre, and criteria sets that set them apart, i.e. reorganise and regroup them. This, and the above-mentioned implications, lead us to consider the factors with which the concept of text categories is connected. Different criteria sets can be used to bring texts together in clusters: some of these, in particular those connected to function, may create clusters that have been traditionally perceived as genres, while others may produce clusters that have little to do with the functional classification of texts.

For the MELD project, all the considerations above lead to a need for a concept for *all* the possible text categories, which we shall call, for the sake of neutrality, "text category". A text category is based on a criteria set (text-internal, text-external, or both) that can be used for grouping texts. The criteria in the set are subject to change, according to the focus of analysis. Therefore, some of the text categories created may be identified by the terms genre/discourse type, register, dialect, even text type, while other text categories will comply with none of the above-mentioned, established text category terms. The text category, accordingly, provides a precise analytical tool that enables the study of linguistic variation in medieval documents without the restrictions (and at times the fuzziness) of the traditional terms previously defined, and in this way it can also be used to find correlations hitherto undetected.

2.4 Text categories and topological space

Text categories, as defined above, are formed by textual affinity: in a text user's mind, the shared features of texts pull them together like gravity pulls stars in galaxies, and therefore the metaphor *textual space*, populated by textual galaxies, illustrates the phenomenon adequately (cf. Mäkinen 2006: 17–19). The affinity is effectuated by intertextuality, i.e. by the shared lexis and structures, and also by the shared text-external criteria. The Kristevan notion that a text perpetuates other texts can be observed, among other things, in the similarities of diction, syntax, and pragmatics of texts (Plett 1991: 7–8; Allen 1999: 39). The observed similarities between texts make them form clusters in the perceived textual space, i.e. the space that is based on an individual's experience of texts.

This system of texts is dynamic: it quickly accommodates any new texts to which a reader is exposed and assigns them their place in the system through textual affinity. A new, influential text may introduce new criteria for grouping texts, thus shifting slightly the existing cores of text categories. The use of the term "core" here implies a prototype-theoretical approach to the concept textual space (cf. Rosch 1975). Our concept of a text category and all the texts that belong in that category is defined by a core bundle of characteristics that we most often associate with the category. These characteristics may be (but need not be) realized in one or a few natural texts, which we would identify as prototypical examples of that category. Some texts of a text category are better examples of the category than the others in the same category, therefore we would perceive the core of a category to be populated by the more prototypical texts, and the group of texts forming the category would spread outwards, the less prototypical texts finding their places closer to the rim of the textual galaxy.

The prototype-theoretical approach to the textual space means that the current text category core characteristics do not describe all the texts ideally: the outliers in a textual galaxy could be better described with another set of criteria or parameters. Then the outliers could, in a re-organised textual space, find themselves in the core of a newly formed text category. This is exactly what the dynamic nature of textual space allows for: we can change the grouping of texts by replacing one set of criteria with another one. Re-choosing the parameters of interest can be used to regroup the texts in textual space. Therefore, also the concept of text category is dynamic, allowing any number of regroupings.

Any re-organisation of the textual space provides a new *topological space*, defined by data points that fulfil certain criteria (cf. Lemke 1999). In the context of the MELD corpus, a topological space could be defined by, for example, single texts that are mapped according to their place of origin, their date of composition, and the spelling variants for a particular lexical item, thus providing one data point per text, the places of which have been defined with respect to the three dimensions (place, date, spelling variant).

A regrouping of texts requires a re-selection of the criteria set according to which the texts will be mapped, and, in effect, that means the re-selection of the topology through which we categorize and analyse texts. Such a re-selection of criteria re-models the textual space and re-organizes the data points (i.e. the places of texts) that define the space. Re-selecting the criteria is essentially focusing on a new set of dimensions, the axes upon which the actual linguistic data that group the texts are projected. It is, in effect, a re-analysis of the same data set. Such a re-analysis is done each time we decide to correlate the linguistic forms in a text corpus with a new variable: for example, physical format, date, or provenance rather than the functional label.

2.5 Contexts of text production and use

Both text production and use are affected by the context in which they take place. In order to make the context more useful for analytical purposes, in particular in terms of the regrouping processes discussed above, the current volume recognises a division of the one, holistic context into several, interlinked contexts. The division of contexts follows to some extent the original ideas of systemic-functional linguistic scholars developing the register theory (Halliday 2004, Martin 1992, Eggins 1994); in particular, this chapter is indebted to Marttila (2014), Lemke (1999), and Mathiessen (1993).

The contexts define the realization of texts, both their composition and encoding in their physical format. The contexts in which texts and documents are manifested, or which affect their creation, may be termed *situational, cultural, linguistic, textual* and *material*. These contexts are interlinked, and they may be thought to form, as it were, chains and meshes of contexts (Marttila 2014: 38, Mathiessen 1993: 226–227).[5] This means that they can glide into one another through the links created by the entities and concepts that are identified by parameters (cf. Chapter 3, p. 39–41). For example, an author identified in the situational context is also a link to the linguistic context, through his or her individual linguistic repertoire, and also through all the language assets to which he or she has access.

The parameters relating to each context can be used in different combinations to group and regroup the texts or observations of texts into corresponding categories. The different groupings of texts are topological spaces, or textual spaces conditioned by the chosen parameters.

The *linguistic context* includes the author's or writer's own linguistic repertoire and all the language and linguistic assets he or she has access to or is exposed to. Some elements of the linguistic context may be assumed by historical facts about medieval literacy and text production, while others are attested to in the documents which we can directly observe. Linguistic context may also evoke the idea of *langue* and *parole*: the former is linked to recognised discursive practices (and to the culture that produced them) of a group of language users, while the latter is associated with the *textual context* and the situation that instigated the reason to write in the first place.

The Middle English linguistic context existed adjacent to Latin and French contexts, and, to a much lesser degree, those of other languages such as Welsh,

5. In Marttila (2014: 38–39), the contexts are presented in this order, moving from contexts in which a text may or may not yet have materialised towards contexts in which a text needs to be a physical object. In this manner the interlinked contexts form a cline of text realization, i.e. of making a text a material object.

Cornish and even Italian; thus, the study of English medieval documents also explores one part of a multilingual context (cf. Chapter 3, p. 56; Chapter 11).

The idea of *textual context* draws on the *linguistic context*, and feeds into the *material context*. The text of a document is realized through the linguistic repertoire of its writer or writers, and it is related to the availability of language sources to them. Thus, the communicative purpose, the linguistic repertoire(s) and the material reality of medium, ink, and script come together in a document.

In the light of the definitions for linguistic and textual contexts above, we can infer that the textual context of a document is linked to the parole aspect of the linguistic context and also to the material context of the document (the medium and everything non-textual attached to it). While some texts (in the abstract sense) may be realized in a single physical piece of medium, many medieval documents were created in several copies at the same time, as indentures or chirographs.[6] In such cases, the relation between the (abstract) documentary text and the physical document may be seen as a many-to-many relation (Marttila 2014: 18): the texts in indentured documents prepared at the same time may attest to some variation in spelling, i.e. they are not always completely identical. Nevertheless, their communicative function to all the parties receiving one of the indentured documents would have been the same, and therefore the indentures carry different versions of essentially the same (abstract) text. In MELD, the parts and counterparts of indentures are, however, defined as different texts, as they are physically separated and may differ considerably in detail. On the other hand, a register copy of a document (produced in interaction with the original) would differ from the original in its function: while the content remains more or less the same, the function of the copy is no longer that of the original document (see p. 52).

One part of the textual context is cotext, that is, the texts that accompany the text in question. The company a document keeps may tell us much about its uses, and it will help define the document's purpose.[7] A comparison between **cartulary copies** and **register copies** of medieval documents (which are usually uniform in layout) illustrates the importance of cotext:

> […] whereas a register contains formal copies of original deeds, a cartulary may, in addition to such copies, also contain an album of the original deeds. Another

6. The creation of texts in interaction has been discussed by Machan (1994: 169, 171–75), even if he does not address documentary texts in particular.

7. A few examples to illustrate the power of cotext: we expect to find poems in a book of poetry, and recipes in a cookery book. Unexpected text types, such as a recipe in a book of poetry may make us attempt to read the recipe as a poem. Similarly, a telegramme in a work of fiction is part of the genre of fiction: it is the author's device to take the plot and story further, no matter what it looks like.

> distinction is that a cartulary characteristically contains closely related documents, such as titles and claims to the lands and property of the compiler, in original or copy, while registers generally contain copies of a wide variety of mostly unrelated deeds. (MELD working manual)

Situational context can refer to anything from location and temporal situation to communicative situation. Location (the actual place of text production) links further to the cultural context, to social and institutional contexts, and to a geographical as well as a temporal situation (the place in time). Eventually the interlinked contexts lead to the linguistic context, as we are discussing a particular linguistic performance recorded in a given location. Situational context also comprehends the interactants in the communication, as they are essential in the communicative situation. For the interactants, MELD can often provide information on their identities, and, through that, on their relations to each other and their status in society. Similar information is available on institutional interactants.[8]

The communicative situation is further linked to several parameters related to the *cultural context* of the text: the functional label of the text, acknowledged by the text users of the text-using community, is part of discursive practices conditioned by the cultural context, which consists of socio-cultural structures and ideologies. It is also linked to such factors as register, conditioned by the situational context, and the function of a text, which is again linked to the textual context. These parameters can be studied through the topic and content of medieval documents, and also through the text labels used by the discourse community to identify the texts (Görlach 2001).

Material context, comprising the physical format, the materials used, script, layout and all other non-verbal aspects of the document, is linked both to the cultural context, and to the functions of texts. Such aspects are often discussed in terms of the concepts of *paratext* and *peritext*. Paratext consists of the (textual) elements that accompany the text itself and provide it with its interpretational framework, e.g. cover, title page, preface, illustrations, notes etc. (Genette 1997). As is pointed out in Chapter 3, however, the concept of paratext poses certain challenges in medieval documentary texts (see p. 66). Peritext, on the other hand, has been defined as the features pertaining to the physical aspect of a text: in medieval documents the peritext might be seen as consisting of aspects such as the choice of medium (paper/parchment), indenturing, script, layout, seals, etc.

It should be noted that some aspects that fall under the concepts of paratext and peritext contribute much more directly than others to the meaning of the

8. This kind of information has been used by Rütten (2013: 288) for categorising documents in the Middle English Grammar Corpus (MEG-C) according to the different interactant combinations.

text, both at the text level and at the level of the individual word or sentence: most notably, this is true of aspects such as layout, rubrication, non-verbal symbols and the choice of script. The visual aspects of a text may be said to form a connecting bridge between the linguistic and material contexts, and combine with the linguistic aspects to produce the specific meaning of the text.

An example of how the material aspects guide our identification of the function of medieval textual artefacts is the comparison of a small travel book of Gospels to a huge table-top Bible: the former is intended for personal use during travels, perhaps even to be kept on one's person, whereas the latter is a display copy, standing also as a witness of one's wealth. Material aspects may also be used in the identification of the functions of MELD texts, as in the example of the differences between an original document and a register copy.

2.6 Changing topologies through chains of context

The different contexts, and the ways in which they are interlinked, form chains, which in turn fork and re-interlink, forming a mesh of contexts. We can move up and down the forking chains of different contexts by choosing different feature sets or topologies, and thus decide which contexts are activated in our current viewing of the textual space. In terms of visualisation, it means that we can spin the abstract textual space and observe it from different angles by choosing different parameter sets that define our point of view. This creates different groupings of documents, or different topological spaces, which are based on the research questions presented to the material.

In practice, the contexts may be interlinked to each other in the following manner. When one studies, for example, a condition of obligation (a functional label, i.e. a parameter of **cultural context**), one may be studying a polled document with a seal, written in *anglicana media* in brown ink (parameters of **material context**) that is physically attached to a bond (an aspect of both **material context** and **cotext**), and conveys information encoded in particular linguistic forms (**linguistic context**) on the conditions (encoded in the **textual context**) that should be met (the content of the conditions are features of the **situational context**, whereas the fact that there are conditions is related to the **cultural context**) in order to render the bond between the named persons (the interactants in the communicative situation, therefore parameters of the **situational context**) void.

The choice of parameters is governed by the observations in the linguistic context: what parameter or parameters explain the attested linguistic forms best? Which parameters allow us to see a system in the linguistic performance? Often the observed linguistic variation in MELD is geographically conditioned; however, the variety of factors suggested here may bring other correlations to surface, especially in cases where geographical conditioning does not seem to explain the distribution of linguistic features.

When using a corpus such as MELD, we can choose the interesting contexts at will from the information available. This means selecting a specific categorization of texts – either by using the parameters already defined in the corpus metadata or by defining them according to the focus of the study, and correlating them to the actual linguistic data. In the process, the resolution can be adjusted by adding more parameters or taking away some. The chains of contexts make it possible for us to change our vantage point from the material, observable reality (e.g. the actual, physical document and the individual linguistic repertoire) to the more generic and abstract levels of document and text instantiation (e.g. the social practices governing the purposes of writing, and the cause-and-effect chains underlying the observable material culture and realization of textual objects). In this, our observations are delimited by what is real and tangible, and what has survived to our days.

2.7 Conclusions

This chapter has addressed the notion of "text category" in the analysis of medieval English documents collected in MELD. As has been demonstrated through discussion, this notion may in principle be defined in terms of any parameter connected to text production, textual communication, and the cultures that produced texts. The traditional terms, genre and text type, are delimited by their definitions to text-external and text-internal criteria respectively. Thus, in comparison, the text category provides an analytical, "free-ranging" tool that is not constrained by the criteria sets of the two traditional terms, nor is it confused with the two by an attempt to redefine genre or text type.

The environments of text production and use have been identified and labelled in this chapter as contexts. The different contexts (linguistic, textual, situational, cultural, and material) may be operationalised through the application of different parameter sets, allowing us to seek and find correlations between text-external phenomena and text-internal reality (see Chapter 3 for a further discussion).

The different contexts form a mesh that can be used to find new points-of-view to the linguistic data which the corpus provides. Text categories will change according to the topology chosen. Therefore, it is important to collect all the possible, related metadata in the corpus compilation phase, as we do not want to lose them, nor do we have an *a priori* understanding of precisely what metadata will be useful in the future.

CHAPTER 3

The categorization of Middle English documents

Interactions of function, form and language

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3.1 Introduction: Categorizing documents

As Chapter 2 has shown, there is no single "best" way of categorizing documents (or other texts): our criteria for categorization depend on our approach and our research questions. The category "Middle English local documents" is in itself the product of particular research questions, not a historical entity necessarily recognized by the users of the texts. Text categories may be based on one or more parameters, depending on the questions we wish to ask: in principle, the number of meaningful categorizations is infinite.

In practice, some categorizations are more useful than others for particular kinds of text. As pointed out in Chapter 1, the parameters most relevant for early English documentary texts will differ from those used to categorize informants in present-day sociolinguistics: sorting texts according to speaker gender, age or ethnic background is not all that helpful when dealing with scribes who are mostly anonymous.[1] They will also differ, although less so, from those best suited for the study of late medieval literary texts. While both kinds of text are produced in the same society, sometimes by the same scribes, they differ considerably as evidence, most importantly because of the shallow textual histories and specific historical contexts of the documentary texts (see p. 102). Useful categorizations will,

1. The Correspondence category forms something of an exception here: even though many letters were also written down by anonymous scribes, their authors are generally made explicit, and some letters are autographs. Accordingly, the study of correspondences has provided opportunities for scholars to study variation in relation to the author's gender (see e.g. Nevalainen 1996; Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 2003, esp. p. 189) and even age (Raumolin-Brunberg 1996). This is not the case for most categories of documentary texts, although it might be argued that statements and wills may to some extent be studied as conveying a "speaker voice" relating to an identifiable individual, even when (as was usual) penned by a scribe (cf. Chapter 10).

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therefore, depend on the corpus, the available information and the research questions that we wish to ask.

This chapter builds on the framework outlined in Chapter 2 to categorize Middle English local documents. It identifies those parameters which we have found useful for classification, at least in relation to some parts of the material, and describes some of their interactions. For medieval local documents, function is a category of major importance, and it is taken as a starting point for the following discussion; however, it is the interaction of function with other parameters, such as the choice of language, formulaicness, physical format and visual layout, as well as situational aspects such as geography and date, that produces the actual variation realized in the texts. The main questions addressed in this chapter are therefore: what were Middle English local documents used for, and by whom, and how do these uses and users affect their form?

3.2 The framework: Textual parameters and contexts of text production

Labov (1994: 11) famously characterized historical linguistics as "the art of making the best use of bad data". Apart from the point that written texts from earlier historical periods represent a language far removed from the spoken "vernacular" which formed Labov's main interest, the badness of the data has to do with its lack of representativeness. The body of texts that survives from any early historical period represents a limited and skewed sample of the language that was produced at the time: extremely so if we are considering *all* language use, and still to a considerable extent if we limit ourselves to written language. In addition, our lack of information about the historical contexts of the texts make comparison and generalization problematic.

Several scholars have later pointed out that the "bad data" problem depends on the research questions asked: rather than reconstructing the vernacular, we might like to pose questions for which the historical materials in fact provide good data (cf. Bergs 2005: 18; Stenroos 2018: 20–21). A promising approach, introduced by Herring, van Reenen and Schøsler (2000: 1), is the concept of "textual parameters": while the information we have of the contexts of historical texts is patchy, the texts themselves can provide much information that may be systematized and used as a basis for generalizations within a limited scope.

Herring et al. describe textual parameters as "properties of texts and their contexts that condition variation within individual languages". They are defined inductively on the basis of systematic empirical study and their number is in principle unlimited. They can be binary (prose/verse), have multiple discrete values (genres) or be scalar (degree of aesthetic focus). Examples given are "text type and genre, poeticality, orality, dialect, writer demographics, scribal influence, cultural status and whether a text is a translation from another language" (Herring, van Reenen and Schøsler 2000: 1).

The great advantage of the textual parameters approach is that it provides a framework for the analysis of historical texts for which traditional non-linguistic variables are to a large extent unavailable. Rather than dismissing the data as "bad", we can study the linguistic variation in relation to information that is actually available:

> The textual parameters approach [...] is a classificatory enterprise that has as its goal to create homogeneous subsets of data out of the heterogeneity of historical records. In so doing, it allows the analyst to make meaningful generalizations within restricted domains. (Herring, van Reenen and Schøsler, 2000: 4)

Many of the parameters suggested by Herring et al. are, however, problematic in that they are based on a high degree of interpretation. For example, categories such as "orality", "dialect", "scribal influence" and "cultural status", tend to be labels assigned by the researcher on the basis of predetermined criteria that are not necessarily self-evident. The categorization will, then, be dependent on preliminary assumptions such as "a drama text contains oral language" or "a text containing the forms x, y and z represents a western dialect".

Few distinctions are, of course, as objective and concrete as that between paper and parchment as the material of a physical text. However, it makes sense to identify parameters that are as transparent as possible, in order to avoid building in preliminary assumptions into the analysis: concepts such as "orality" or "dialect", and perhaps also "genre" (see p. 27) should therefore arguably be research questions rather than parameters. In analysing the MELD materials, we have tried to identify parameters that are, as far as possible, "raw" categories, based on a minimal amount of interpretation. The labels may be systematized in terms of the contexts proposed by Mäkinen in Chapter 2 (see Table 3.1).[2]

Here, the situational context is interpreted as having to do with the facts (as far as we can work them out) of where and when the text was produced, and by whom, while the cultural context has to do with the social and cultural meanings and frameworks involved. Much of the situational and cultural information may be derived directly from the contents of the text: documents are often explicitly dated, some state their provenance, and most make clear their institutional context; when such direct information is missing, it may often be inferred on non-linguistic grounds (see p. 83). As was pointed out above, the gender, age and social class of

2. Most of the parameters are included as metadata in the MELD corpus, and others are in the process of being added.

Table 3.1 Textual contexts and textual parameters

Context	Parameter	Possible values
Situational	Location	London, York, Bishop's Itchington
	Method of localization	Explicit, inferred, historically situated (see Chapter 4)
	Date	1488, 1521
	Method of dating	Explicit, inferred, derived from context
	Topic (specific)	A specific court case, the Welsh uprising
	Identity (of scribe, author, recipient, people involved)	Robert Wodelark, Agnes Paston, Thomas Sourale
	Institutional context	King's College, Durham Priory
Cultural	Domain	Academic, ecclesiastical, episcopal, manorial, monastic, municipal, private
	Function	Letter, will, inventory, affidavit
	Topic (general)	Heresy, land rights, defence
	Social category (of scribe, author, recipient, people involved)	Nobility, bishop, upper clergy, lower clergy, merchant, unknown
	Gender (of scribe, author, recipient, people involved)	Male, female, unknown
Textual	Stage	Draft, instrument, copy, uncertain
	Cotext (if any)	Cartulary, account book
	Textual elements present	Heading, note(s), signature
Linguistic	Main language	English, French, Latin, mixed
	Multilingual events	Present, not present
	Level of formulaicness	High, medium, low
Material/ visual	Medium	Paper, parchment/vellum
	Physical format	Codex, roll, indenture, bill, booklet
	Seal	Present, not present
	Seal fastening (if any)	Pendant, incised tag, embossed
	Script	Textualis, Anglicana, Secretary
	Grade of script	Formata, media, currens

the scribe and/or author are generally unknown except for Correspondence texts; on the other hand, the social category and gender of the people *involved* in the documents – the participants of a contract, for example – may in themselves form interesting parameters. In principle, age could be included as a parameter as well; however, information about age is so rare in the present material that its inclusion in the table would seem misleading.

The other parameters are in principle relatively straightforward, requiring observation and sets of simple criteria. In many cases, however, the categorization presents challenges, not least in its applicability to the study of linguistic variation; Chapter 4 discusses the particular problems relating to location as a category. Several of the parameters involve categories with fuzzy boundaries; this is particularly true of the parameters function, script and grade of script.

Any text may be situated within all these contexts, provided that the information is available; in addition, many other parameters could be added, from document size to month of issue. The corpus may therefore in principle be sorted according to any parameter, or any combination of them, thus changing the constellations of texts *ad infinitum*, and potentially bringing to light linguistic patterns of interest.

It should be noted that the parameters – and consequently the possible constellations – are chained and interlinked, and their relationships to each other are asymmetrical. For example, the function of a text determines its physical format, not vice versa, while the geographical context for the most part determines neither; all these parameters may have an effect on the linguistic form, but they will not necessarily affect the same aspects of it.

It will make sense to differentiate between two major sets of parameters: (a) those which relate to text-external factors and actually influence the form of the text (but not are not themselves influenced by it), and (b) those which relate to the form of the text itself. The former group relates to the situational, cultural and textual contexts, while the latter group relates to the linguistic and material ones. The relationships between the contexts might be summarized as follows:

Cultural, situational and	---------- >	The formal realization of the physical text
textual contexts		(linguistic context < ----- > material context)

It may be noted that the variables representing group (a) are always independent in relation to the linguistic or material form. The variables of group (b), on the other hand, generally make up the dependent variables of quantitative studies, but may also be brought in as independent variables in relation to each other: linguistic forms may be studied in relation to script, while the use of English or Latin may, conversely, form the independent variable in a paleographical study. Every text is, of course, also situated in a larger, text-external linguistic and material context, which includes the conventional choices of language, materials etc. in other texts: these choices relate closely to the cultural, situational and textual contexts. For example, the use of Latin in most quitclaims belongs to the cultural context that determines the choice of language of a specific quitclaim; similarly, the preference for secretary script in a particular scribal community is part of the situational context of a text produced in this community.

In the remainder of this chapter, we approach the textual space of local documents from the left side of the diagram, taking the parameter of function as the starting point. This provides an angle for outlining some of the major interconnections between the contexts and parameters: in other words, how does function interact with the other parameters to produce the variation we see?

3.3 Categorizing the functions of Middle English local documents

3.3.1 The functions of documentary texts

Beyond the pragmatic function that is their defining characteristic (see p. 11), documentary texts have no single overarching function. Very often they, indeed, "document", or record events or transactions; however, they may also communicate news, transfer rights or property, issue commandments, request favours, file complaints, and so on. All these functions require different physical and linguistic forms: in late and post-medieval England they also affect the choice of language.

The categorization of documentary texts according to function is therefore crucial to make sense of the material. What makes this challenging is the fluidity and complexity of their functions. The same document may play different roles, simultaneously or in sequence: a bond is often included at the end of a transaction, while a payment order becomes a receipt once the payment has been signed for, and will then be stored as a record. A copy of a document, such as a sale, made for archiving purposes, may be said to have a different function from the original: it is made for record keeping rather than to carry out the sale, and does not contain the seals and signatures that vouch for the legality of the document.

Even at the "original", or *instrument* stage, many types of documentary texts have a purely recording function (memoranda, accounts and surveys being obvious examples), and all preserved documents eventually end up as records.[3] Other documents may be considered to have the force of commissive, directive or declarative speech acts. For example, in a power of attorney of 1506, given in Helmingham, Suffolk, Thomas Fincham appoints John Talemach as his attorney to carry out a distraint of the priory of Dodnash, because of the priory's failure to honour the memory of his cousin, sir William Newman, according to contract:

3. The term "instrument" is here used somewhat more broadly than in its legal sense, to denote that physical version of any document that is actually meant to carry out its function, rather than a draft or copy: this includes the private letter actually sent rather than drafted, as well as the indented and sealed lease.

(3.1) To all maner of peopill thes presentes Seyng' or heryng J Thomas Fyncham Gentillman […] Cosyn and heier to the said sir Will*a*m Newma*n*n […] ordey*n*n depute and Attorneye make John Talemach of Hevmyngh*a*m Esquyer in the Count' of Suff' and full power giff to the said John Talemach in my name and in my stede to distreyne in the londis & ten*ntes* of the said p*ri*orie (Suffolk D3019)
'To all people who see or hear the present document: I, Thomas Fincham, gentleman […] cousin and heir to the said sir William Newman […] ordain, deputize and make into an attorney John Talemach, esquire, of Helmingham, Suffolk, and give full power to the said John Talemach to distrain in the lands and tenements of the said priory in my name and stead'

The performative force of the written document is indicated by the introductory formula *To all maner of peopill thes presentes Seyng' or heryng*, followed by the declaration bestowing the power.

Other document types present a more complex picture. A written will sanctions the eventual transfer of values (unless superseded by a later document) by carrying out the initial act of bequeathing:

(3.2) J bequeth to Margery peys iij yerd*es* and a half of kersy to make hyr A petycote (Sussex D0599)
'I bequeath to Margery Peys 3 ½ yards of kersey to make her a petticoat'

However, as the bequeathing does not come into force until after the testator's death, which may happen years later, the testator also appoints one or more executors to perform and fulfil the act. The will may accordingly be said to have performative force in two respects: as an appointment and as a (binding) instruction for the eventual transfer of values.

In other cases, a document may perform part of what is required to complete the act, in which case it also serves as a record of the other part. The various kinds of conveyance used to transfer the rights to a property perpetually may be used to illustrate this. The enfeoffment was originally an oral transaction, consisting of the ceremony of "taking seisin" (cf. Example (1.3)), which was then confirmed in a written document. In the fifteenth century, enfeoffments and gifts were increasingly replaced by a new type of document: the sale, also referred to as the "bargain and sale". Unlike the enfeoffment, the sale did not include an oral ceremony, but instead usually involved the act of registering the sale at a local court. The sale was thus carried out through two acts involving writing: the registration at court and the signed and/or sealed document. This double performance is regularly indicated with the formula "X has bargained and sold and by this present document (fully) bargains and sells" as in the following Buckinghamshire sale from 1514:

(3.3) Thys Indenture […] witnesseth that the seid Richard **hath Bargayned and solde and by these p*r*esent*es* Fully bargayneth and selleth** vnto the seid Robert and his heyres all his Tent' w^{t} a Garden' therto belongyng sett and lyinge in the Borough of Cheppyng Wecombe in a lane ther' calde Croyndenlane (Bucks D5000)
'This indenture witnesses that the said Richard has bargained and sold and by this present document fully bargains and sells to the said Robert and his heirs his entire tenement with a garden, set and lying in the borough of Chepping Wycombe in a lane called Croyndenlane'

Analysing document types in terms of speech acts is potentially of considerable interest (see e.g. Rütten 2013); at the same time it raises complexities of definition, not least with regard to different scholarly views on the status of writing. Some scholars would view all historical written documents as records of, or substitutes for, oral transactions or speech acts (cf. Schneider 2013: 57); from such a point of view, all documents would be considered *evidence* of speech acts, not the speech acts themselves.

This is not the view taken in the present work: apart from the question of writing as an independent channel of transmitting language (which we assume it is), the force of the written document as an instrument is central for understanding its form. While a few types of documents, such as testimonies, explicitly record a spoken statement, by far most were composed as written texts; this is the case even in those (relatively few) text categories that refer to oral or non-verbal acts such as enfeoffments or perambulations. Accordingly, the linguistic forms we study are, first and foremost, written ones: even though the texts may at times offer fascinating glimpses of speech, their language is a written code which sometimes develops markedly differently from other (both spoken and written) varieties (cf. Thengs 2015). By the fifteenth century, the written document carried full legal force; viewing it as merely a record of something else would be to miss a central part of its function.

3.3.2 Function vs genre

The example of enfeoffments and sales also illustrates another challenge: that of the connection between function and form. Most documentary texts include formulaic elements, for good reasons: for the clerk, conventional phrasing is easier to produce, and for the user it makes clear what kind of document is intended and ensures its legality. At the same time, formulae may be misleading, as they are not used completely consistently, nor does the terminology necessarily accord with later established practice.

The same point may be made about physical format (see also Section 3.6). Partly, the format is a direct consequence of the function, in that, for example, indentures are made when each party of the transaction needs to have their own copy; however, it also becomes part of the conventional form of a document, the information that provides the means for the user to categorize the text. In other words, the user expects a certain physical form and phrasing in order to recognize a particular kind of document: a bond, for example, is expected to be a small document in the form of a deed poll (with a straight top and one or more incised seal tags); it will be in Latin and may include a condition in English, and it will begin with the words *Noverint universi*. A bond that does not show these characteristics will certainly be confusing; will it still be a bond?

Here it is important to distinguish between historical "genre" and the simple parameter "function". Genre is a particularly problematic concept in historical study, as it is generally defined in terms of the conventions and expectations of a particular community. As noted in Chapter 2 (see p. 26), a written work is produced for an audience with precise knowledge of generic forms and expectations. These expectations, and his/her own experience, guide the writer to reproduce the significant features of the genre at which he or she aims. The features which constitute a genre are, however, not fixed: the expectations of the audience are culturally inclined, and genres form dynamic systems that constantly evolve. The generic codes that are valid today need not be the same as those which were valid five hundred years ago (see e.g. Taavitsainen 1993: 173): the genre of a historical text was, at the time, what the intended audience thought it was, based on all the salient characteristics of the text, including its language, physical format and phrasing.

This sum of expectations is hardly feasible for us to reconstruct; on the other hand, its constituents, including function, phrasing and physical format, are directly available to us. While the exact characteristics of a genre might vary over time and place, the basic function of a text does not. A medieval lease might look physically different from a present-day one, and employ different stylistic choices and terminology; however, its function of contractually establishing that a party is leasing a piece of property from another remains the same. In the present corpus, texts are therefore classified according to their function as understood by the compilers in their present-day context (but with recourse to information about English legal history as appropriate), regardless of how the text might have been classified previously or what the text itself claims to be. The formal characteristics of the text are recorded separately and are not taken into account when determining the function of the text; this separation of what might be the constituents of a "genre" allows us to operate at a lower level of interpretation, making fewer assumptions.[4]

4. It should be pointed out that the formal characteristics provide useful indications of what a text might be, of which we have taken full advantage; however, the function label is finally determined purely on the basis of the content.

3.3.3 Functional categories in MELD

The functional categories defined for MELD are the product of a collaborative enterprise involving several members of the Stavanger Middle English team.[5] The categorization has benefited much from previous classifications, such as those of Pugh (1939, 1947), Harvey (1984) and Bailey (2002) as well as LALME (I: 42–43) and the excellent Special Collections website at the University of Nottingham. However, as explained in the previous section, the present classification was built up as a system of its own, based purely on our understanding of the function of the texts, disregarding other criteria such as form. The labels chosen accord as far as possible with general archival practice; however, as archive cataloguing systems vary considerably and may be based on different criteria, the function label given to an individual document may differ from its designation in an archival catalogue.

The texts in MELD have been classified into 67 functional categories, subsumed under ten superordinate categories: accounts, conveyances, correspondence, directives, memoranda, ordinances, settlements, statements, sureties and surveys (see Table 3.2). The texts are unevenly distributed among the categories: the two most common functional categories, leases and financial accounts, have 234 and 193 members respectively, while some categories, such as arrears and pledges, are represented by one text only. A detailed description of the classification, with full definitions of all the individual categories, is available in the MELD Introduction; what follows is a brief overview of the superordinate categories and the materials classified under them in MELD.

Table 3.2 Functional categories in MELD

Superordinate category	Subcategory	Number of scribal texts in MELD 2017.1
Accounts	**Total**	**224**
	Arrears	1
	Financial account	193
	Inventory	27
	Invoice	3
Conveyances	**Total**	**723**
	Agreement	133
	Appointment	18
	Assignment	1
	Commission	17

5. Apart from the present co-authors, the team working on functional categorization included Anastasia Khanukaeva, Nedelina Naydenova and Delia Schipor.

Table 3.2 (*continued*)

Superordinate category	Subcategory	Number of scribal texts in MELD 2017.1
	Exchange	13
	Gift	6
	Grant	19
	Intent	29
	Lease	234
	Marriage articles	60
	Power of attorney	7
	Quitclaim	2
	Sale	74
	Surrender	4
	Use	19
	Will/Testament	87
Correspondence	**Total**	**156**
	Complaint	15
	Letter	82
	Petition	25
	Request	34
Directive	**Total**	7
	Command	1
	Instruction	1
	Payment order	5
Memoranda	**Total**	**172**
	Court record	25
	Inquest	10
	Notary record	13
	Note	120
	Pedigree	4
Ordinances	**Total**	**97**
	Jurament	12
	Rule	85
Settlements	**Total**	**132**
	Accord	10
	Award	113
	Commitment	8

(*continued*)

Table 3.2 (*continued*)

Superordinate category	Subcategory	Number of scribal texts in MELD 2017.1
	Partition	1
Statements	**Total**	**295**
	Abjuration	11
	Affidavit	20
	Allegiance	2
	Attestation	64
	Confession	4
	Curse	1
	Declaration	6
	Deposition	4
	Endorsement	1
	Letter of credence	3
	Letter testimonial	3
	Presentment	1
	Proclamation	11
	Receipt	104
	Renunciation	1
	Testimony	35
	Unsworn statement	2
	Vow	13
	Vow of betrothal	9
Sureties	**Total**	**150**
	Bond	19
	Condition of obligation	116
	Defeasance	8
	Pledge	7
Surveys	**Total**	**60**
	Financial survey	1
	Land survey	13
	Perambulation	6
	Rental	29
	Terrier	11
Grand Total		**2,017**

ACCOUNTS provide overviews of transactions or assets of money and moveable property, either at fixed intervals or for specific purposes. They form the third largest superordinate category in MELD, with a total of 224 texts, by far most of which belong to the category **financial accounts.** These are lists of income and expenditures, often made at annual intervals and produced in varying formats from small sheets to booklets, rolls and codices. Long accounts may be produced by several scribes (in which case they appear as several scribal texts in MELD), and, conversely, the same scribe may continue to produce annual accounts in the same codex for years, even decades. It might be noted that "financial account" is a term created for the purpose of MELD for what would generally be simply termed an account, in order to avoid confusion with the superordinate category term.

Accounts also include **inventories, arrears** and **invoices**; however, only the first occur in a substantial number (27). Inventories are lists of belongings, generally drawn up in connection with an account or with a will or sale. Both financial accounts and inventories tend to be repetitive, but are often excellent sources of vocabulary; for example, the following Cambridge inventory of 1461 lists the utensils kept in a brewery and to be sold with it:

(3.4) that is forto sey . […] masshefatt . ij masshrothirs . J taphose . J . taptrough . J . burnelede . J wortlede . J Cawdron̉ of brasse (Cambs D6067)
'that is to say, one mash-vat, two mash-staves, one tap hose, one tap trough, one burn lead, one wort lead, one cauldron of brass'

Accounts are special among the document categories in that they are sometimes written in a "mixed code" containing elements of English, French and Latin (see p. 257, 265). These mixed codes are best considered a language of their own (see Wright 2000b: 151, 2013: 124–125; see also Chapter 11 in the present volume); however, a few such texts have been included in MELD because of their intrinsic interest, even though the "English" they provide basically consists of a few disembodied words and phrases (e.g. Oxfords D2314, D2316, D2318 and D2319). Even accounts that clearly have English as their main language tend to contain relatively large numbers of words or phrases in Latin.

CONVEYANCES make up by far the largest superordinate category in MELD, with 724 texts and 16 subcategories. In terms of number of texts, it makes up more than a third of the corpus. Conveyances are documents that involve a transfer of any type of values, including property, money, rights, titles, and authority. The category includes both preliminary agreements and the actual legal instruments by which the transfer is made. As most conveyances involve two or more parties, they are commonly produced as indentures (see p. 64); an important exception is wills/testaments, which are always produced in a single copy.

Most types of conveyance transfer rights to property, either for a fixed period (the **lease**) or for perpetuity (the **enfeoffment, gift** or **sale**); properties of approximately equal value may also be exchanged (the **exchange**) and existing rights may be waived or surrendered, either voluntarily (the **quitclaim**) or by force (the **surrender**). Properties may also be bestowed temporarily to be transferred later (the **use**) or bequeathed (the **will**). Future transfers are detailed in **marriage articles**, almost always documents of a considerable size due to the large number of eventualities to be taken into consideration: the bride or groom dying before the wedding or before the birth of issue, or underage sons or daughters refusing to marry when the time comes.

As defined here, conveyances may also transfer other values: **grants** and **testaments** convey moveable or intangible values, including money or rents, while **appointments, commissions, assignments** and **powers of attorney** all convey responsibilities.

CORRESPONDENCES always involve both a sender and an addressee, and at least part of the text consists of a direct address to the latter. The material contains three specific types of correspondence – **complaints, petitions and requests** – as well as a catch-all category including all correspondences that do not fit the other categories, simply called **letter**. This heterogeneous category includes both official, business and private letters dealing with a variety of topics. The number of letters included in the corpus is so far relatively low (82) considering the interest and variety of this category; however, as letters are the one text type that is easily available in other resources – both editions and corpora – they have not so far been prioritized in the compilation of MELD.[6]

Originally part of the Correspondence category, a small group of DIRECTIVES have been separated to form a supercategory of its own, as not all of the texts included here can sensibly be described as letters. This group consists of direct commands and instructions expected to result in the specified actions; it includes one highly conventional category, the **payment order**, which is usually to be retained as a receipt and included in accounts.

MEMORANDA are records of various kinds, which do not involve a transfer of values or a personal statement, but simply note down facts, events or decisions. Again, a catch-all term **note** has been used to contain all memoranda that cannot be subsumed under the specific headings **court record, inquest, notary record** or **pedigree.** Like letters, notes are a heterogeneous group. It is formally the most variable group of all, usually containing no formulaic content apart from an initial

6. Excellent resources include the CEEC family of corpora as well as several editions of family correspondences, including the Paston letters (Davis 1971–76; Beadle and Richmond, 2006) the Cely letters (Hanham 1975) and the Stonor letters (Kingsford 1919, 1996).

Memorandum (often abbreviated to M^d) or, occasionally, the English equivalent *be it remembered;* even this beginning formula is not always present. Notes may refer to virtually any event or circumstance that is felt to be important to record; in contrast, court records and inquests carry out highly specific official functions. By the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, court records commonly contain reported speech, often the only part of them that is in English (cf. Example (1.2)).

ORDINANCES and SETTLEMENTS form relatively small and specialized groups of documents. Ordinances are descriptions of duties or rules and include two subordinate categories: a **jurament** is the oath taken by an official on entering office, while a **rule** is the set of rules for a specific institution or group, such as a guild. Settlements, on the other hand, relate to the practice of settling disputes out of court. In such cases, parties may simply make an **accord**, rendering further action unnecessary. Alternatively, they may submit their dispute to arbitration: the submission is made through a **commitment** and the eventual ruling is given in an **award.**

STATEMENTS may be made by a person or group, usually in first person but sometimes in the third. They contain the largest range of subcategories of all, as many as 19, although most of these are represented by very few texts. By far the most common subcategory is the **receipt**, a brief acknowledgement of the receipt of money, legal documents, goods – or prisoners. Receipts are generally signed and often autographs, as evidenced by phrases such as *jn witness wheroff the sayd John has written thys byll w*[t] *his own hand*.

Several kinds of statement relate to prosecution and court cases. Witness statements of various kinds are classified, following legal practice, into **affidavits, attestations, depositions** and **testimonies.** Personal statements read out in court (usually episcopal courts) include **abjurations, renunciations** and **confessions** as well as **vows.** Other statements include the **proclamation**, always issued by an authority (here usually municipal) and most commonly announcing new rules or prohibitions.

The SURETY involves a pledge or obligation given to ensure the keeping of an agreement. The basic document category here is the **bond**, or obligation. Bonds are highly formulaic and virtually always appear in Latin (see p. 58–59); it may be noted that the nineteen bonds that appear in the present material are all "exceptional", containing non-formulaic content. Bonds are commonly accompanied by a **condition**, stating the precise circumstances under which the bond is made void; these are usually directly attached to the bond they condition, and they are very often (if not always) written in English. **Defeasances** annul an earlier bond, while **pledges** record an advance deposit.

Finally, SURVEYS provide overviews of landholdings or other sources of income, with or without their expected or potential value. **Land surveys, perambulations** and **terriers** are overlapping categories that provide information about land holdings. Land surveys list their size and approximate location, while terriers provide geographical detail with the aim of defining their limits; perambulations, finally, concern a single landholding and describe the precise boundaries with much landscape detail. These three related types of document, all of which describe and define geographical areas, may be termed *land documents* (see Chapter 8). Some of them are exceedingly long; the most extreme example in the present material is D2704, an Essex terrier of 1477, written in tiny handwriting on a roll that is 9.5 meters long.[7] **Rentals** list landholders and rent values, while the **financial survey** lists any other kind of values such as payments or tax values; even though this is a common document type in the archives, only one text is included in MELD, as most financial surveys contain no linguistic material beyond names and sums.

Unlike literary texts, a documentary text generally changes its function when copied (except for the two or more copies produced simultaneously as indentures; see p. 64). In the MELD database, all functional categories reflect the function of the text as an instrument: even though all archival copies basically function as memoranda, they are classified here according to their "original" function, as they will still retain the linguistic (if not the visual and material) characteristics of the instrument. It is, however, important to bear in mind that the archive copy of a lease does not primarily function as a lease, but as the record of a lease, while the draft of the same text, if it survives, simply functions as a draft. To distinguish between instruments, archival copies and drafts, another category, *stage* is added to the MELD metadata, with four possible values: **draft, instrument, copy** and **uncertain**.

The functional categories defined for MELD cannot be assumed to provide an exhaustive list of the functions of English documentary texts produced in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries: during the corpus compilation, new categories were added up to the final stages, and others may be expected to appear as more documents are added. It should also be noted that a vast number of documentary functions during this period would still require Latin; Schipor (2018: 8, 100, 143) defined altogether 108 functional categories in her study of documentary texts at the Hampshire Record Office, 70 of which involved Latin texts only.

Function makes a natural starting point to the study of the MELD texts as it correlates to some extent with most of the other parameters. The following sections will discuss its interaction with parameters relating to three contexts of text production: cultural (domains and communities), linguistic (code selection) and material (format and layout).

7. This particular text was not transcribed in its entirety for MELD.

3.4 Who produced the documents? Communities, institutions and domains

In fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century England, documentary texts were produced virtually everywhere and concerned a large part of the society. There is no reason to assume that every single small village in which documents were produced had a resident scribe of its own; however, there is no doubt that both the production of documents and the competence to write them were widely dispersed throughout the country (see further p. 89).

The production of documents may be discussed both in terms of the people who physically wrote the documents and those who commissioned and used them; in both cases, the practices of individuals may be viewed as part of larger social contexts, generally studied in terms of networks or communities. Such concepts, which are central in current sociolinguistics, have been defined variously, depending on the viewpoint and the materials studied. The concept of **community of practice** involves a group of people who share a common goal or concern and who interact on a regular basis (Wenger 1998; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992: 464); examples here might be the members of a guild or a town council. The **discourse community** is more explicitly defined in terms of language and texts, and does not presuppose regular interactions between all members: Barton (2007: 75–76) defines it as “a group of people who have texts and practices in common” and “who, by definition, have a common discourse, in the narrow sense of common ways of using language, and in the broader sense of common ways of acting in relation to knowledge”. Discourse communities for the present purpose might include occupational groups such as lawyers or merchants, or more complex definitions such as the members of monastic orders in northern England. More specifically, the group of readers and writers connected to a particular text or group of texts may be referred to as a **text community** (Meurman-Solin 2012: 467), while the people producing written texts in a particular historical context form a **scribal community.** All of these concepts are potentially useful for the study of the present material, and most of them are applied in the following chapters.

A more challenging concept for the present purpose is the idea of **social networks** (Milroy & Milroy 1985, Milroy 1992), often discussed in terms of speakers with weak and strong ties. As the study of social networks generally requires a knowledge of the contacts and relationships of individuals, late medieval materials are for the most part not well suited for this kind of approach, with the partial exception of well-preserved family correspondences such as the Paston letters (cf. Bergs 2005, 2018). On the other hand, the general findings of present-day sociolinguistic studies may be relevant for our interpretation of medieval patterns: for example, changes may be expected to proceed faster in loose-knit communities with much outside contact, such as London (see also Chapter 7). In addition, scribal and business networks may be traced on the basis of the texts themselves and may be informative for the study of distributions of specific variants (see Chapter 6).

The people who physically wrote the texts – the scribal community behind the late medieval English local documents – were for the most part anonymous, clearly literate and, as far as we know, nearly always male. At the same time, the available evidence suggests that they (like the documents themselves) form an extremely heterogeneous group, including people at all levels of society except the very highest and lowest, with highly varying levels of education and power. Most clerks would have learnt basic Latin and business skills during a few years – perhaps just two or three – at a local grammar or business school (cf. Orme 2006: 68–73), while others would have a full legal training; offices involving writing would be held by people with various backgrounds, and many noblemen – with whatever educational background – wrote their own letters. This heterogeneity makes the concept of scribal community potentially misleading: the people who produced the documents shared few characteristics and interests apart from their literacy and at least a basic competence in writing and composing documents. Indeed, by far most of the people who produced the documents were routined writers; shaky and amateurish writing mainly occurs in the greetings and signatures added to the end of letters dictated to secretaries.

Some documentary texts are written and composed by a single individual for their own purpose: this is most obviously true of autograph letters, but other document categories, such as receipts, are also often physically written by the person whose purpose the document conveys. Far more commonly, however, documentary texts were written for an institution or employer to which/whom the clerk was attached: some would be produced for in-house use within an institution, while others would be kept by those individual people or families whose dealings they concerned.

The people who used and commissioned the texts – the overall text community – form an even more varied group than the writers, and include both men and women. Anyone who held land or other rights, or engaged in business of any sort, would be concerned with written documents. Still more people made statements recorded in writing and thus had an interest in their formulation, whether they were able to read the text themselves or not. Such stakeholders often include people of modest circumstances: a former servant attesting to the legality of a will, neighbours testifying to a slander case in court or old villagers testifying to boundary agreements made decades ago. The community engaged in documentary texts was an extremely heterogeneous one, with very different associations to and stakes in the written text.

The people and institutions who commissioned the texts might be discussed in terms of **sponsors of literacy**, a concept introduced by Brandt (1998, 2002; see also Stenroos 2016a: 111–112). Brandt defines sponsors of literacy as those institutions or individuals that benefit materially or spiritually from the literacy of a reader or writer, and who commission and reward literacy practices. In late medieval England, typical sponsors of literacy might be guilds, manors, municipalities and religious houses, as well as educational institutions; individual sponsors might be parents putting a child to school or a tradesman taking up an apprentice. The institutions are for the most part straightforward to identify, and may in themselves be categorized in various ways. For many purposes, it makes sense to categorize institutions in terms of **domains**, here defined as the area of activity, power or jurisdiction with which the institution is concerned (see Table 3.3 for examples). A document written by a private individual, such as a private letter, may be considered to belong to the private domain.

Some functional categories are directly connected to specific domains: proclamations are generally municipal, while episcopal administration involves a large number of specialized documents, normally written in Latin (Schipor 2018: 144). On the other hand, certain categories, such as accounts, conveyances and correspondence, appear in all domains.

Table 3.3 Examples of domains and institutions in the MELD material

Domain	Type of institution	Example
Academic	University, college, school	King's College
Ecclesiastical	Church, parish, church guild	Parish of St Michael at the North Gate, Oxford
Episcopal	Diocese	Winchester diocese
Manorial	Manor, family	The manor of Grantchester
Monastic	Abbey, priory	Durham Priory
Municipal	Municipal government, craft guild	Town of Beverley, the Weavers' Craft of Coventry

Other ways of categorizing institutions might be as urban vs rural, lay vs religious and, perhaps, local, regional or national. Some of these labels may be problematic if applied mechanically: for example, churchwardens were generally lay people and monastic houses would often appoint lay stewards and bailiffs, while university graduates, at least in principle, had entered holy orders. On the other hand, the distinction between urban and rural, while also fuzzy, appears to be an important one when it comes to the kinds of communities involved in text production. As Bergstrøm (2017: 56) notes, capable people in towns might hold office in several institutions during their lifetime: for example as churchwardens, mayors or aldermen and officials of a guild. Many scribal communities would overlap, and there is no absolute boundary between ecclesiastical and lay communities in terms of the people producing the documents. The mainly rural context of manorial documents would give rise to very different kinds of network, with much fewer opportunities for intersections between different communities.

Together with the generally more varied backgrounds of town populations and their exposure to more contact with outsiders, it may be expected that linguistic variation and change might pattern very differently in towns and in the countryside; this has, indeed, been suggested in studies by Bergstrøm (2017: 229 and p. 154 in the present volume), comparing late medieval Cambridge with its surroundings, and Thengs (2013: 334 and p. 172 in the present volume) who studied urban and rural materials in the Northwest Midlands. In particular, Thengs (2013: 334–337) showed that some linguistic changes in the material seem to spread from one urban centre to another, suggesting the pattern known as "city-hopping" (see also Chapter 7, p. 166–167).

Finally, the community within which a text is produced, and in particular its domain, plays a crucial role in the choice of language: some communities (such as those connected to episcopal administration) would tend to work almost exclusively in Latin while others (such as parishes and municipalities) would be more likely to produce texts in English. This fundamental fact of late medieval English writing needs to be considered next.

3.5 Function and code selection

One of the most notable aspects of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century English document production is its multilingualism. In late and post-medieval England, the function of a documentary text would to a large extent determine its language: while some categories appeared commonly in both English and Latin, others show a marked preference for the one or the other. Two factors in particular seem to strongly influence the choice of language: the intended users and the degree of formulaicity (cf. also Stenroos 2020).

The main language of administration throughout the medieval period was Latin. While English was to some extent used in the Anglo-Saxon period, its use was discontinued after the Norman Conquest. French appeared as an administrative language in the mid-thirteenth century (Clanchy 2013: 210) and continued in use into the fifteenth, although it never rivalled Latin; in the early fifteenth century English documents began to appear in increasing numbers, while French largely disappeared in all but a few contexts.

Machan (2003: 35) has suggested that the introduction of French was a direct result of the general growth of literacy and document use: "at a time when the semantic content of documents was beginning to rival their symbolic import, intelligibility demanded, in some cases, translation into French." At this point, in the thirteenth century, French would still be the high-status vernacular among those classes of people who were most likely to use documents. This situation changed dramatically during the fourteenth century, and by 1400 intelligibility would demand a new language shift, this time into English (p. 13–14).

The two vernaculars, French and English, seem to have been used in at least partly similar functions: correspondence, ordinances, oaths, conditions of obligation and, to some extent, leases and sales. Britnell (2013: 87), studying urban administration in particular, found French to be mainly used in speech-related genres such as proclamations and oaths, as well as in letters and petitions. French was also used extensively by lawyers, especially in York and London, up to the early fifteenth century, and it survives to the mid-fifteenth century as the record-keeping language of London craft guilds (1445 for the Merchant Tailors and 1459 for the Mercers; see Britnell 2013: 87). However, in the materials viewed for MELD, as well as in the provincial town records studied by Britnell (Winchester, Colchester, Bristol and York), French is generally absent from *c.*1420 onwards (see also p. 263).

Documentary texts in English appear sporadically from the late fourteenth century, correspondences and ordinances being among the first categories to appear. Texts excluded from MELD because of their early date include guild ordinances from London, York and Oxborough, all from the 1380s, as well as letters from the Lollard William Swinderby to the bishop of Hereford around 1390 (cf. Black 1998); the earliest English text identified by the MELD team is a Wiltshire attestation of 1375. It is worth noting that these examples considerably predate the well-known appearance of English from 1417 in the letters of Henry V. From the early fifteenth century, English documents gradually increase in number, at markedly different rates in different communities and text categories. Letters in English generally tend to be early: in the Beverley Town Cartulary, which spans the years 1400–1453, the earliest English texts, from the 1430s, consist of correspondences only, while conveyances and sureties in English appear in the early 1450s (Schipor 2013: 72, 76).

Throughout the period covered by MELD, the great majority of documents continues to be produced in Latin, with a small and slowly increasing proportion in English. The most clear-cut difference in terms of code selection has to do with discourse communities: texts produced by professional clerks for internal use would generally be in Latin, while texts to be used and kept by lay people might be in English. Thus, in Schipor's (2018) study of three archive collections at the Winchester Record Office, over 99% of the texts in the diocesan archive were in Latin, while the manorial collection studied contained considerably more English (see p. 262).

This difference does not simply reflect the role of Latin as the language of church administration, but also the fact that all the diocesan materials consist of bishop's registers. With few exceptions, the framework language of registers, memoranda books and court rolls – any formal records kept by professional clerks – was Latin, whatever the language of the individual texts recorded or copied. This means that the clerk's "own voice", recording memoranda as well as introducing and contextualizing the documents copied – letters, appointments, abjurations and so on – would virtually always be Latin.

Registers are therefore generally multilingual, the proportion of English depending on the community in question. In bishop's registers, by far most documents copied would also be in Latin, the in-house language of church administration; an important exception is the statements given by lay people at episcopal courts, such as abjurations and vows of chastity. As Britnell (2013: 87) has pointed out, such statements needed to be understood by the person giving them in order to be legally binding, and in the fifteenth century they generally appear in English.

When it comes to the most common document types found in archives, English is generally found in the following functional categories (cf. also Stenroos 2020):

a. *As a rule:* letters, including petitions and complaints (except formal letters from ecclesiastical/monastic authorities), abjurations
b. *Commonly:* awards, commissions, conditions of obligation, marriage agreements, memoranda, most kinds of statement
c. *As a substantial minority:* agreements, guild ordinances and records, leases, records, receipts, rentals, sales, surveys, inventories, wills
d. *Rarely:* exchanges, gifts, grants, power of attorney

The list does not include one of the most common functional categories, financial accounts, as their language varies considerably depending on their institutional context (see below). English virtually never appears in bonds, enfeoffments, final concords, inquests post mortem, manorial court rolls, probates of wills and quitclaims. It might be noted that Latin thus dominates the most common types of document in any county archive: bonds, enfeoffments, gifts, grants and quitclaims, as well as manorial court rolls.

A very substantial proportion of the documents produced for and kept by lay people were, accordingly, still in Latin. It is notable, however, that the categories that tend to be written in Latin, even when not intended for professional users, are ones that tend to be very formulaic. Thus, the bond is a highly formulaic document with nearly invariable wording apart from the names, sums and dates. In the following example of a Norfolk bond of 1503, the parts that are formulaic have been highlighted in bold:

(3.5) **Nou*er*int vniu*er*si me** Thomam Crowlonde de Dekylburgh in Com*itatu* Norff yoman **teneri & *perprese*ntes firmit*er* obligari** Joh*ann*i Myles de Bonewell **in** viginti libris **legalis monet*e* Anglie soluend*is* eid*e*m** Joh*ann*i **aut suo cert*o* att*o*urn*ato* hered*i* ut execut*oribus* suis** ad festu*m* Natiuitatis s*anct*i Joh*ann*is Baptiste ***proximo* futur*um* post dat*um* p*re*sent*e*m sine dil*ati*one ult*er*iori ad quem quid*e*m soluc*ion*em b*ene* & fideli*ter* ut p*er*mittit*ur* faciend*am* obligo me hered*es* & execut*ores* meos *perprese*ntes Sigill*o* meo Sigillat*um* dat*um*** p*ri*mo **die mensis** Maij **regni Regis** henrici septim*i* **post conquestum anglie** deci*m*o Octauo. (Cambridge, CUL: Buxton 14/56)
‘Know all men by these presents that I, Thomas Crowlond of Dickleburgh in the county of Norfolk, yoman, am held and firmly bound to John Myles of Bunwell in twenty pounds of lawful money of England to be paid to the aid John or to his certain attorney, heirs or executors by the feast of the Nativity of St John the Baptist next coming after the date of the present with no further delay, to which payment well and truly to be made, I bind myself, my heirs and executors by these presents sealed with my seal. Dated the first day of May in the eighteenth year of the reign of Henry the Seventh after the Conquest of England.’

While the bond itself is completely formulaic, and thus predictable, the specifics of each case are given in the accompanying condition, often (if not always) written in English. As the condition often describes the duties to be carried out by the bound party, intelligibility would be important: as all conditions are different, the text is generally unpredictable except for the opening and closing formulae, and thus impossible to access without a good command of the language:

(3.6) **The condic*o*nn of this obligac*o*nn is suche þ^{t} iff** Agneys þ^{e} wyf of þ^{e} w^{t}jnne bownde Thom*a*s Crowlond ou*er*lyve the seide thom*a*s & clayme ony man*er* of tytle int*er*est or Right of & in A close lyeng in Tybenh*a*m conteynyng by estymac*i*on ix acr w^{t} a tofte lately p*ur*chasid of þ^{e} seide Thom*a*s & agnes by þ^{e} w^{t}jnne wretyn John Myles and Also dispossesse þ^{e} seide John or his heir’ or assign’ of þ^{e} seide close / **that thanne this p*re*sent obligac*i*on to stond in all his streyngth power & effect or ell to be voyde and of noon streyngth no*r* valo*ur*** (Norfolk, D0653)
‘The condition of this obligation is such that if Agnes, the wife of the within bound Thomas Crowlond, overlives the said Thomas and claims any kind of title, interest or right of and in a close lying in Tibenham, containing by estimation 9 acres, with a toft lately purchased from the said Thomas and Agnes by the John Myles named in the bond, and also disposses the

said John or his heirs or assignees of the said close, that in that case this present obligation will stand in all its strength, but otherwise it will be void and of no effect.'

A similar pattern may be seen in the case of conveyances. Some types of conveyances are virtually always in English, for obvious reasons. For example, commissions are contracts with building contractors or workmen, setting out the details of the work to be carried out and the terms of payment. Few workmen would be fluent in Latin, and being able to refer to the exact requirements would be of crucial importance, especially in the case of large building projects such as the construction of the vaulting of King's College Chapel (D6081, D6086).

As for the conveyances transferring property, practices vary according to category. Leases and sales are fairly commonly written in English, while the same is very rarely the case with enfeoffments, gifts and quitclaims. Again, there is a difference in the typical amount of information content. Gifts and enfeoffments most often simply record the transaction, with no added information beyond the names and dates and a short reference to the property or rights conveyed. Even though they generally involved an exchange of money, the sums are seldom stated. Like bonds, they tend to be largely formulaic, and would be recognized even by the illiterate by their large initial letter, in the case of gifts the S of the first word, *sciant:*

(3.7) Sciant presentes et futuri quod me [name] dedi, concessi et hac presenti carta mea confirmavi [name] […]
'may all present people and those to come know that I [name] have given, granted and by this present writing confirmed to [name] […]'

This formula appears word for word in most Latin gifts. It will be useful to compare it with the opening clauses of those gifts that do in fact appear in English. These are rare in the material, and generally tend to include more information: most often they incorporate an intent, a description of the purpose for which the gift has been made. Only five texts in MELD may be classified as gifts; it may be noted that their openings vary considerably in form:

(3.8) a. Be it knawyn' to all men being p*re*sent and for to be that I […]hase geuyn and g*ra*unt & my charter indente confermert […] (Cumb L1144, ca1450)

b. Be it knowen to all peopull that nowe be And heraftre shal be that I […] haue yeven g*ra*unted And by this p*re*sent my dede indented haue confirmed […] (Shrops D0215, 1512)

c. Be It knowyn onto alle men bi these p*re*sent*es* that I […] haue geuyn and grau*n*tid & bi this my p*re*sent w*ri*tynge confermyd […] (Leics D0432, 1512)

d. This endentur berys wyttenes that […] gewys and *gra*untys and by this p*re*sent endentur has confermit […] (Wml L0120, 1441)
e. This indentur' […] witneses at […] hays Gyffeyn' & Grantyt & be this (pre)sent indentur confirmyt (Nhb L1225)

As is plain from the examples, regional variation in spelling and morphology abounds in the documents; however, the documents also vary greatly with regard to the phrasing. While (a) and (b) translate the Latin *sciant presentes et futuri*, (c) substitutes a formula more common in other types of documents, "by this present (writing)", perhaps suggested by an imperfect understanding of the Latin, and the last two abandon the standard opening formula altogether.

In contrast, leases and sales often provide much more detail: in sales, the financial transaction is usually stated in full and the geographical location of the landholdings may be described, while leases frequently contain details about the payment of rent and other conditions, and sometimes also descriptions of the lands and assets involved. As regards the phrasing, the English leases are a much more homogeneous group than the gifts, mostly including a variant of the formula "this indenture witnesses that X has granted and let to farm" (see Example (5.1) on p. 95). Still, even within limited geographical areas, there is much variation in the phrasing and, not least, the spelling.

When it comes to heavily formulaic documents, the lack of established English models meant that the standard Latin formulae would plainly be the easiest option for the reasonably competent scribe, and perhaps also the best guarantee of legality for the layman. In fact, documents such as quitclaims, bonds and final concords – some of the commonest documents in most archives – continued to be routinely written in Latin until 1733, when an Act of Parliament decreed that English was to be used to record all official information in the law courts. At that point, consistent English formulae would have developed for most document categories; in the fifteenth century, however, the habit of writing English still involved much variation, and the Latin formulae were readily available and could be drawn upon for all such uses that did not require English.

From this point of view, it is not surprising that the first category of documents that routinely appears in English is the correspondence. Even though medieval letters are frequently thought of as formulaic, with their sometimes lengthy opening and closing formulae (see e.g. Fludernik 2007: 242), letters by their very nature contain information that is unpredictable. Similarly, notes are by their nature unpredictable, and generally seem to appear in whatever language was most convenient.

The most heterogeneous document category with regard to code selection, finally, is the account. Conventions of language choice vary considerably between domains and institutions: manorial accounts, produced by bailiffs or reeves, are virtually always in Latin, with occasional English attachments such as receipts or inventories. There is no reason to assume that such accounts were generally produced by people with much Latin learning: reeves, in particular, were drawn from among the tenants themselves, and, as Parkes (1973: 559) points out, producing accounts in Latin would at times only require knowledge of formulae.

In contrast, churchwardens' accounts were from an early date commonly written both in English and in a "mixed code" (see p. 257, 265); in many archives, they are among the earliest English texts found. The early preference for English in these accounts might perhaps have to do with the rather varied and complex activities typically reported in them, which may have required more language skills than the listing of manorial rent incomes (see Example (3.9); cf. also Example (11.6)); it is also likely that the levels of learning varied greatly among the churchwardens, who were usually elected among lay parishioners for a single term.

(3.9) It' to Robert Jhonsun for me*n*ding of chirch walle ~ v d
It' for A surplis yt we bowght ~ v s iiij d
It' for ij surplis me*n*ding ~ viij d
It' payd to Rog*er* carryer for a hors to fech downe ye horgan plaer ~ iiij d
It' for me*n*ding of ye horgans ~ viij s
It' payd to a ma*n* yt was wt hym al nyght ~ iiij d
It' for colis to yam ~ ij d
For kandels to tham ~ ij d ob
It' for brede & ale to tham ~ j d ob
It' for ye horgan makars brekfast & h*es* ma*n*nys ~ iij d (Oxford D2328)
'Item, to Robert Jhonsun for mending of the chirch wall, 5 pence; Item, for a surplice that we bought, 5 shillings 4 pence; Item, for the mending of two surplices, 8 pence; Item, paid to Roger Carrier for a horse to fetch down the organ player, 4 pence; Item, for mending of the organs, 8 shillings; Item, paid to a servant who was with him all night, 4 pence; Item for coal for them, 2 pence; for candles for them, 2 ½ pence, Item, for bread and ale for them, 1 ½ penny, Item, for the breakfast for the organ maker and his servant, 3 pence'

In sum, the language of a text correlates to a large extent with its function, but other parameters are relevant as well. In the material studied, the choice of language seems to generally reflect pragmatic needs: texts meant for professional in-house use, and very highly formulaic texts, are usually in Latin, while texts meant for the use of lay people and containing unpredictable content would often be written in English. However, not nearly all instances of code selection follow these general patterns: in many instances, the language of an individual text may simply reflect the preferences and background of a particular scribe or sponsor.

3.6 Function and the material context

Physical form (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2) is closely connected to the function of the text, and any exceptions to the conventional combinations of form and function are potentially significant for the interpretation of the text. The physical form of a text is often the sole indicator of whether it is the original or a copy, and unexpected formats may be highly meaningful: a letter produced as an indenture is clearly expected to be used as legal evidence.[8] The physical form may also influence the linguistic form in ways which may be predictable, even trivial, but important to be aware of: a small format may require shorter spelling variants, such as *wich* rather than *qwhych* 'which', cf. Bergstrøm 2017: 200.

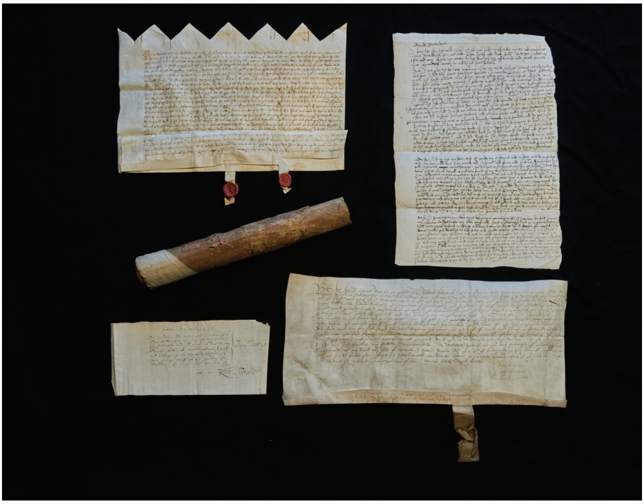

Figure 3.1 Five common formats of Middle English documents. Clockwise from the top left: Indenture, sheet, deed poll, bill and roll (Private collection, Sola, Norway). Image: Patrick Hana Thengs

At the most basic level, a text may be written on different materials: in the present context, this means either parchment or paper.[9] The choice of material is usually predicted by the function of a text, and largely reflects the need for preservation: conveyances transferring property or long-term rights are meant for long-term storage, and were produced on parchment. Formal registers also tend to be made

8. See Stenroos 2014: 363 for an example.

9. Parchment is here used as the general term for a writing material produced from animal skin through processes of drying and stretching, including the finest calfskin varieties (known as *vellum*) as well as the rougher, everyday varieties (sometimes known as parchment, the overall term then being *membrane*).

Figure 3.2 Accounts written on paper rolls (Private collection, Sola, Norway). Image: Patrick Hana Thengs

of parchment, while more ephemeral documents, such as letters and rentals, tend to be on paper.[10] The latter kind of documents are, of course, less likely to survive – both because of their material and their lack of lasting value; it might be noted that many of these more ephemeral text types are also those typically written in English, the implication being that the surviving documents are almost certainly skewed towards Latin.

The format of a document also reflects its function. Texts that were produced in more than one copy, to be kept by both or all parties to a transaction, were produced as **indentures**: the text was written twice (or more) on parts of the same sheet, and the copies were then cut apart in a jagged or wavy line, making possible an authentification by bringing the parts back together. On the other hand, texts that were only produced in a single copy, such as wills and bonds, were cut straight at the top, or "polled", producing a **deed poll.** Both indentures and deed polls would be authenticated with seals. The former most commonly have "pendant" seals: seals fixed on tags cut and folded out of parchment (or occasionally paper) and attached to the document at a 90 degrees angle; this method allows for the inclusion of a very large number of seals if needed. Deed polls, on the other hand, usually only

10. It might be noted, however, that tiny documents such as receipts are often on parchment, presumably using up cut-off pieces.

require one seal, which is most commonly attached to a horizontally cut tongue of parchment cut from the bottom of the document, known as an "incised" seal tag.

Both letters and receipts are generally much simpler in format, and are mostly written on small or medium pieces of paper or parchment. Both are usually signed and may contain an "embossed" seal in addition: a seal pressed into the paper/parchment itself rather than appended on a tag. Letters (apart from drafts) are generally neatly written on a rectangular piece, and those produced by people of high rank may leave a large blank space around the written area as a marker of status. Receipts may be written on scraps cut in any format, and are generally much less neat. The small pieces of paper or parchment used for letters and receipts are here termed **bills**; it makes sense to distinguish these cut pieces from the large paper **sheets** which are often folded to make **booklets**. Sheets and booklets are mainly used for copying or drafting documents or for records that are not meant to be kept for long periods, often containing various kinds of accounts, memoranda and scribbles on the same page.

Finally, **codices** and **rolls** are used for long texts, continuous record-keeping or archiving. The quintessential format of medieval texts – the heavy leather-bound codex – appears in the present material in cartularies and registers, kept by administrative clerks working for an institution such as a municipality or a diocesan office. A cartulary was generally a collection of charters and other deeds relating to rights to property, and would often contain original documents attached to the codex; a register, on the other hand, would contain all kinds of documents and memoranda copied into a codex, often in the form of a log or "memoranda book". However, the names are to a large extent used interchangeably. Rolls are sometimes used for similar purposes, but most typically appear as the format of court proceedings, accounts and surveys: their main advantage is flexibility of length, which may in principle be infinite.

Both the size of a document and its choice of layout and script may be used to signal status or identity. Guild ordinances, for example, appear to be typically written in a formal book script, in contrast with other documentary texts, which are most often written in a cursive hand; in general, they tend to mimick religious texts in layout, script and overall style (see e.g. Bergstrøm 2017: 188 seq.). Many medieval guilds were religious in nature, and all required a certain solemnity to enforce their rules; the presence of elements more typically associated with literary religious texts than documents would thus seem to make sense as an identity marker.

Similarly, the social status of the parties involved in the production of a document could have an impact on the choice of materials and script, and, indirectly, of linguistic form. An example of such an impact is a large-sized document at the King's College archive (JEC/1; Cambridge D6025), containing an agreement between Chief Justice Robert Rede of the Common Pleas and Jesus College for the establishment of a fellowship at Jesus College. Not only is this agreement written on the single largest sheet of parchment recorded within the corpus catalogue, but it is also one of very few illuminated texts within MELD, showing a lavishness of production unusual for documentary texts, presumably not to do with its contents but rather marking the status of the parties. This text, as Bergstrøm (2017: 186) notes, shows an unusually extensive use of final <e>, with spellings such as *ande* 'and', *nowe* 'now', seemingly in order to fill the parchment.

The layout of manuscript texts, finally, varies greatly, with the result that, in documents, the distinction between text and paratext is not always straightforward. In a letter, it is relatively easy to distinguish between the body of the letter (text) and the other elements connected with it (paratext), such as the address clause at the dorse of the sheet, *Tho the ryȝht worschypfull Master cristofer Morre be-syde Guldeford be thys delyueryd* 'to be delivered to the right worshipful master Christopher Moore near Guildford' (Sussex D0554) and the signature added by a different hand, *your treu & faythefull frend J Mountacu* 'your true and faithful friend, J. Mountacu' (Cumb D0269). Similarly, an account with headings written in the margin may easily be divided into text and paratext.

However, such distinctions become problematic as we consider cases where the same functional elements are realized visually in different ways. For example, a registrar copying a letter into a register may be including the address clause, the letter and (copied) signature into a single text block, with no visual distinctions. If we, then, compare texts that are otherwise equivalent but differently laid out visually, do we define the boundaries of text and paratext differently – in other words, does the copying scribe change the boundaries of the "text" by not choosing to make visual distinctions?

To avoid this problem, a **scribal text** is here defined as consisting of a unit of discourse, written in the same scribal hand and coherent in terms of content and function, including all headings, marginal notes and signatures, and visually distinct from its surroundings, even though it may itself be divided into visual elements (cf. Schipor 2018: 6). Such elements may be classified into categories such as body text, headings, incipit, marginal note, signature and so on (see p. 257–258).

There are grey areas: we need to decide whether we consider a bond and its condition two different texts or elements of the same one, and whether the parts of an indenture make up one text or many. One could also ask whether annual accounts, entered in a codex year after year by the same scribe, form a single composite text or a series of related texts. Finally, registers often contain groups of texts that are closely related in content, such as the documentation pertaining to a single court case: should this, perhaps, be counted as a single text? What we decide will also determine what we consider to be *cotext*: the "surrounding" texts appearing or originating in the same physical context (see p. 32).

For the purpose of MELD, we have chosen the finer divisions in each case: the bond and condition are separate texts, as are the copies of an indenture, the annual accounts and the individual court case documents: this is because each one of them has to some extent a separate identity, whether in terms of date, textual history, or storage.[11] It is, however, crucial to be aware of the fluidity of what we refer to as texts: in their material context, they shade into each other, interact with each other on the page and sometimes become regrouped through history; and they could certainly be defined differently. Reading the material form of a medieval document – and indeed any manuscript text – is therefore a crucial part of understanding what it is, and making sense of its linguistic form.

3.7 Conclusions

This chapter has discussed the various ways in which the function of a text intersects and interacts with other parameters. The purpose has been twofold: to explain the thinking behind some of the fundamental terms and concepts used in the compilation of MELD and in the remainder of this book, and to show how an awareness of the cultural, linguistic, material and textual contexts builds up our understanding of the texts from which we derive our data.

It is suggested here that historical materials only begin to yield good evidence when approached from several angles, as the different viewpoints combine to build up a fuller picture. Different kinds of text are meant to do different things, and are produced by and for different people: for the present-day sociolinguist such points may be self-evident and unproblematic, as the information is readily available and can be used to define the samples. For the study of historical states of language, these points are even more crucial as our overall knowledge is so much less. Making sense of a historical text includes being aware of the conventions of its functional category, studying its physical form and enquiring into its historical context: all these lines of enquiry add exponentially to the goodness of our data when it comes to interpreting and generalizing from the linguistic variation we find.

11. Their relatedness is, however, marked by a shared code, differentiated by the addition of a lower-case letter for copies of the same text, such as indentures (e.g. D0055a and D0055b), or a number for texts appearing in the same physical context (e.g. D0370#1 and D0370#2).

CHAPTER 4

The geography of Middle English documentary texts

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4.1 Geography as a textual parameter in Middle English

Linguistic variation in Middle English has traditionally been related to geography. Geography is, without doubt, the most salient factor behind spoken variation of which most people are aware, and the study of dialects, based on geography, was for a long time the only reasonably systematic approach to linguistic variation. In Middle English studies, dialectology has been central because of the exceptional amount of variation in the written mode, which at least to some extent may be assumed to reflect geography, giving seemingly endless opportunities both for the direct study of "written dialects" and for the reconstruction of spoken ones.

At the same time, geography is one of the most challenging of the textual parameters identified in Chapter 3. While the function of a text is for the most part reasonably straightforward to establish, and the format is immediately visible, relating Middle English linguistic data to locations on a map is problematic in many ways.

The first and most obvious problem has to do with the available information. For much of the surviving Middle English material, we have no biographical information about the writer – either in the sense of the author who composed the abstract text or of the scribe who produced the physical text – and no indication of geographical provenance. In addition, the overwhelming majority of "literary texts" (see p. 101–102) survive only in copies, often many scribal copyings removed from the original text.

There have been two solutions to this problem. The first has been to turn around the question, as it were, and localize scribal texts on the basis of their language, by comparing them to other texts. The linguistic variation is assumed to form a (more or less) regular "dialect continuum", and the geographical "fit" becomes the research question. This approach has been highly influential within Middle English studies in recent decades, not least because of the monumental work carried out for LALME.

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The second approach is to focus on those texts for which non-linguistic information about geographical provenance is available or may be deduced. Such information may consist of manuscript associations or the identification of specific decorating styles or materials; more direct evidence includes localizing clauses in the text itself and associations with known people or places. The only sizeable group of texts for which such direct information is commonly available is the kind of texts with which this book is concerned, that is, local documents.

There has been a tendency in the scholarly literature to consider actual geographical provenance of less importance for the study of linguistic variation than the linguistically defined “dialect”: as scribes and exemplars could travel, the language of a text does not necessarily show linguistic characteristics typical of its place of production. At the same time, however, it may be argued that this mobility plays in itself a crucial role in the dynamics of linguistic variation and change: the people who move and travel also contribute to the linguistic landscape. Accordingly, we need to study geographical variation not only in terms of typological “fit” but in its actual historical context.

Documentary texts, as defined in this book, are always connected to a specific historical context. They are therefore often related to actual geographical locations, whether through explicit localizing clauses or through names or manuscript associations. A map based on such localizations will allow us to study the surviving range of linguistic usages connected to a given place, and relate them to historical networks of text production.

However, no matter how direct the evidence, mapping historical texts to locations on the map involves further problems, both of a methodological and theoretical nature: ultimately, they involve the question what we mean by localizing texts or speakers geographically. First of all, a medieval dialect map is necessarily based on very different principles from those underlying a present-day one. We are dealing with historical texts rather than live speakers, with well-known implications: we cannot augment the material at will, nor can we ask the informants for detailed biographical information. We are therefore constrained by the materials that happen to survive to us, and identifying geographical connections based on consistent criteria will be a major challenge.

In addition, it is not at all obvious which criteria should be used in relating the linguistic forms to points on the map. Even in a present-day survey, such criteria need to be carefully specified: locating a speaker or linguistic form is not the same as locating a landmark. Locations on a map are, of course, not the same as physical locations in any case, as all maps are abstractions. At the same time, we can use map coordinates to locate a position in the real world, and generally find the town or camping site or street address that we are looking for. However, we may in principle spend the entire day in a town without coming across the linguistic forms recorded on a recent dialect map: should we then assume that the map is erroneous or conclude that the speakers we met were not representative?

The contention of this chapter is that neither assumption is (necessarily) fair: both the dialect map and the day of observation provide valid information about the language spoken in the area, based on different samples and criteria. The discrepancy may, however, make us aware that something is going on: a wave of migration, a large number of temporary residents, generational differences – all perfectly possible, and important for understanding the linguistic development of the area.

The fact that linguistic forms are not attached to the physical ground may seem obvious; however, in traditional dialectology, the nature of the connection between a linguistic form and a geographical location is seldom problematized. Instead, it is largely taken for granted that a particular form "represents" or "belongs to" the dialect of a specific location in some quintessential way. However, in all periods, the linguistic usage found at a place depends on the speakers present: the place itself does not speak or write. On the other hand, a speaker can connect to geography in a multitude of ways, and this is also the case with texts and writers.

This chapter addresses the different ways in which Middle English documentary texts may connect to geography. First, it discusses the traditional notion that each place has its own "authentic" dialect, and shows how this notion underlies influential work on Middle English language until the present time. It then goes on to suggest that this notion does not stand up to more recent thinking about geography and linguistic variation. Instead, as texts relate to geography in different ways, their positions on a dialect map may vary according to the criteria used. Finally, the implications of this more fluid approach to geographical variation are discussed with reference to the mapping of Middle English local documents.

4.2 Changing models of geographical variation

4.2.1 A "soil somewhere in England": The idea of the local dialect

One of the basic assumptions of traditional dialectology is that every place has its own dialect. This dialect is often perceived as being endangered or disappearing, with few, if any, people left who speak the "real" dialect in its presumed pure form. Until very recently, the study of Middle English geographical variation focussed on the identification of such local dialects. Views have, however, differed greatly with regard to how far, and by what means, they may be reconstructed or identified.

Tolkien (1929: 104) expressed a rather negative view in a classic formulation:

> Very few Middle English texts represent in detail the real language (in accidence, phonology, often even in choice of spellings) of any one time or place or person… Their "language" is, in varying degrees, the product of their textual history, and cannot be fully explained, sometimes cannot be understood at all by reference to geography.

Tolkien's statement formed part of an argument claiming a special status for the language of the then recently discovered *Ancrene Wisse* manuscript, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 402, which he assumed represented such a "real language": a written language based on "good living speech – a soil somewhere in England" (Tolkien 1929: 106). What made this language special was, above all, its regular spelling system and morphology, and the fact that it appeared in more or less identical form in another manuscript written by a different scribe, Oxford, Bodleian Library Bodley 34. To Tolkien, this regularity was a sign of authenticity, and therefore of local dialect.

Unlike many other early (and later) scholars, Tolkien was clear about the written mode of the AB language. He also made explicit his assumption that the regularity of a writing system was evidence of its close connection to speech, an assumption that perhaps made more sense in the pre-variationist era than it does now. Following Tolkien, scholars for many years saw copying as an inevitable force of "corruption". This view was challenged by the highly influential work of McIntosh, who, in a classic paper of 1963, introduced the concept of scribal translation and argued for the use of "translated" texts as dialect evidence (McIntosh 1963: 27–28).[1] The LALME methodology was based on the assumption that many Middle English scribes translated the language of their exemplars so thoroughly into their "own" usage that the resulting language, at least at the levels of spelling and morphology, could be considered representative of a single "lect", relating to a single geographical location.

The LALME compilers retained the idea of the "real language" of a place as the focus of enquiry, and expanded greatly the potential number of texts that could be seen as reflecting such languages, referred to as "local dialects". As any text that contained a relatively consistent language could be assumed to reflect the language of a specific place, it was then possible to localize texts in relation to each other.

The method of localization developed for LALME, known as the "fit"-technique, is based on the general premise that geographical dialects form a dialect continuum, that is, they are characterized by "a non-random, orderly patterning

1. The well-known typology of scribal approaches (including translation, *literatim* copying and various practices producing something in between) was introduced by McIntosh (1973); for fuller discussions of this typology, see Benskin and Laing (1981) and Laing (2004). The application of this typology in LALME has recently been criticized by Scase (2019).

over space" (LALME I: 10; for descriptions of the technique, see McIntosh 1963; Benskin 1991a). This kind of patterning was assumed to characterize the written variation in Middle English texts as well:

> There are good grounds *prima facie* for believing that the written dialects of Middle English behave similarly: firstly they can be assumed to have corresponded, at least in some degree, with spoken dialects [...] secondly, the great diversity of the written language, as a cultural phenomenon, presents *per se* a strong case for correlations (LALME I: 10)

Accordingly, the LALME compilers expected that every text might be localized within the dialect continuum, assuming that it contained an internally consistent combination of forms. A combination that could not be fitted in such a way would then represent something else than a local English dialect: a dialect mixture (*Mischsprache*), "standardized" usage, or a genuine dialect from another continuum, such as Hiberno-English (LALME I: 12).

In order to connect the texts to geographical locations, the LALME compilers used a set of local documents that were associated with specific places and deemed to represent the language of those places. The other texts would then be localized in relation to these "anchor texts". However, LALME did not differentiate between the two categories in an absolute way, and the anchor texts themselves were selected in order to produce a regular continuum. The resulting corpus is, accordingly, designed to reconstruct dialectal variation on an idealised, typological basis, without the noise that might be expected to characterize ordinary language use.

As the localizations of most texts in LALME are relative, they are not meant to reflect precise geographical positions; rather, they reflect the linguistic similarities between texts. In Williamson's (2004: 119–120) terminology, the localizations are in "linguistic space" rather than "real" or "geographical" space.[2] At the same time, the production of dialect maps implies in itself that the network of localizations is assumed to bear a resemblance to actual geographical patterns. The underlying assumption is that each text reflects the language of a place on the real map, unknown to us, and the aim is to place the texts as close as possible to this place: "the denser the entries on the maps become, the closer we may hope to come to the correct absolute position for each text" (LALME I: 12). It is suggested that, in areas where texts are abundant, the localizations might be "probably accurate to within ten miles" (LALME I: 12).

2. Real space represents the actual physical location of an informant (or whatever is being mapped), while geographical space is the representation of this location on a map (Williamson 2004: 119–20).

To sum up, the "fit"-technique is based on two interconnected assumptions: that Middle English written variation forms a regular continuum over space, and that each "dialectally consistent" text can be said to represent the language of a specific place within this continuum. While these assumptions are necessary for the reconstruction of a dialect map based on linguistic localizations, they turn out to be problematic once we start placing texts in their historical context.

4.2.2 From geographical to social space

In human geography, ideas about space have changed dramatically over the last half century. From the 1960s onwards, the physical, Euclidean notion of space has largely been replaced by the idea of spatiality: the definition of space in terms of social rather than physical distance (cf. Britain 2002: 604, Muysken 2008: 4). In the study of linguistic variation, the implication is that physical distance in itself is not the crucial factor: rather, the important point is the frequency and direction of contact. Accordingly, we do not expect spoken language to vary across space in a regular continuum: innovations may leap from town to town and spread rapidly in some directions rather than others.

This would have been equally true in the Middle Ages: people would travel along specific routes to centres of education, business or worship, and the inhabitants of two nearby villages in a rural area might have more dealings with the people of a town slightly further away than with each other. There are, indeed, indications that the phenomenon known as 'city-hopping' in present-day studies of geographical variation may also be found in Middle English written variation (cf. Thengs 2013: 334–37; see also p. 166, note 2), and there is no reason why we should not also assume manor-hopping and abbey-hopping.

The regular continuum becomes even more problematic as we consider written language. Variation in both speech and writing reflects social space: networks of contact rather than physical distance as such.[3] In the late medieval and early modern periods, those who were literate formed a small part of the entire population, although literacy rates would have been considerably higher in the cities and within some social groups (Cressy 1980: 177; Reay 1998: 41–42). Written conventions and innovations travel along partly different routes from the multiple channels of everyday speech: education would have played a central part, but

3. In addition, of course, written texts in the manuscript era were produced in different ways: some were composed and written down by the same person, while others were dictated or copied. The combination of exemplars, scribal repertoires and scribal practices create an additional complexity in copied texts, discussed somewhat confusingly as "diastratic variation" by Laing (2004).

transmission would also have taken place through other literacy networks, such as business contacts and institutional or religious affiliations.

The concept of social space changes dramatically the implications of the geographical location of a text. It no longer makes sense to assume that a specific combination of linguistic forms "belongs to" a geographical spot because it can be fitted into a reconstructed continuum, nor can we expect the overall assemblages of linguistic forms to change subtly and gradually as we move across the map. Instead, we may wish to enquire into the actual patterns of variation in texts that were produced in specific places. Unlike the dialect continuum, such patterns are unpredictable and reflect a multitude of known and unknown variables, including geographically situated connections as well as the functional and institutional categories discussed in Chapter 3. Geography simply becomes an extralinguistic variable – albeit a very powerful one – forming part of the context of the linguistic forms studied. It is, moreover, not a single variable: as geographical connections are of different kinds, texts may group geographically in different ways, some of which are better documented than others. The following section discusses the geographical connections considered in the MELD project.

4.3 Connecting texts to localities

4.3.1 How does a text relate to a place?

In a present-day dialect survey, the dialect of an informant is generally connected to the place where he/she lives or grew up, preferably both. Many speakers, however, have complex geographical connections. For example, a speaker may have grown up in Wiltshire, studied at Nottingham and then moved to work in Glasgow. For the traditional dialectologist, such a speaker would be of little interest as an informant. On the other hand, if we are interested in studying the dynamics of change, the language of such speakers is no less relevant than that of isolated speakers in rural areas, the traditional informants of dialect surveys (see e.g. Chambers & Trudgill 1980: 33).

The geographical connections of a Middle English text may be more complex still. The scribe's personal geographical connections may include the places where they grew up, went to school and worked, all of which may be different. The text itself was written at a specific place, sponsored or commissioned by a geographically positioned agent of some kind – institution, authority or private person. There may be local conventions and house styles, a copied text may reflect at least something of the language of its exemplar, and a dictated text may reflect the vocabulary and grammar, even the pronunciation, of the person dictating. The first step in localizing texts on the geographical map in order to study variation is, therefore, to define the kind of geographical connection to be mapped.

In LALME, it was assumed that the link between the text and the localization of the dialect had to do with scribal education. The linguistic forms of the scribe were assumed to reflect those of the place where they had learnt their writing habits (LALME I: 23), rather than the physical provenance of the text, which the LALME compilers generally viewed as less relevant.[4] On the whole, LALME was not concerned with the actual language produced at a place, unless it could be used to reconstruct the dialect continuum and thus qualified as "local dialect". In contrast, the approach taken in MELD is that the entire range of written variation found in local documentary texts – not just the "local dialects"– should be included in the study. To make this possible, localizations have to be based firmly on non-linguistic evidence.

Few documentary texts contain no evidence at all of geographical connections; however, the kind of evidence available varies in precision, kind and reliability. Biographical information about the writers of the texts is relatively rare. Most exceptions consist of the letters of aristocratic writers, representing the top layer of society: as it happens, these writers are also the ones who are the most difficult to pinpoint geographically (see 4.3.2 below). However, even if we could find out precisely where each scribe was born, or which school they attended, such localizations would only sort the data according to one kind of geographical connection among many (although, in that hypothetical situation, we would probably not complain).

There are, in fact, various kinds of connection for which we can find information, and which may be just as useful as the background of the writer, always depending on which questions we ask. Some types of documentary texts commonly contain a localizing clause that states where the document was written; this is especially typical of conveyances such as leases, wills and grants, as well as of letters. Other texts contain references to people and places that may be used to localize the text, while yet others relate to institutions or practices that may be localized. All these kinds of evidence have been used to localize texts in the MELD corpus, and each have their own implications both for mapping and for the interpretation of data.

4. The distinction is not always made clear in LALME: for example, the discussion of the localizations of literary manuscripts on p. 23–24 frequently refers to the localizations as though they were evidence for the place of copying, as in: "the works of the *Gawain*-poet were copied not far from where, on other grounds […] we would have expect him to have lived" (LALME I: 23–24).

4.3.2 Localizing texts on the basis of localizing clauses

The most precise localizations are generally those provided by localizing clauses found in the documents themselves. In MELD 2017.1, approximately one third of the included texts (ca 650 texts out of 2,017) contain such a clause, usually formulated as "given at…" or "written at…" and in most cases including the date as well:[5]

(4.1) Giffen at derynton' on seyne luke day in the ȝere of the Reigne of kyng' harry the sexte aft<u>er</u> the Conquest' xxxiiijth (Shrops D0150)
'Given at Dorrington on St Luke's Day in the 34th year of the reign of king Henry VI after the Conquest'

Localizations based on a clause such as this are referred to as "explicit" in the MELD corpus. Explicit localizations are generally ideal for the production of a dialect map, as they are both unambiguous (in intention, if not always in practice) and specific, typically stating the town or village, sometimes even the precise spot where the document was produced:

(4.2) written in the Orcheyerd of *sir* Ric' Emson' in Kymbell in the Southwest end of the South aley of the same Orcheyard (Bucks D5028#2)
'written in sir Richard Emson's orchard in Kimble, at the southwestern end of the south alley of the same orchard'

It may be assumed that localizing clauses for the most part reflect genuine provenance. There are, to be sure, counterexamples. Very occasionally, there are grounds to assume that the localizing clause gives the wrong information, and that the document was in fact produced at a different location; however, such cases are rare. Somewhat more commonly, a localizing clause may refer to a place of production that would seem fairly irrelevant for the language of the text. For example, the will of Sir Thomas Strickland, knight, of Sizergh Castle in Kendal, Westmorland, is dated at Sandwich, Kent, en route to France:

(4.3) in y^e^ ȝer' of y^e^ Rynge of kyng Henry y^e^ sext efter y^e^ conquest of yngland y^e^ nent […] wrytyn' in grete hast att my schippyng in Sandwyghthe (L1234)
'In the 9th year of the reign of king Henry VI after the Conquest of England […] written in great haste at my departure from Sandwich'

Here we are dealing with a person of known provenance, producing a text while travelling, in a location that is not only different from his usual residence but one where his stay is temporary and dictated purely by the logistics of the moment.

5. Dates in medieval documents often relate to feast days, and commonly refer to the regnal year of the ruling monarch; however, the present-day systems of days of the month and *anni domini* are also in use, and there are occasional references to the years of office of a bishop, pope or mayor.

As it turns out, there are other surviving texts in the same hand, all in documents with a solid connection to Kendal, and one may assume that the scribe, if other than Thomas Strickland himself, was connected to his home area in Westmorland rather than to a shipping port in Kent. For this particular text, accordingly, the localization clause does not necessarily provide the most useful kind of geographical connection.

Such examples are relatively rare in most types of documentary texts; however, they appear frequently in the category "correspondence". Letters virtually always state where they were written; however, as their main function is to communicate across distances, they are often written by people on the move, either while travelling or while staying at a place away from home. For example, the bishop of Salisbury dates a letter at Woodstock, Oxfordshire:

(4.4) writ' at wodestok*es* in haste ye xviij day of August by candell aft*er* x of ye bell at euen' […] ȝo*ur* trewe frende & brother' w . Bishop of Sa*rum* (D0281)
'Written in haste at Woodstock, by candlelight after ten o'clock in the evening, the eighteenth day of August […] your true friend and brother, W., bishop of Sarum'

Not all letters were written on the move, of course: many, perhaps most, of the letters in MELD were written by people at home. It might, however, be noted that the authors of a considerable part of surviving Middle English letters are people at a high level of society, who tended to be exceptionally mobile: people such as earls, countesses and bishops, who would divide their time between their manors and London residences.

Accordingly, letters form to some extent a group of their own with regard to geographical connections: their localizing clauses refer not uncommonly to temporary lodgings rather than places of residence or office, and many of the writers involved are exceptional in terms of their geographical ties. In MELD, all texts that fall under the superordinate category "correspondence" are therefore classified as a separate group in terms of localization: even though explicit localizations are usually available for these texts, the background of their authors often seems more relevant to their language than their place of production, and it may therefore make more sense to map them according to the former, placing them in the "inferred" localization category (see below).

Apart from cases such as these, localizing clauses may generally be considered a reliable way of connecting texts to places. There is clearly no guarantee that the documents were produced by local people. With the limited information available, it is for the most part impossible to differentiate on non-linguistic grounds between scribes who are long-term residents and those who are recent immigrants or visitors. There is no doubt that the late Middle Ages saw a considerable amount of migration, especially into the cities and larger towns, and sheriff's or bishop's clerks might travel throughout the county or diocese. There can therefore be no expectation that all the written material physically produced at a place was produced by local people or presents a uniformly "local dialect". The implications of this uncertainty are discussed further in Section 4.5 below.

With all these caveats, localizing clauses are in many respects the most solid grounds for localization that we can expect. Their most important advantage is that they are based on unambiguous statements in the documents themselves: they involve no guesswork or interpretation by the corpus compilers, except for those relatively rare cases when a placename cannot be identified with certainty or refers to several equally plausible alternatives. Their main limitation is that they are more typical of some types of documents than others: for example, while they are quite common in conveyances, in particular leases, they are much less common in memoranda and extremely rare in bonds. Above all, however, it is crucial to bear in mind that they only relate to one kind of geographical connection. Localizing clauses tell us where the document was produced; not where the properties (if any) were situated, nor where the parties or the scribe came from.

4.3.3 Historically situated texts

Some texts are firmly connected to places, whether or not they include an explicit localizing clause. Of all types of documents, surveys provide the most direct physical connections: a land survey, terrier or perambulation literally connects with "a soil somewhere in England" (or wherever the place surveyed is located). Land surveys may occasionally include holdings over large areas; however, in such cases they are generally divided into geographical subsections. Whether or not they were written down by a local clerk, they would have to rely on local knowledge and tradition, and would for the most part be intended for local use (see Chapter 8). Such documents often include a clause or heading defining the area surveyed:

(4.5) This is þa *per*ambulacion' and the vew of a carucate of Land callid Cubblard land liyng' in the filde3 of þe tovn of hilton' made vppon' þe morne aftir saynt valentin day the yer' of o*ur* Lord MCCCCL (Durham D0257)
'This is the perambulation and view of a carucate of land called Cubblard Land, lying in the fields of the town of Hilton, made the morning after Saint Valentine's Day in the year of our Lord 1450'

The evidence provided by such texts is different from that of the localizing clauses, in that there is no explicit mention where the text was produced. However, this kind of connection may also be considered to provide a fairly solid basis for localization, unless there are good grounds to assume that the document was produced by external parties and for external use. Such localizations are referred to in MELD as "historical": we may not have explicit provenance statements, but the historical connection of the text relates it very firmly to a location.

Apart from surveys, typical examples of texts with historical localizations are account books, cartularies and registers: collections of records relating to a specific place or institution, usually copied into or attached to a codex or a scroll. The "Cartulary of Tutbury Priory" may be assumed to have been produced in Tutbury; "The Little Red Book of Bristol" was probably produced in Bristol, and so on. Such books may or may not include a contemporary incipit or heading stating the office or institution to which it belongs; however, their historical context is in general well known, and they often take pride of place in archive collections. This category includes codices such as bishops' registers, town cartularies and registers, memoranda books, prior's books and, at a less illustrious level, account books belonging to specific, geographically situated, institutions such as parishes or guilds. Altogether, approximately a fifth of the MELD texts (*c*. 370 texts) belong to this category.

As noted in Chapter 3 (see p. 65), registers most commonly contain copies of original documents rather than the original documents themselves. This makes the localization of the texts somewhat more complicated than in the case of original documents or drafts: the question becomes which of the two localizations is the most relevant one: that of the original or that of the copy?

As far as the language of the texts is concerned, scribal practices vary greatly and unpredictably in the extent to which they reproduce the forms of the exemplar.[6] The scribe of the mid-fifteenth-century English texts in the Beverley Town Cartulary, presumably the Town Clerk, produced highly variable language which clearly reflects either the usage of his exemplars or his sense of appropriateness, or both (cf. Schipor 2013: 66–67). A local commission for the cleaning of the river abounds in northern forms:

(4.6) al the same p*ar*ties **ar** accordid & condiscendid that the same Joh*n* Gargrave **sal gar make** & finisch a payre of Clowys sufficient at the hy **brig** of Beu*er*lay Bek […] be the fest of the Natiuite of saynt John Baptist nest **comand** aftir date of this indent*ur*e (ERY L1257#3)
'all these parties are accorded and agreed that the same John Gargrave shall cause to be made and completed a pair of suitable floodgates at the high bridge of Beverley Beck […] by the Feast of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist next following after the date of this indenture'

6. Cf. footnote 1.

In contrast, his copies of a correspondence between Richard, Duke of York and King Henry VI, clearly copied because of their potential relevance to the city but with no direct connection to it, contain few northern forms:

(4.7) Plese it to your highnesse tendirly to consider that grete gruchyng & murmur' is vniuersaly in this your Reavme of that . Justice is not deuly ministred […] enspecial of them that been endited of treson' & othir' beyng opynly noysed of the same […] Wher'fore J […] consaile & aduertise your excellence […] so to ordeyne & prouide that deu iustice be had […] And for the hasty execucion' hereof like it your hynesse to addresse your letres of preuey seal & writtes to your officers & mínístres to do take & areste all suche persones (ERY L1257, fol. 35v.)
'Please it your highness to consider that there is great complaint and murmur everywhere in your realm of that justice is not ministered as it should be […] especially to those who are accused of treason and others openly suspected of the same […] wherefor I […] counsel and advise your excellence […] to ordain and provide so that due justice be had […] And for the speedy execution of this, may it please your highness to address your letters of Privy Seal and writs to your officers and ministers to let take and arrest all such persons'

Corresponding to the northern forms in Example (4.6), the letter shows *been* 'are', *do take & areste* 'cause to be taken and arrested' and *beyng*, followed by *makyng, sayeng, com<u>m</u>yng* 'making, saying, coming' (fol. 36r). There is also a regular distinction between the use of *whilk* 'which' and *mekil* 'much' in several local Beverley texts in the cartulary and *which, moche* in all the non-local ones (see Schipor 2013: 64–65).

On the other hand, the English texts produced in the Register of Bishop Thomas Spofford of Hereford (1421–48), himself of a northern origin, are written with a consistent sprinkling of northern forms, irrespective of the origins of the texts themselves; examples here are a chastity vow by a local woman (4.8) and a letter from the bishop to the abbess and convent of Acornbury (4.9):

(4.8) I Isabel Russell now laate wyfe of John Russell esquyer whose saule god assoile / of my free wylle and gude deliberacyo*n*n vow and *pro*mittys til oure lord (Herefs D0744#4)
'I, Isabel Russell, now the widow of John Russell, esquire, whose soul God may save, of my free will and good consideration vow and promise to our Lord'

(4.9) And who so thus by Symony enters in-to ony religion or benefice the lawe wille and ordaneth that al such p*er*sons suld by the ordinary be p*ri*ued and expellyd […] and be t*ra*nslat in-to ane othir monastery (Herefs D0744#5)
'And as for anyone who enters into an order or benefice by simony, the law ordains that all such persons should be deprived and expelled by the ordinary, and moved to another monastery'

In (4.8), northern forms include *saule, gude, til* and perhaps *laate;* there is also an interesting example of the "Northern Subject Rule" pattern in *vow and promittys*, even though the pronoun subject is not adjacent to *vow*.[7] In (4.9), there are the forms *suld* and *ane* 'one', as well as the *-s* third-person singular ending in *enters* (but cf. *ordaneth*). Spofford had clearly brought with him his own clerk, whose written English was still remarkably northern after sixteen years in Hereford; bearing in mind that episcopal administration was overwhelmingly carried out in Latin, this is perhaps not surprising.

On the basis of its language, Example (4.6) would presumably have been accepted as local dialect in LALME, while (4.7) might have been classified as "colourless" and both (4.8) and (4.9) as *Mischsprachen*. For the present purpose, however, the criteria for inclusion and localization must be based on non-linguistic grounds: the question is, therefore, what kind of geographical connections the texts might represent.

In all four cases, the physical texts were produced by a clerk at a historically well-defined location: Beverley in the case of (4.6) and (4.7) and Hereford in the case of (4.8) and (4.9). At least three of the texts represent copies of original letters or instruments, while one (4.8) may have been copied from a draft or script used for oral delivery. As was noted in Chapter 3, register copies have a different function from the originals and may be visually embedded in a long "register text" rather than defined as individual texts (see p. 66). This change of function, as well as the undisputed geographical location of the register copies, would suggest that all these texts should form part of the material for Beverley and Hereford respectively. They certainly all form part of the written output produced at these places, and therefore clearly have a claim to be included in the corpus.

On the other hand, the fact that (4.7) was composed by another writer at a different place makes it different from the others. While the physical copy in the Town Cartulary was produced at Beverley, the content, wording and possibly a substantial part of the linguistic form represent a text produced somewhere else, for a different purpose. Accordingly, the text has a dual connection to geography (as well as to time): that of the register copy and that of the original. Such dual-connection texts are clearly geographically situated, but they are much more

7. For a detailed discussion of the Northern Subject Rule and its adjacency condition, see de Haas (2011: 14, 116 and *passim*)

complex with regard to localization than the others: while they may be of considerable interest linguistically, and clearly form part of the local text production, they are not directly comparable either to the texts composed at the register locality, or to texts from their original locality, and should be treated as a group of their own. The present version of MELD does not include such dual-connection register texts, although they may be added at a later stage; the text sampled in (4.7) has therefore been excluded for the time being, while the other three represent fully local text production and have been included.[8]

4.3.4 Inferred localizations: People and places

A large proportion of the surviving documents do not contain an explicit localizing clause, nor do they belong to a historically situated codex or survey a specific place. Many of them may, however, still be localized on the basis of non-linguistic evidence. Most commonly, such evidence consists of place-names and the names of parties and witnesses. Less commonly, texts may be localized on the basis of other documents, sometimes physically attached, which relate to the same transaction or event and provide evidence of location. The hand of the scribe, if found to be identical with that of other already localized documents, may also serve as evidence of localization. Approximately half the texts in MELD 2017.1 (c. 960 texts out of 2,017) are localized using these kinds of evidence; such localizations are here referred to as "inferred".

Inferred localizations reflect a very different kind of relationship to geography from that of localizing clauses or historically situated texts. For the most part, they refer to places of residence: not usually of the scribes themselves but of the parties involved in the document, often definable as the scribe's "sponsors of literacy" (Brandt 1998, 2002; cf. also p. 55). The document may have been produced at such a residence – especially when it also represents a major institution, such as a large priory or college – but it might also have been produced elsewhere.

Some inferences are more certain and precise than others. For example, a 1517 lease conveys an acre of land from the churchwardens of Wooburn, Bucks. to William Manfeld, a fuller "of the same town"; the land is described as *one acr' of lond arrabille lyyng' ther' in one Feld Called Taynterfeld as merkys & boundes of olde tyme schewe & extend* 'an acre of arable land lying there in a field called Taynterfeld, as marks and bounds of old time show and extend' (Bucks D5001).

8. The criterion of inclusion here is the same as that for other texts with dual connections (see 3.4 below); that is, the two locations should not be more than seven kilometres apart. It should be noted that the duality of register copies pertains to their date as well: copies of substantially earlier texts have therefore not been included.

This document may confidently be localized in Wooburn. Other documents may concern parties from different places and involve land holdings at yet another location; in such cases, there have to be specific grounds to assign the text to one location rather than another. For example, in the compilation of MELD it has generally been assumed that an agreement between a powerful institution (such as Durham Priory or King's College) and an individual landholder of low rank may be assumed to have been drawn up by representatives of the institution and may fairly safely be placed at its location.

It is often possible to localize a text with a high degree of certainty within an area, such as a cluster of villages, all of which are named in the document, but not to be able to pinpoint it any further. This is particularly common in the case of conveyances that involve two or more parties. Precisely where one draws the line of texts being "localizable" will depend on the purpose: for the MELD project, a distance of seven kilometers was agreed upon as the maximum distance between two points that could make up a single localization.

Some documents cannot be safely pinned down to even such an approximate location. A document may involve people or places from different towns or counties, as is often the case with marriage articles and awards for dispute cases. In many cases, such documents can still be confidently located to a part of the country, but there is no specific point on the map where they could be localized. Such texts have not been included in the present version of MELD; however, there is no reason why they could not form part of a geographically ordered corpus as long as the imprecision of their localization is taken into account in the analysis.

4.4 Mapping the localizations

Geographical patterns of any kind are generally shown in the form of maps. Maps provide a powerful means of visualizing geographical patterns, and are often the only way of making sense of spatial relationships. At the same time, producing maps is problematic in ways that go far beyond the technological challenges.

Maps (paper or digital) are inescapably two-dimensional, with several implications. For all maps, this means projecting a portion of a curved earth onto a flat surface, meaning that some parts of the map will be stretched or compressed. For historical dialect maps, two-dimensionality poses further challenges, as surviving materials are generally too scarce to allow for samples that are easy to map and directly comparable: texts may cluster into single locations, their localizations may vary in kind, precision and certainty, and they may represent a substantial period of time. Maps based on such materials have to make choices about presenting the data that form a substantial part of the analysis itself.

In Section 4.3, three main kinds of geographical connection relevant to late medieval local documents were distinguished: explicit, historical and inferred. These connections are not mutually exclusive: the same text may be localized on the basis of two or even three kinds of connection if the information is available. This means that, as there are different kinds of geographical connection, there are also different possible dialect maps, depending on the kind of connection being mapped. Since many of the explicitly localized texts may also be localizable on the basis of people and places, the same document may appear in different places on the different maps. This crucial point is, of course, basically the same as that discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 with reference to the more abstract, multidimensional text universe: the position of a text depends on which factors are included in the categorization.

For the most part, the "explicit" category is the most suitable one for mapping, as the locations are generally unambiguous and reasonably precise; however, as noted in 4.3.2, this localization type is not necessarily the most useful one for the category "correspondence". Figure 4.1 shows all the explicit localizations (not including the category "correspondence") in the Eastern Counties part of MELD.[9] The map shows 68 texts (out of 571 in total), relating to 38 different locations. In order to achieve a denser coverage, it may make sense to combine the texts with "explicit" and "historical" localizations into a single map: both localizations are likely to refer to the actual place of production, even though the latter type does not include specific localizing clauses. Figure 4.2 shows a combination of explicit and historical localizations in the Eastern Counties, and includes 262 texts relating to 62 different locations.

We can also produce maps of those texts for which there are firm connections based on people and places (Figure 4.3). While the localizations shown here are limited to those MELD texts that were localized in this way only, such a map may also include texts which have localizing clauses; however, for this map, those texts would have to be localized on the basis of references to people and places. This might localize the text in a different place from that of the localizing clause. Neither localization is necessarily more "correct" than the other; they simply reflect different kinds of geographical connection and, accordingly, show different things.[10]

9. The Eastern Counties subcorpus was published in May 2017 as the first installation of the MELD corpus, and includes the following counties: Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Ely, Essex, Hertfordshire, Huntingtonshire, Middlesex, Norfolk, Northamptonshire and Suffolk.

10. One example of such a text is Derbys L0084, which records the transfer of Bradshaw manor from Will Bradesha of Bradesha to his son Hare Bradesha, but is given at Chapel-en-le-Frith, some 50 km to the southeast of Bradshaw.

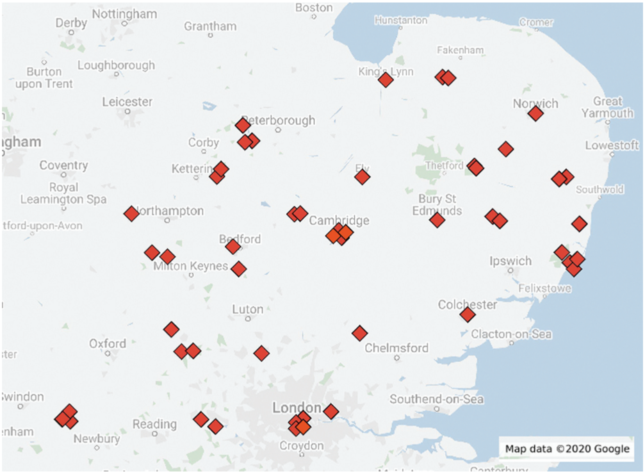

Figure 4.1 Explicit localizations in the Eastern Counties of MELD (not including the Correspondence category)

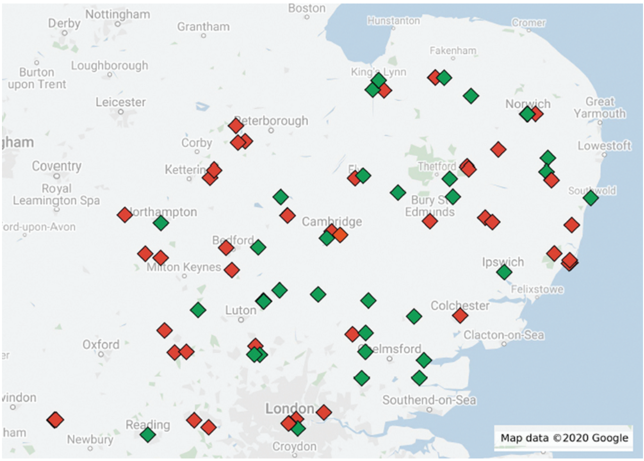

Figure 4.2 Explicit (red) and historical (green) localizations in the Eastern Counties of MELD

Dot maps such as these can only include informants that are fairly precisely localized. Unless indicated otherwise, in the maps produced for MELD, the explicit and historical localizations cluster around the centre of the given town or village, while inferred localizations may have a total margin of error of at most 3.5 km. However, as was noted in Section 3.4, not all texts may be localized at such a precision. In order to deal with such texts, a more general geographical categorization has to be used: this could make use of county boundaries or of a grid of squares, using different shades indicating proportions of a variable, or it could simply entail

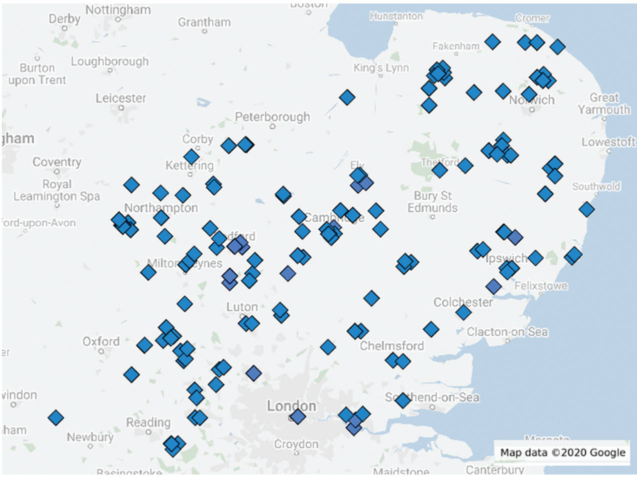

Figure 4.3 Inferred localizations in the Eastern Counties of MELD

dividing the material into geographical subcorpora and presenting the findings in a diagram or table rather than on a map (see Chapter 5).

Ideally, maps should be based on a single type of localization. However, in many cases it will be desirable to include different kinds of localization on a single map: doing this will give an overview of the entire corpus, and, when the overall number of texts is scarce, it may help bring out patterns in the data. In such cases, the different types of localization might be marked, or their mixedness should be made explicit; each individual text should, of course, only appear once on the map.

Map 4.4 shows all the texts of the Eastern Counties on the same map, using explicit or historical localizations when available and including a total of 571 texts at 154 locations. It may be noted that the number of texts per location varies considerably. Nineteen places have more than five localized texts, with Cambridge and London showing by far the greatest numbers (see Table 4.1); conversely, 98 locations show one text only.

The clustering of texts in particular places may at times simply reflect the compilation process, but may also show real patterns of production and/or survival. The Weasenham materials derive from the large and well-preserved family archive of the Coke family of Weasenham, held at the Cambridge University Library, and the Hitchin documents consist of accounts and receipts from a large building project commissioned by King's College, Cambridge ("the Biggin"). Elsewhere in the country, the town records of Bridgwater in Somerset contain a large number of surviving early English documents (19 texts in MELD 2017.1) and a considerable number of conveyances, held at several northern archives, contain localizing clauses placing them in Penrith, Cumbria (18 texts in MELD 2017.1). Sometimes such clustering seems to reflect differences in code selection, scribes switching to

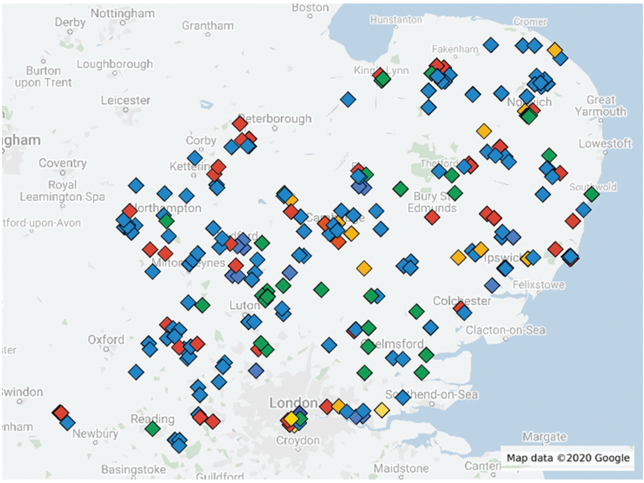

Figure 4.4 All localizations in the Eastern Counties of MELD: Explicit (red), historical (green), inferred (blue) and Correspondence texts (yellow)

Table 4.1 Locations in the Eastern Counties of MELD with five or more localized texts

Location	Number of texts
Cambridge	130
City of London	78
Reading	30
Weasenham	20
Hitchin	14
Grantchester	13
Norwich	13
King's Lynn	10
St Albans	10
Bungay	9
Coltishall	9
Northampton	7
Bardwell	6
Everdon	6
Bedford	5
Lambourn	5
Maldon	5
Northall	5
Orford	5

English in some places earlier than in others; however, as for historical texts in general, it is often impossible to tell whether the distribution reflects differences in the quantity of texts originally produced or simply different survival rates.

Perhaps the most important point to note, however, is the considerable spread of locations, both with regard to connections to people and places and to the actual physical provenances. The same is true of the entire MELD map: the texts in MELD 2017.1 are produced in 395 stated or historically defined locations overall, while at least a further 367 locations are established on the basis of people and places. Despite the sometimes uneven numbers of texts per location, the distribution shows beyond doubt that vernacular pragmatic literacy in late medieval England was not concentrated in a limited number of centres: texts were produced everywhere, and they concerned people and places all over the country.[11] This distribution is in itself of considerable importance for our interpretation of the linguistic patterns found: in Chapter 5, it is suggested that it has important implications for our assumptions about the development of written English.

4.5 Discussion

The traditional assumption behind historical dialectology was that the linguistic forms of the past were distributed in a geographical pattern – whether forming discrete "dialect areas" or a continuum – which it was the dialectologist's task to reconstruct. This chapter has presented an alternative approach, which takes the historical and geographical context of the texts themselves as a starting point. As the geographical connections of speakers and texts may be highly complex, it assumes that maps will change according to the connections considered.

Once we start producing dialect maps based on the localization principles outlined in this chapter, the question is what kind of dialectal patterns might emerge. First of all, there is the question to what extent administrative documents may be expected to show geographical variation at all. The LALME Introduction suggests that "the very fact of earlier standardization" made documents from the southern half of England, almost from the beginning, "less useful as evidence of regional

11. It should be noted that 14 of the texts are localized in Wales; however, as this material is clearly insufficient for generalizations, this statement can only be made about England. The geographical and social patterns of English texts in Wales may be expected to differ considerably from those in England.

dialect" (LALME I: 3), and few southern documents have, indeed, been accepted as mapped sources in LALME.[12]

Secondly, there is the undoubted fact that scribes travelled, and we cannot assume that all texts from a particular place were produced by scribes native to or even resident in that place; this is particularly relevant for large cities with immigrant populations. Considering both mobility and beginning supralocalization, one might expect that a dialect map which includes all the noise excluded from LALME might show very diluted geographical patterns, if any at all.

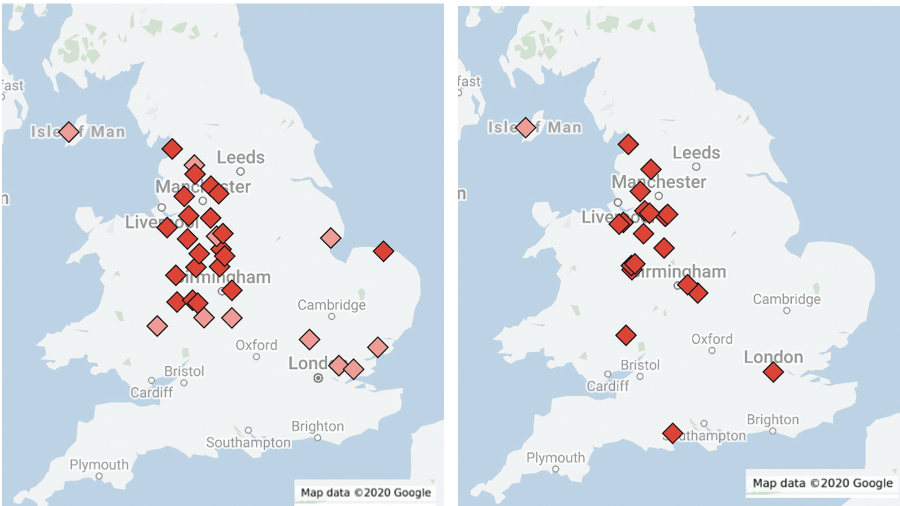

Figure 4.5 The distribution of <o> spellings of MAN in MEG-C and MELD (fifteenth century)

This does not, however, appear to be the case. Figure 4.5 shows the distribution of <o> spellings in the lexical item MAN in the Middle English Grammar Corpus (MEG-C), which consists of texts localized in LALME (see p. 104), and the MELD corpus respectively. In order to be chronologically compatible, both maps include texts from the fifteenth century only. It is clear from a comparison of the maps that the distribution in MELD is no more garbled or chaotic than the MEGC one. Both maps show a clear main distribution pattern with some outliers. The literary material in the MEGC corpus shows several outliers where <o> appears as a minority spelling (the pale diamonds); this is to be expected in texts that may have been copied from other dialects and show relict usage (for the concept of relict, see Benskin & Laing 1981: 58).

12. The idea of the early standardization of documentary texts is discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

The MELD map, on the other hand, shows only two outliers: one in London (as might be expected) and one in Dorset. The Dorset text is a financial account from Wimborne Minster (Dorset D4298), which contains several linguistic forms that might seem to suggest a Northwest Midland dialect rather than a southern one: so *qwen* 'when', *hor* 'their' and *payt* 'paid' as well as *mon* 'man'. This text quite clearly stands out linguistically in its context, just like it stands out on the *mon* map: it does not disappear into a general chaos.

The Cambridgeshire material studied by Bergstrøm (2017) provides a similar example, which stands out even more because of the large number of texts studied. The ordinance of the Guild of All Saints in Cambridge (Cambs D6014) contains a number of regular features not found in other Cambridge texts, including a full set of *th-* forms in the third person plural pronoun (*they, thar, thame*) and regular *q*-spellings for initial *wh* (*qwhan* 'when', *qwho* 'who', etc.). Bergstrøm's material, which had a somewhat longer timespan than that of MELD (stretching to 1547) consisted of 169 documentary texts; among these, the All Saints text was the only one that stood out linguistically.[13]

These two examples suggest that, even with the mobility of scribes, localizations based on non-linguistic evidence do not present a chaotic picture: rather, they provide evidence of connections and movements that are absent from a map based on a dialect reconstruction. Given that *most* people in virtually any historical period will not tend to move very far from their origins (see e.g. Cavalli-Sforza 2001: 53–54), the majority of the scribes working in a given area at a given time are likely to have had a local background (unless we have good reason to think otherwise); the largest cities, to which migration was considerable, may to some extent form an exception. In other words, as long as we have enough material, local patterns will show through the general variation.

Equally importantly, however, it should be noted that whatever forms were produced by scribes who were *not* local also form a part of the linguistic reality of that place and time. Judging from the dialectal forms, the scribe of the All Saints ordinance might have been a Norfolk scribe working in Cambridge. However, as the text was an authoritative one and came to be used, and added to, by the Cambridge guild for a period of several decades (cf Bergstrøm 2017: 192; cf. also Bergstrøm 2013: 12–13, 19–20), it clearly has to be included as part of "Cambridge language": it formed part of the overall flow of language produced in Cambridge during the fifteenth century and presumably contributed to its development as much as any single text produced by a local scribe.

13. Bergstrøm (2017: 193) localized the dialect, using the LALME framework, in South Lincolnshire or North Norfolk.

4.6 Conclusions

The argument of this chapter has been that geography as a variable of linguistic variation is much more complex and dynamic than suggested by the traditional idea of localization. Linguistic forms are produced by speakers and writers in places that are neither random nor irrelevant: most speakers will for the most part stay within a fairly restricted geographical range, and when they move, their language use becomes part of the overall language use of the new place and contributes to its further history. Conversely, the language history of each place is made up of the linguistic forms actually produced there, or by and for people living there, irrespective of the individual backgrounds of the speakers or writers.

From this point of view, the question of the "real dialect" of a given location is meaningless. This does not mean that we should ignore the importance of traditional, long-term, geographical patterns; however, it is suggested here that such patterns may be searched for in the actual, historically contextualized data, rather than being used as an organizing principle to reproduce the dialect patterns we expect. From such a point of view, we can study geographical variation in Middle English at least with regard to the following kinds of source material:

- written language said to be actually produced at a given place at a given time
- written language found in a text connected with a specific place
- written language found in a text connected with people connected with specific places
- written language found in a text connected to an institution with a geographical location or focus

Instead of a single connection between linguistic form and location, the different kinds of geographical connection become parameters in their own right. Geography is interconnected with all other variables: as with present-day variation, Middle English texts form part of a multidimensional text universe in which the various geographical connections only make up part of the network of parameters that are relevant for understanding their linguistic variation. Most obviously, the geographical location of a text always relates to a specific point in time.

Geographical variation should, accordingly, be studied from different directions and at different resolutions. The study of all texts produced in a given place will allow for a close study of that particular community, the sponsors, active writers, social networks, and so on. The study of materials connected to a particular area or institution over time makes possible the study of change in writing conventions, including supralocalizing changes, while the distribution of variants of particular items over the entire geographical range allows for an overview of large-scale patterns. The chapters in Part II will address some of these different directions of geographical study.

PART II

Text communities and geographical variation

CHAPTER 5

Regional variation and supralocalization in late medieval English

Comparing administrative and literary texts

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5.1 Introduction

In the LALME Introduction, it is stated that documentary texts from the southern part of the country are largely "standardized" by the mid-fifteenth century, and therefore do not provide useful evidence for the study of dialectal variation (LALME I: 3). At the same time, even a cursory look at fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century local administrative texts, such as those contained in MELD, reveals a considerable amount of variation with regard to spelling, morphology, syntax and lexis, even in formulaic phrases; this may be illustrated by comparing six versions of an opening formula found in southern leases from this period:

(5.1)
- Þis endenture wytenesseth that […] hath granted and lete to ferme (Beds D4226, 1451)
- Þise indenture […] beres witnes that […] hath dimised and latten to ferme (Essex D2682, 1459)
- Þis enden*tur* […] witnessith that […] haue g*ra*unted and to Ferme haue letyn (Gloucs D2710a, 1481)
- thys bill indented […] witnesseth that […] hath g*ra*unted and to ferme hath lete (Kent D2910, 1486)
- Þys indentur wytnessyt that […] have let to ferme (Suffolk D3018, 1492)
- Þes Jndenters […] beryth wytnes y^t […] hathe g*ra*untyd and letyn to Ferm (Suffolk D3027, 1502)

Þis English formula renders the Latin *Hec indentura testatur quod […] ad firmam dimisit* 'this indenture witnesses that X has let to farm'. Þe six documents show considerable differences at all levels: purely orthographic (*witnesseth* vs *wytenesseth*), relating to phonology (*letyn* vs *latten*), morphological (*beres* vs *beryth*),

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syntactic (*lete to ferme* vs *to Ferme […] letyn*) and lexical (*endenture* vs *bill indented*). This variation may be considered representative for English documentary writing in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries (see also Example (3.8), p. 60–61, and Stenroos (2020: 54). Clearly, if we are dealing with "standardization" in this material, the concept must be defined differently from the ways in which, for example, present-day Standard English is usually described.

The compilers of LALME had looked at thousands of late medieval English documentary texts, as evidenced by the extensive lists of local documents in the LALME Index of Sources; clearly, they had grounds for describing the language of the southern documents as "standardized" despite the variation. Standardization is not a precisely defined concept, and scholarly views on the dating of the standardization of written English vary widely, from tracing its beginnings to the fourteenth century (Schaefer 2006: *passim*) to placing it firmly in the eighteenth (Beal 2010: 21): clearly, what constitutes standardization depends to a large extent on one's viewpoint, and on the type of materials and linguistic features studied.

For the LALME compilers, "standardization" would not preclude a considerable amount of variation. It is, however, specifically contrasted with "regional diversity" and described as the loss of written dialects:

> The dialects of the spoken language did not die out, but those of the written language did; and although there are some late survivals, they are no sufficient basis for a dialect atlas. (LALME I: 3)

The purpose of this chapter is to enquire into how far the LALME characterisation of fifteenth-century documents is true of the MELD materials, and to assess, in a preliminary way, how they compare in terms of linguistic variation to other materials from the same period. As explained in Chapter 4, the MELD corpus was compiled following very different principles from those of LALME: most importantly, all the texts were localized on non-linguistic grounds, and included without consideration of their linguistic characteristics. In addition, by far most texts in the corpus are later than the often presumed onset of standardization, placed by Samuels (1963: 71) in the 1430s. Assuming that most administrative documents at least from the southern part of the country were, as LALME suggests, standardized by the mid-fifteenth century, one might expect the corpus to show few clear geographical patterns.

Most accounts of standardization, in particular those suggesting a fifteenth-century date, have identified administrative writing as the domain that "leads" the process; on the other hand, it is generally accepted that handwritten texts (as most types of documentary texts continued to be until the invention of the typewriter) were standardized much later than printed ones (see e.g. Görlach 1991: 46; Smith 1996: 76; Sönmez 2000: 407), and it is not always necessarily clear to what extent this only refers to "private" handwriting.

The term “standardization” is, on the whole, a highly problematic one, and means different things to different scholars. At the same time, it is difficult to ignore, precisely because it has played such a large role in discussions of fifteenth-century English and still dominates the descriptions of this period in many textbooks of the history of English. The first question to be adressed in this chapter is, therefore, what the “standardization” of documentary texts in the fifteenth century has been assumed to imply; the remainder of the chapter will enquire into the extent to which such implications are justified with regard to the local documents in MELD. The questions to be addressed are to what extent late medieval local documents still show geographically conditioned variation, and how they compare to non-documentary writing in terms of supralocalizing tendencies.

5.2 The idea of a fifteenth-century standard

The best-known description of standardization is that by Haugen (1966), who defines it as “minimal variation in form” and “maximal variation in function”, achieved through processes that he refers to as “codification” and “elaboration of function” respectively. There has been a widespread idea that written English was standardized from the fifteenth century, and that this standardization process began in government documents and then spread through administrative writing throughout the country. Some textbook writers of the history of English describe the development of English in this period as though Haugen’s processes had already been completed (see e.g. Görlach 1999: 459–60). However, no evidence for actual codification exists until a much later period, and the ideas of “minimal” and “maximal” variation clearly presuppose a continuum rather than absolute states.

The time of the most spectacular formal variation in written English was undoubtedly the Early Middle English period, from the late twelfth to the early fourteenth century (see Lass & Laing 2013–). From the mid-fourteenth century, the overall variability was gradually reduced, while still remaining considerable. Some scholars have accordingly seen the fourteenth century as the starting point of a gradual process of standardization (cf. Schaefer 2006: *passim*): here “standardization” may simply be taken to refer to a reduction in variation.

The textbook narrative of the fifteenth-century standardization of English is above all based on Samuels (1963). In this classic article, which was reprinted with some revisions in 1989, Samuels identified four “incipient standards” which he called Types I-IV. The successful standard, Type IV, emanated from the offices of central administration in Westminster from the late 1430s, as a direct result of the adoption of English as the official written language of the government offices:

> Type IV (which I shall call "Chancery Standard") consists of that flood of government documents that starts in the years following 1430. Its differences from the language of Chaucer are well known, and it is this type, not its predecessors in London English, that is the predecessor of modern written English […] it was […] adopted by the government offices for regular written use; from then on, it was backed by the full weight of the administrative machine(Samuels 1963[1989: 71])

This account of standardization was developed further by Fisher (1977, 1979, 1992, 1996), who introduced the idea of fifteenth-century standardization as an active government policy with a nationalistic basis. Fisher's narrative has been followed by numerous textbooks; his interpretation of the idea of "Chancery Standard" is, however, no longer generally accepted and was subjected to a thorough criticism in Benskin (2004).

Samuels (1963) described the linguistic aspect of standardization as the increasing adherence to a model variety that could be identified using a list of orthographic forms. He identified the following list of "Chancery Standard" markers: *gaf* GAVE, *not, but, such(e), thes(e), shulde;* in addition, he included a large range of forms of THEIR including *her* but not *hir* and, it seems, any form of THROUGH suggesting a disyllabic pronunciation. The early process of standardization would, then, consist of the increasingly frequent co-occurrence of these forms as part of an otherwise (unavoidably) vaguely defined but presumably increasingly homogeneous "London" or "Midland" type usage.[1]

The development of a "Chancery Standard" as the official written language of government offices has later been shown to be untenable. Both Benskin (2004) and Dodd (2011a, 2011b, 2012) have pointed out that the language of Chancery documents continued to be mainly Latin until the eighteenth century; the "flood" of documents in English that starts in the 1430s would seem to refer to the shift from French to English in petitions to the Crown that has been described by Dodd (2011a). While fairly dramatic, this shift did not represent the usage of Chancery itself, nor was it sustained (see Dodd 2011a: 119; 2012: 262 and *passim*). Even though other government offices adopted English for some of their output in the fifteenth century, there seems to be no indication of the kind of enforcement of a standardized model envisaged by Fisher; rather, the written English produced, whether at Chancery or elsewhere, was highly variable and reflected the geographical background of the clerks, or of the writers of their exemplars (Benskin 2004: 31–33).

1. Wright (1996) provides a discussion of the background and various interpretations of the idea of a "Midland" basis of the standard, going back to Ekwall's (1951, 1956) suggestions about immigration patterns to London. In a new study (Wright 2020) she traces this idea well beyond Ekwall and back to the nineteenth century.

The fifteenth century, accordingly, saw no sudden shift to English as *the* written language of government documents. On the other hand, the century certainly saw the establishment of English as a written administrative language, both in Westminster and elsewhere, beside Latin and increasingly replacing French. One might then ask to what extent this new function of English discouraged regional variation, and to what extent it makes sense to assume the spread of a London "standard". Benskin (1989, 1992) accepted the general idea of a London-based standard but shifts the actual *locus* of standardization to "the provinces", where London-derived forms were adopted by local clerks:

> It is […] in its adoption as a second-learned competence that the language of the capital qualifies as a national standard at all: the displacement of local conventions is not an epiphenomenon, but standardization itself. Without attention to provincial usage, "the rise of standard English" simply cannot be understood, and it is above all in administrative and legal writings that the early standard appears (Benskin 1992: 75)

Benskin envisaged the dispersal of London forms above all as the result of legal training in London: lawyers trained at Westminster, at the Inns of Court and Inns of Chancery, would take a Westminster house style with them when they returned (Benskin 1989: 20–21). The change would take place gradually and include the development of "regional standards" in which local variation had been suppressed in the favour of supralocal forms (Benskin 1992: 82–84).

The compilers of LALME differentiated between "standardized" and "colourless" language: while colourless language would simply result from contact – a "purging" of "grosser provincialisms" in Samuels' (1963: 93) memorable phrase – standardization presumes the adoption of an external norm: "a second-learned *Gemeinsprache* as opposed to a *Muttersprache*" (Benskin 1992: 75). As this presupposes the replacement of one well-defined entity with another, a very large number of texts is then defined as containing mixtures (see e.g. Samuels 1981[1988: 89–90]).

More recently, scholars have moved away from views of standardization that consider varieties as separate entities, including what Hope (2000) termed the SAD (single ancestor-dialect) hypothesis of standardization. Instead, the development of written English is seen as involving various processes of supralocalization that take place over time and geography (Nevalainen & Brunberg 2003: 160–61; see also Wright 2000a). Such studies do not treat "local dialect" and "learnt *Gemeinsprache*" as separate entities, but rather consider the changing proportions of linguistic forms and the contexts in which they appear. This approach is in line with developments in the study of dialectal variation in general: dealing with present-day English, Upton (2006: 386) and Kretzschmar (2009: 4–5, 66–69 and *passim*) have called for a focus on the varying distributions and proportions of actual forms rather than on attempts to identify "dialect types".

Such approaches have made it possible to arrive at more nuanced, and far more complex, views on the late- and post-medieval development of written English. Nevalainen & Brunberg (2003), in their ground-breaking study of the diachronic development of morphological and syntactic change in early modern correspondences, show convincingly that there is no single route of "standardization", at least with regard to these kinds of change:

> [S]upralocalizing features do not have any **single** path of transmission. This generalization supports our argument that it is individual linguistic features rather than fully-fledged varieties that get selected, accepted and diffused across the country. The people who do the selecting, accepting and diffusing may vary even with simultaneously spreading features. (Nevalainen & Brunberg 2003: 183)

Indeed, the term "standardization" makes little sense as a descriptive term with regard to this development: in the present context, its use will therefore be restricted to the discussion of scholarly and/or political views, while linguistic data will, as far as possible, be discussed using terms such as "supralocalization" and "innovation". These terms should be taken to refer, respectively, to linguistic forms that are no longer regionally marked and ones that develop or are adopted as new variants replacing earlier ones.

What happens, then, to the implications of the fifteenth-century "standardization" narrative? The appearance of English as one of the written languages of government is, certainly, an important milestone in the social history of the language; however, there does not seem to be any firm evidence of the development, let alone the institutional enforcement, of a specific model of "government English" during this period. On the other hand, the question remains whether the language of local administration might tend towards supralocalization to a greater or lesser degree than other types of written English. Are Late Middle English local documents, especially those from the southern half of the country, poor material for the study of regional variation, as was suggested in LALME, and do they differ in this respect from other kinds of material?

5.3 Variability and text production: Documentary and literary texts

The idea that the fifteenth century saw a dramatic loss of regional variation in written English has been discussed most fully by Benskin (1989, 1992, 2004); the description of this development in his important 1992 article is worth citing at length:

> At the close of the fourteenth century, the written language was local or regional dialect as a matter of course […] By the beginning of the sixteenth century, in contrast, local forms of written English had all but disappeared. Even from the periphery – from the far Northwest, from East Anglia, and from Ireland – texts in solidly local language are relatively very rare; for the most part, the conventions of a century before are reflected dimly if at all. English was still far from uniform by comparison with the written standard of the present day […] but in the written language of ca. 1500, local dialect had become very nearly a thing of the past.

In Benskin's discussion, as in LALME, the crucial development is not the reduction of variation as such, but the disappearance of "local dialect" from writing.

What, then, is meant by local dialect? Benskin refers to "the conventions of a century before", suggesting that we are dealing with a specific written tradition. The analysis for LALME was carried out using a questionnaire that was essentially developed on the basis of fourteenth-century variation, and many of the dialect markers were recessive by the fifteenth century, irrespective of "standardization". The main problem in tracing dialectal continuities (whether spoken or written) through time is that the salient markers change: some become obsolete while others lose their regional significance. On the other hand, if we are not focussing on specific "dialects" that need to be defined using specific markers, we could simply ask whether the variation that does appear in fact shows geographical patterning.

As noted above, it is generally accepted that handwritten texts remain variable longer than printed ones, the evidence for the former usually deriving from private writing, such as letters and diaries. Given the centralized nature of printing, and the immensely more widespread practice of handwriting, such a pattern is not surprising. Even before printing, however, there were considerable differences in practices of text production between different types of texts, some of which may be expected to play a significant role for the kinds of written variation present.

From this point of view, the main dividing line in the late- and post-medieval English text universe is between what we may call documentary and "literary" texts. Between them, these two categories may be considered to cover more or less all texts of any length.[2] Both categories – really supercategories – are so complex and include such a vast range of text types that one might question their validity as categories at all. However, they differ from each other in certain crucial aspects of use and production, and consequently provide very different kinds of evidence for linguistic study.

2. A third category, micro-texts (cf. Lenker & Kornexl 2019), may be distinguished. This category, which consists of very short texts, overlaps with both other categories but contains texts that cannot be defined as either, such as scribbles.

Documentary texts, as defined here, share the two major characteristics of a mainly pragmatic function and a connection with a specific historical context (see p. 11). Because documents relate to specific situations they are typically produced in just one or two fair copies. Accordingly, they most often survive to us as “originals”, or rather fair copies; even when they survive as archive copies, they have generally not been copied over more than once.

Documentary texts may be contrasted with “literary texts” in the broadest sense. This term, which is used in the LALME tradition, encompasses more or less all other texts of any length, including many more types of texts than those usually thought of as “literary”: medical works, cookbooks, chronicles and treatises as well as romances and sermons. What is common to such texts is that they do not relate to a specific situation but have a general application; for example, a medical recipe may be of interest to different people at different times, just like a poem may. Because of this general interest, literary texts are typically produced in multiple copies and dispersed in time and space, and most medieval literary texts survive to us in copies far removed from the original. We also generally have no explicit information about when and where the text was produced, either in terms of original composition or the physical text.

Documentary and literary texts were produced by largely different communities of scribes, even though we know of scribes who produced both. In London, the two groups had separated into different companies by the last quarter of the fourteenth century, known as “scriveners” and “stationers” respectively:

> What distinguished the writers of the court letter from the writers of the text letter were their individual areas of expertise: writers of the court letter specialised in a similar craft to those of notaries public as the writers of conveyances, letters and legal instruments, whereas the writers of the text letter specialised in the writing, binding and selling of books. The writers of the court letter became known as “scriveners” while the writers of the text letter became known as “stationers” […] there were times at which the work of one group overlapped the work of the other, for example in the copying (rather than composition) of statute books […] (Bevan 2013: 36)

A scrivener – the producer of documentary texts – would have at least some legal knowledge, and fulfilled a central role in the working of the increasingly document-based society of the late Middle Ages. Not all who drew up accounts or conveyances, or composed letters, had formal education (see Orme 2006: 73; cf. also Parkes 1973: 559), but they would need at least a rudimentary knowledge of document types. The scribe who copied literary texts and produced books, on the other hand, would not need legal or administrative competence, but would simply be skilled in writing and book production as a craft.

The different tasks would also entail different kinds of exposure to texts. The scrivener or clerk would encounter both Latin and English documents, and perhaps some French ones, but Latin would be the dominant language; the exemplars of the stationer, on the other hand, would reflect their location and patrons, and could involve texts of considerable length and varying age. All these differences had a potential impact on the development of written conventions.

As noted above, many scholars have explicitly connected standardization with the language of documentary texts, in particular administrative and legal ones (see e.g. Benskin (1989: 20–21, 1992: 75; Fisher 1977, 1979, 1996, Samuels 1963). A different view emerges in the work of Rissanen (1999, 2000). Rissanen carried out direct comparisons of the language of government documents and statutes with texts belonging to other domains, and concluded that "the statutes and documents cannot be regarded as texts establishing standard spelling" (Rissanen 1999: 194). He also pointed out the importance of considering several levels of language, rather than just spelling:

> The discussion has largely taken it for granted that the basis of standard English is the language of officialdom as evidenced by the documents produced in the Signet Office and the Chancery. The discussion has mainly concentrated on the decreasing variability in spelling. It is obvious, however, that if research on the development of the standard is extended from spelling to syntax and lexis, the picture becomes much more complex. Even in spelling, documentary and statutory texts do not necessarily represent the maximum degree of invariance […]
>
> (Rissanen 1999: 190)

Rissanen's study found that the legal and administrative texts in his corpus tended to contain less, rather than more, consistent spelling than the literary texts to which they were compared; they also tended to show more innovative syntactic usage. He concludes, guardedly, that these results "may indicate that many previous statements about the basis of the Southern English standard spelling are somewhat simplified" (Rissanen 1999: 201).

Later studies, focussed on orthography, have suggested that documentary texts may show some systematic differences from non-documentary texts. In Stenroos (2004: 276–279) it was shown that the proportion of <th> compared to <þ> was considerably larger in documentary texts in LALME than in non-documentary ones; later work by Jensen (2010: 374–75; 2012) showed the same pattern, as well as a similar difference between <sh> and <sch>, in Yorkshire West Riding materials transcribed for the Middle English Grammar Corpus (MEG-C). The same features were included in a comparison between MELD and MEG-C materials from the West Midland area in Stenroos & Thengs (2012) and, more fully, in Thengs (2013: 117–126). Both Thengs (2013: 339) and Bergstrøm (2017: 202) also note that guild ordinances tend to show linguistic and visual features more similar to literary texts than to other administrative documents.

All the studies so far have looked at very limited datasets, either in terms of geographical area or by focussing on one or two features only. With the completion of MELD, it is now possible to extend the study to the full geographical range, as well as including a larger range of features. The following sections present a preliminary study of a selection of features at different levels of language, comparing the documentary texts in MELD with literary texts of the same period.

5.4 The material and methodology

The most suitable point of comparison available for the local documents in MELD is the Middle English Grammar Corpus (MEG-C), which consists of transcriptions of samples of the texts mapped in LALME. The present comparison is based on MEG-C 2014.1, a version that contains 481 texts (765,243 words). As MEG-C contains both literary and documentary texts, and some of the documentary texts appear in both corpora, the comparison is restricted to the "literary" – that is, non-documentary – texts in MEG-C. In addition, for the purpose of this study, all epistolary texts in both corpora were left out of the comparison. This was done in order to make the comparison more clear-cut: while letters clearly fall within the category of documentary texts, they represent a wide range of domains and contexts, including private writing. Leaving them out allows for a straightforward comparison between administrative writing and literary texts, the realms of scriveners and stationers respectively.

The two corpora are largely straightforward to compare, as they were produced by the same team in the same format. Both corpora consist of texts that have been transcribed directly from manuscript or photographic image, using the same transcription conventions.[3] However, several points need to be considered when carrying out the comparison.

First, as the MEG-C corpus is based on the localizations in LALME, the literary texts were originally selected on the basis of their dialectal features and localized using the fit technique (see p. 72–74); one might therefore expect them to show strongly regional usage as a rule. On the other hand, as the MELD texts were

3. Some minor refinement of transcription conventions has taken place during the compilation of MELD. The most important is recording the cross bar over 'b', 'h' 'l' and 'll', not distinguished in MEG-C; in addition, tags have been introduced for various symbols and other visual features typical of documentary texts and not affecting the verbal content, such as the sign indicating a following numeral.

not selected on linguistic grounds, they might be expected to include much noise that was removed in LALME, including the "colourless" and "standard" language commonly referred to in the LALME lists of unmapped documents. Accordingly, one might expect the MELD material to show fewer regional forms purely as a result of the compilation principles.[4]

Secondly, the comparison has to take geography into account, both in order to ascertain that the samples are comparable and to address the question of geographical variation in MELD. At the same time, bearing in mind the relatively small size of the corpora, the samples compared should be large enough to allow for probability testing of at least some of the data. The geographical division adopted here will therefore, as a starting point, make use of a basic division into northern, western and eastern areas that has been used as a working division in the compilation and use of the MEG-C and MELD corpora over the years (see Figure 5.1); geographical distributions of specific forms may then be shown on maps.[5]

Finally, the two corpora cover partly different periods, and the parts that do not overlap should be removed from the direct comparison. This means leaving out the sixteenth-century material from MELD and the fourteenth-century material from MEG-C, ending up with the fifteenth century only. Even so, it turns out that the literary material contains so few texts that can be reasonably reliably dated to the second half of the century, that the direct comparison in practice needs to focus on the first half of the fifteenth century, ending up with a subcorpus of 210,974 words for MEG-C (73 texts) and 151,555 words (308 texts) for MELD (see Table 5.1). It may be noted that, while the MELD subcorpus is smaller in terms of words, it contains more than four times as many texts, reflecting the fact that the documentary texts are typically short.

The next step is to identify the items to be compared. There are certain basic requirements: the items should occur frequently in all or most types of text in the corpora, and they should show variation. As the enquiry aims at a general overview, it would also be desirable to cover different levels of written language, including spelling, morphology and lexis. As regards spelling, the data should include both features that might be assumed to map onto spoken variation (such

4. To compare like with like, one should ideally compare the MELD material with a randomly picked corpus of literary texts – ones that have not been picked on the basis of dialect. However, as far as we are aware, no such corpus, that would both provide a wide range of text types and follow comparable transcription conventions, is readily available.

5. While it is possible to compare dot maps based on LALME and MELD localizations respectively (as was done in Stenroos & Thengs, 2012) a slightly lower resolution – showing proportions per county – is preferred here in order to avoid the impression that the localizations are strictly comparable.

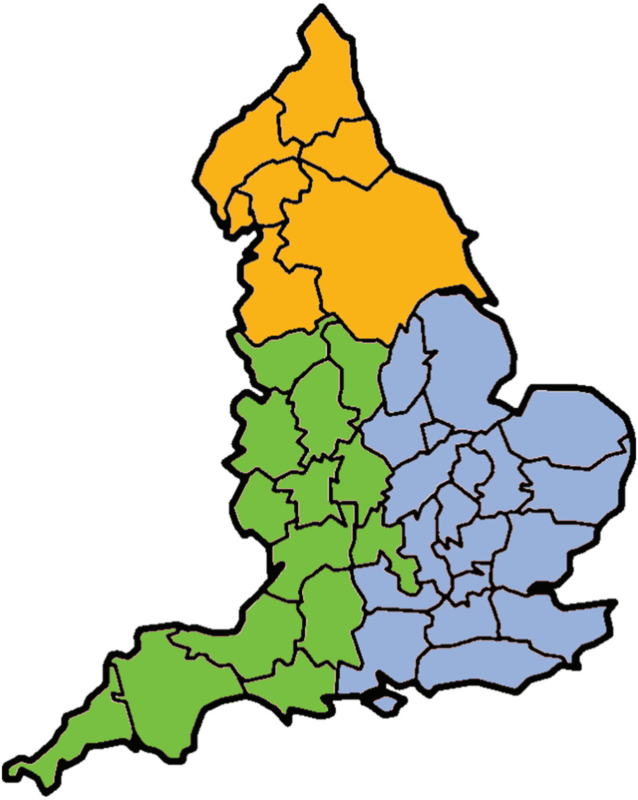


Figure 5.1 The northern, western and eastern areas

Table 5.1 Geographical division into six subcorpora

	MEG-C		MELD	
	Texts	Words	Texts	Words
Northern	15	41,310	114	47,978
Western	29	85,470	96	47,887
Eastern	29	84,194	98	55,690
	73	**210,974**	**308**	**151,555**

as *land* vs *lond*) and purely orthographic features (such as *shal* vs *schall*); these categories were termed "S-features" and "W-features" respectively by McIntosh (1974: 603). On the other hand, the items should not include ones that might be expected to show variation conditioned by text type: for example, legal vocabulary or the choice of syntactic structures. While interesting, such differences reflect genre-specific language rather than standardization or supralocalization as such (cf. Thengs 2015).

On these grounds, the following twelve items were selected for comparison:

ANY, ARE, CALLED, GIVEN, HOLY, LAND, MAN, OTHER, RIGHT, SHALL, THEY, THEM

All these items appear frequently in most types of texts, and most of them yield several kinds of information. A search using AntConc 3.2.1 (Anthony 2007), limited to simple words in the basic form (i.e. disregarding plurals, compounds and derivatives) yielded some 25,000 tokens with context. The following orthographic features were studied on the basis of the searches:

(th) in THEY, THEM
(th) in OTHER
(gh) in RIGHT
(sh) in SHALL
(ll) in SHALL
(a) in ANY
(a) in MAN, LAND
(e) in THEM
(ey) in THEY
(i) in GIVEN
(y) in ANY, HOLY
(o) in HOLY

The convention of round brackets is here used to indicate a variable, represented by the spelling unit used in present-day Standard English: the variable (th), for example, is realized in the material as <th>, <þ>, <y> and <d>. It should be noted that the variables cannot be classified simply as W-features or S-features, as some of them show both kinds of variation; for example, the variation between <sch> and <sh> in SHALL is clearly a W-feature, but the variants <s> and <x> may well reflect spoken variation.

In addition, the following features were studied:

Morphological features:
THEY: *th*- vs *h*- forms
THEM: *th*- vs *h*-forms
ARE: *beth, ben, are, arn, er* (each class including a range of variants, see p. 122)
GIVEN, CALLED: OE *ge*- prefix vs zero

Lexical feature:
CALLED: *call* vs *clepe*

Variants appearing in a single text only were disregarded throughout.

For a full consideration of the data, one should ideally trace the patterns to the level of the individual text, taking into account the textual histories of literary texts, scribal networks and the like. The present study is necessarily a preliminary overview, and several of the features will be discussed in more detail in studies of specific samples of the MELD material in Chapters 6 and 7.

As the texts vary greatly in length, an overall token count would not make sense as it would be extremely skewed by the longest texts. Instead, all texts are equally weighted as informants. If a text contains variation, the figures are calculated as proportions out of 1.0 (thus, a text containing half and half of two variants will make up 0.5 informant for each). Inescapably, some of the informants provide more actual tokens than others: in particular, some of the long literary texts provide very large numbers. This means that, even though the number of informants is lower in the case of the literary texts, the figures are, on the whole, based on larger quantities of data.

5.5 Comparison of the corpora: Findings

The comparison of the MEG-C and MELD samples reveals a rather striking overall pattern. It turns out that the two corpora show very different usages with regard to several of the purely orthographic features (W-features) studied, while their usage with regard to orthographic S-features and to morphological/lexical variation shows no such divergences. The W-features will therefore be discussed separately (5.1), followed by a discussion of the other features (5.2).

5.5.1 Purely orthographic features (W-features)

The development of digraph spellings with <h> as the second element for (mainly) fricative consonants was one of the large-scale orthographic trends in Middle English. At varying rates, the spelling units <gh>, <sh>, <th> increased in use during this period, gradually replacing <ȝ>, <sch> and <þ> (as well as minor variants), while <wh> took over completely from an early stage in the non-northern area; only <ph> remained a marginal grapheme. As <sh> and <th> have been identified in earlier studies as especially typical of documentary texts, the variables (sh) and (th), as well as (gh), have been included in the present study.

The variable (th) in THEY, THEM and OTHER

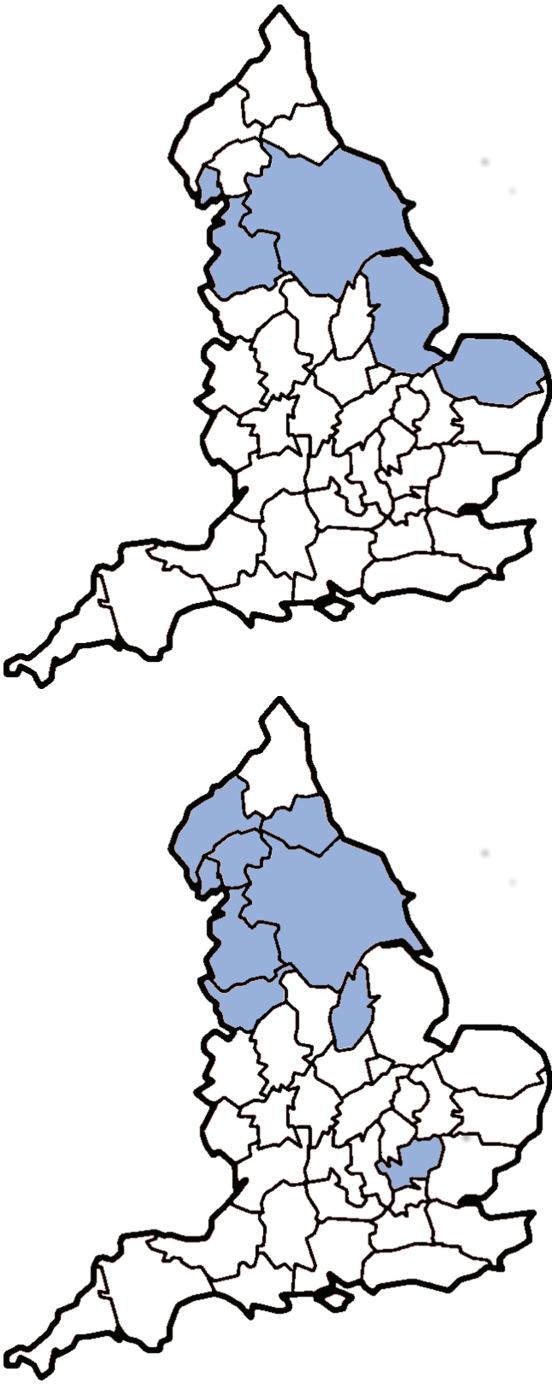
The variable (th) is highly complex in terms of its Middle English variation. The voiced and voiceless variants of the dental fricative were only (marginally) phonemicized during the Middle English period, a process usually dated to the fourteenth century (Lass 1992: 59; Jordan 1968: 183), and have for the most part not been distinguished orthographically in the history of English. The spellings <þ> and <ð> were used interchangeably in Old English, and <þ> continued in use up to the early modern period; however, the alternative spelling unit <th> gradually increased in frequency from the late fourteenth century onwards (Stenroos 2004: 273; cf. also Benskin 1982: 18). From the fourteenth century, the letter 'þ' merged in some written systems with 'y', so that the two spelling units came to be realized with the same symbol, most commonly with the visual shape of 'y'. In the LALME material, this merger appears predominantly in texts localized to the North (Benskin 1982: 14–16).

Earlier studies of (th) in Middle English materials generally show a gradual increase in the use of <th> in all areas, with the predominance of <th> being particularly marked in documentary texts (Stenroos 2004: 276–279, Jensen 2010: 374–75; 2012). The northern area, however, shows a system of its own, first described by Benskin (1977: 507, n.); here, the spelling <y> tended to be used for the voiced fricative, generally found in closed-class words, while <th> tended to be used for the voiceless one. The distinction seems to have been made most regularly in initial position, and would gradually give way to the supralocal use of <th> in all positions (Benskin 1977: 507; Stenroos 2004: 278–79).

For the present study, initial (th) was collected for the third person plural subject and object pronoun forms, THEY and THEM, while medial (th) was collected for the item OTHER. These items were selected as they appear frequently in the material, while also providing data for other developments, most notably the disappearance of the *hy, hem* forms of the third person pronoun and the appearance of the innovative form *oder* (see 5.2 below).

In the present material, the distribution of merged <þ> and <y> is, as might be expected, mainly northern in both MEG-C and MELD; the few occurrences in the western and eastern areas appear in texts localized either in the Northwest Midlands (Cheshire) or in the Northeast Midlands and East Anglia (Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Norfolk), as well as, in MELD, Cambridgeshire. In this regard, both corpora show a similar picture (see Figure 5.2).

If the systemic distinction between merged <y> and unmerged <þ> is disregarded, the proportional distribution of the two main forms, <th> and <þ/y>, present completely different pictures in the two corpora. In THEIR and THEM, the literary texts show <þ/y> as completely dominant in all three geographical areas; in the documentary texts, on the other hand, <þ/y> and <th> are equally common in the North, whilst elsewhere <th> dominates completely (see Figure 5.3). Medial (th) in OTHER shows an even more clear-cut picture, as <th> dominates in the northern documents as well (Figure 5.4). On the whole, based on these three items, <th> is considerably much more common in MELD than in MEG-C in all areas, both initially and medially.



(a)

(b)

Figure 5.2 The distribution of merged <y>/<þ> in MEG-C and MELD

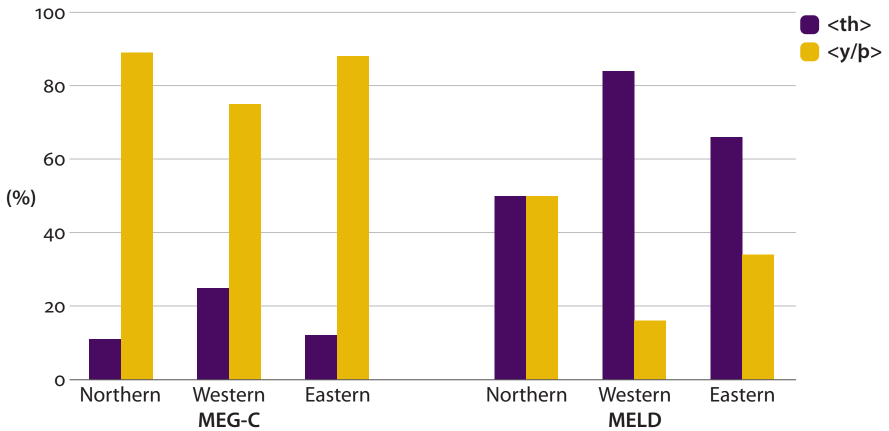


Figure 5.3 Proportional frequencies of <th> and <y/þ> in THEY, THEM (number of informants: MEG-C 15 – 29 – 28, MELD 65 – 47 – 42)

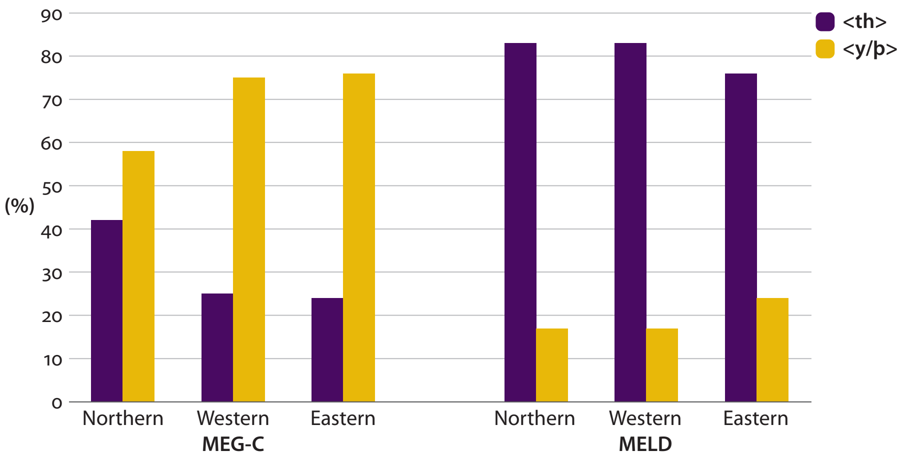


Figure 5.4 Proportional frequencies of <th> and <y/þ> in OTHER (number of informants: MEG-C 13 – 29 – 26, MELD 69 – 67 – 55)

The variable (sh) in SHALL

The initial consonantal element in SHALL was spelt <sc> in Old English, and may have represented an affricate in the spoken mode; according to Jordan & Crook (1974: 169), the appearance of the spellings <s>, <ss> suggest that the sound was "monophonemized" around 1100. In LALME, both <sch> and <sh> appear as the major spellings throughout the country; with the exception of two regional variants, <s> and <x>, these two spellings dominate both in LALME and in the present material. Very minor spellings, such as <ch>, <sc> and <ss> also appear, but were not collected for the present purpose.

The present data show, first of all, a shared geographical pattern in both kinds of material: in the northern area, <s> is the majority form in both corpora, both <sch> and <sh> appearing as minor variants (see Figure 5.12 below). The <s> spelling of SHALL in the North is almost certainly an S-feature: pronunciations with [s] survive at least into the twentieth century, and appear on the list of late modern northern dialect features in Ihalainen (1994: 214).

Outside the northern area, however, there is a marked difference, paralleling the pattern in (th): here the spelling unit <sch> dominates in the literary texts, while <sh> dominates in the documents (see Figure 5.5). The eastern area shows, in addition, a few occurrences of the spelling unit <x>. In both corpora, *xal(l)* as a main form is limited to Norfolk and Suffolk.

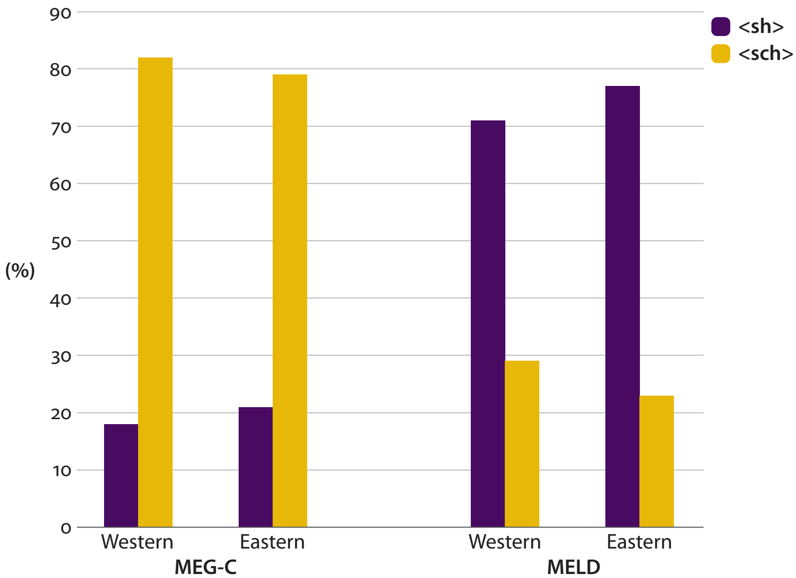


Figure 5.5 Proportional frequencies of <sh> and <sch> in SHALL (number of informants: MEG-C 28 – 27, MELD 56 – 51)

The variable (gh) in RIGHT

The third of the spellings relating to fricatives, (gh), relates to a consonantal element that was lost during the Middle and Early Modern English periods: a postvocalic velar or palatal fricative (its quality depending on the preceding vowel) going back to Old English [x], spelt <h>. Spelling evidence suggests that the element had been widely lost by the period here concerned, the change being particularly early in East Anglia (Lass 1999: 116; see also Chapter 6); however, its seems to have remained in the speech of "educated speakers" in the sixteenth century, and was still retained by some in the seventeenth (Lass 1999: 117; Dobson 1968: 986–987).

Despite some early spellings such as *nyte* ‘night’, spellings indicating a consonant were generally retained throughout the period and survive in Standard English.

Earlier in Middle English, the (gh) variable showed one of the most complex spelling-to-sound mappings in historical English, with 49 different variants recorded in LALME only in the item THROUGH (Stenroos 2007: 14). However, by the fifteenth century, the spellings <ȝ> and <gh> were completely dominant, and they are the only ones collected for the present study.

The pattern for (gh) in the present data parallels that of (sh) and (th), in that the two competing fifteenth-century forms, <ȝ> and <gh>, dominate in the literary and documentary texts respectively, with the exception of the northern area, which shows <gh> only (see Figure 5.6). In the present material, <ȝ> is almost totally absent from the documentary materials. As the absolute figures here are relatively low – only thirty texts in all – an additional check was carried out on three other items, LIGHT, MIGHT and NIGHT. A few more yoghs were identified; however, they are altogether vanishingly few in the MELD corpus.

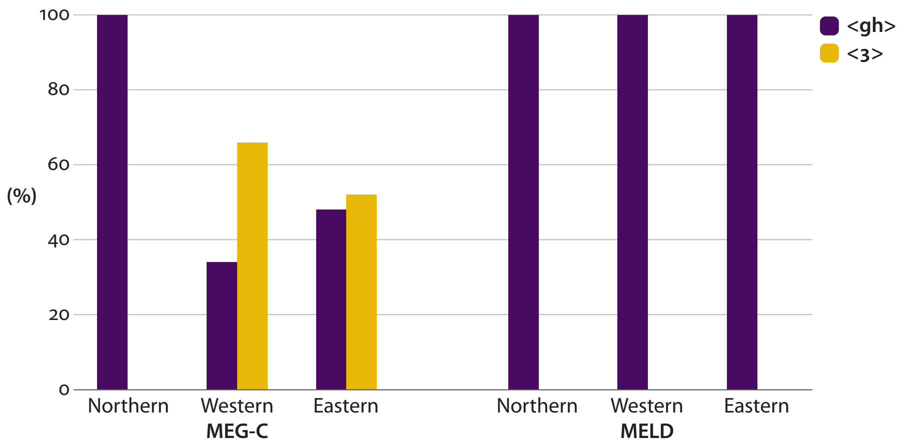


Figure 5.6 Proportional frequencies of <gh> and <ȝ> in RIGHT (number of informants: MEG-C 12 – 24 – 18, MELD 24 – 14 – 16)

Final <i> and <y> in ANY, HOLY AND THEY

The spelling units <i> and <y> had mapped onto different vowels in Old English, the latter relating to the close rounded vowel [y] (see Benskin 1982: 21–22 for a discussion of the history of <y> in English). During the Middle English period, <i> and <y> became interchangeable as vowel spellings, mapping onto the short and long (pre-shift) close front vowels as well as the second element of front closing diphthongs. Gradually, it became conventional to prefer <y> in final position, while <i> came to be preferred initially and medially; this development may well have been prompted by, or associated with, the convention of avoiding short <i> graphs at the end of numbers to prevent forgery.[6]

For the present purpose, only the final position was considered, both for the simplex short vowel (the reflex of OE *-ig*) and the diphthong *ay/ey*, as found in the items ANY, HOLY and THEY. For the simplex vowels, hardly any <i> spellings were found in either corpus: only two MEG-C texts and one MELD text, out of a total of 68 and 150 texts respectively, show <i> as a majority form, and a few more occurrences appear as very minor variants. For THEY, on the other hand, the diphthongal spellings <ai>, <ei> are preferred in the literary texts, while <ay, ey> dominate in the documentary texts (see Figure 5.7); the difference is not as marked as that for the fricative spellings, but still significant.[7] The same preference appears in all three geographical areas in both corpora, with the exception of the western area in MEG-C, where the two spellings are equally common: in general, the western area shows the highest proportional frequencies of <y> in both corpora. It might also be noted that the first element of the diphthong (which represents a potential S-feature) shows a marked geographical variation which is not shown in the Figure, <ai>/<ay> spellings dominating in the North (see Stenroos 2019a: 52).

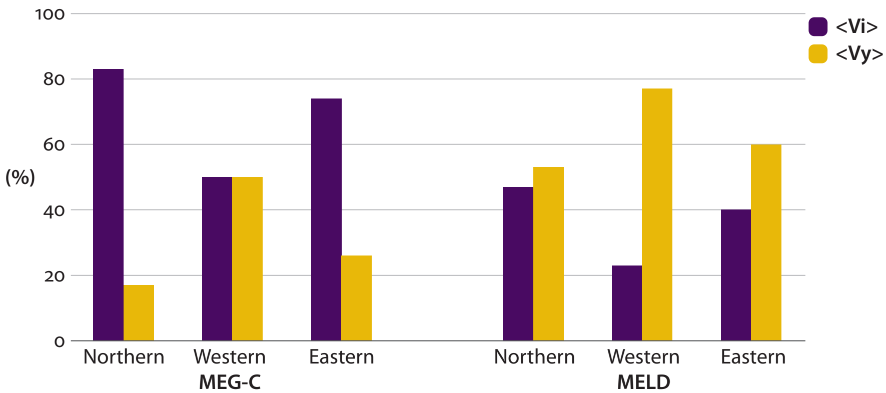


Figure 5.7 Proportional frequencies of <Vi> and <Vy> in THEY (number of informants: MEG-C 15 – 26 – 27, MELD 43 – 32 – 37)

6. In writing Roman numerals, the convention was to signal the end of the numeral by lengthening the last minim, e.g. *xij* ‘12’, *viij* ‘8’. Outside numerals, the “long i”, which eventually becomes <j>, is for the most part only used word-initially and following <i>, as in the Latin form *alij* ‘others’.

7. $X^2(1, 381) = 14.540$, $p = 0.0001$.

Double and single <l> in SHALL

Finally, a comparison was carried out between the two corpora concerning the use of double and single <l> in SHALL. The choice between single and double consonant following a short vowel is one of the features of English orthography that remain variable until relatively late, still varying considerably in printed texts of the eighteenth century. The difference between the two corpora is, again, not as dramatic as that for the spellings relating to fricatives; however, for the non-northern areas it is considerable, showing a preference for double <l> in the MELD materials (see Figure 5.8). It may also be noted that, in both corpora, the double form <ll>, which eventually becomes the standard form, is least common in the eastern part, while it is clearly dominant in the North both in the MEG-C and MELD materials.

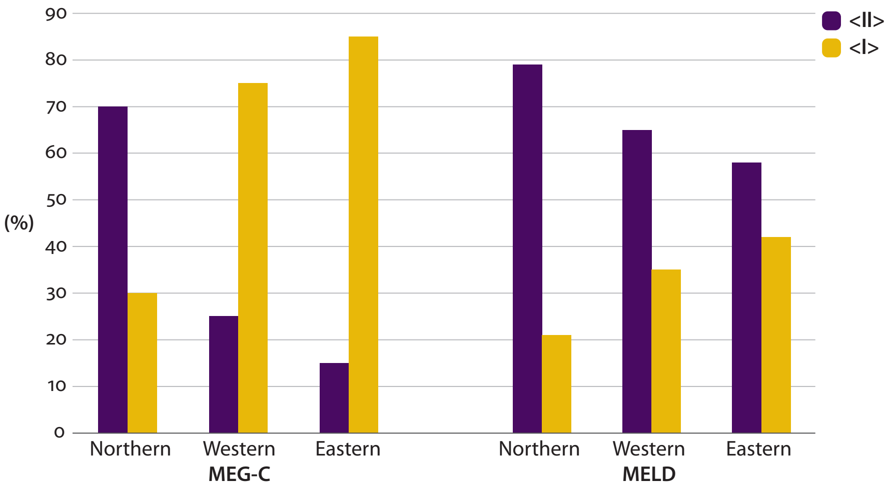


Figure 5.8 Proportional frequencies of <ll> and <l> in SHALL (number of informants: MEG-C 13 – 28 – 26, MELD 76 – 55 – 48)

Summary

All the W-features here studied show highly significant differences between the literary and documentary texts.[8] These differences are greatest in the non-northern areas, while several of the features show no difference between the two corpora in the northern area. The northern texts generally tend to either agree with the majority patterns in the non-northern documentary materials (e.g. <gh> in RIGHT and <ll> in SHALL), or show a completely different form (<s> in SHALL).

8. Probability testing was carried out on all the results (X^2 and Fisher's Exact Test).

5.5.2 Features relating to the spoken mode

While the W-features studied here show significant, sometimes dramatic, differences between the documentary and literary texts, no similar patterns are found for the other features studied, all of which connect, at least in principle, to variation in the spoken mode: phonology (orthographic S-features), morphology or lexis. These features generally show geographical patterning in both corpora, with few significant differences between the corpora; indeed, the similarities between the corpora are in some cases striking considering the differences between them both with regard to text production and corpus compilation (see 5.4). In the following, the orthographic S-features are discussed first, followed by the morphological and lexical features.

Phonology: LAND, ANY, SHALL, HOLY, MAN and OTHER

The vowel of LAND had undergone homorganic lengthening in Old English, with the /ɑː/ subsequently rounded to /ɔː/ in non-northern dialects. Middle English spellings such as *lond* may be assumed to reflect this rounding, while the *land* type may reflect either unrounded forms or forms with a short vowel (unlengthened or shortened at an early stage). The spelling *lond* could also map onto a short vowel in the West Midland area, where it would show rounding before nasals (cf. MAN below). As Figure 5.9 shows, both the MEG-C and MELD data show <a> forms as clearly dominant in the North, whilst <o> forms dominate in the non-northern areas: here <a> is only found occasionally in both corpora, mainly restricted to North Midland counties (Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire).[9]

The two corpora show essentially the same pattern, with some minor variation between the subcorpora. It is worth noting that the proportion of <o> spellings remains relatively high in the documentary materials over the following century: even though <a> forms are increasing in frequency, <o> is still the majority form in the first half of the sixteenth century (Figure 5.10).

The variation in ANY has a different etymological background, going back to Old English variant forms *ǣnig* and *ānig*, which result in ME *eny, any, ony* due to vowel shortening at different stages. ANY also shows largely the same pattern in both corpora: here <a> forms dominate everywhere, while <e> and <o> appear as fairly substantial minority forms. The main difference is that MELD shows a more even spread of these minority forms, with texts showing <o> found in all parts of the country; in MEG-C they are (with the exception of one Cheshire text) limited to the eastern area, within which they show a very clearly limited distribution,

9. As with many forms that show a predominantly northern distribution, <a> is also found in the MELD Cambridge material (D6026, D6137#1).

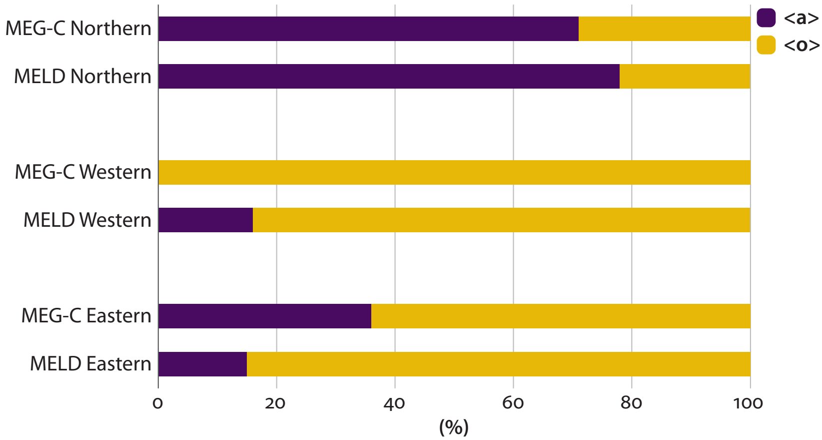


Figure 5.9 Proportional frequencies of <a> and <o> in LAND (number of informants: MEG-C 9 – 13 – 14, MELD 28 – 19 – 20)

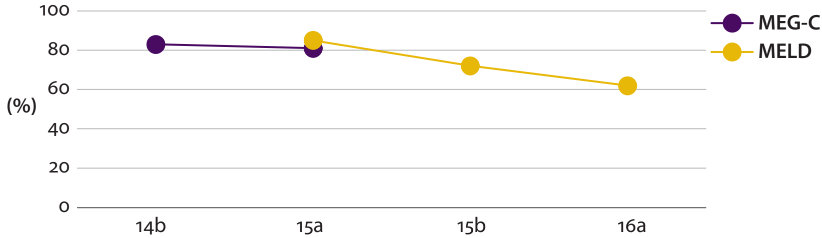
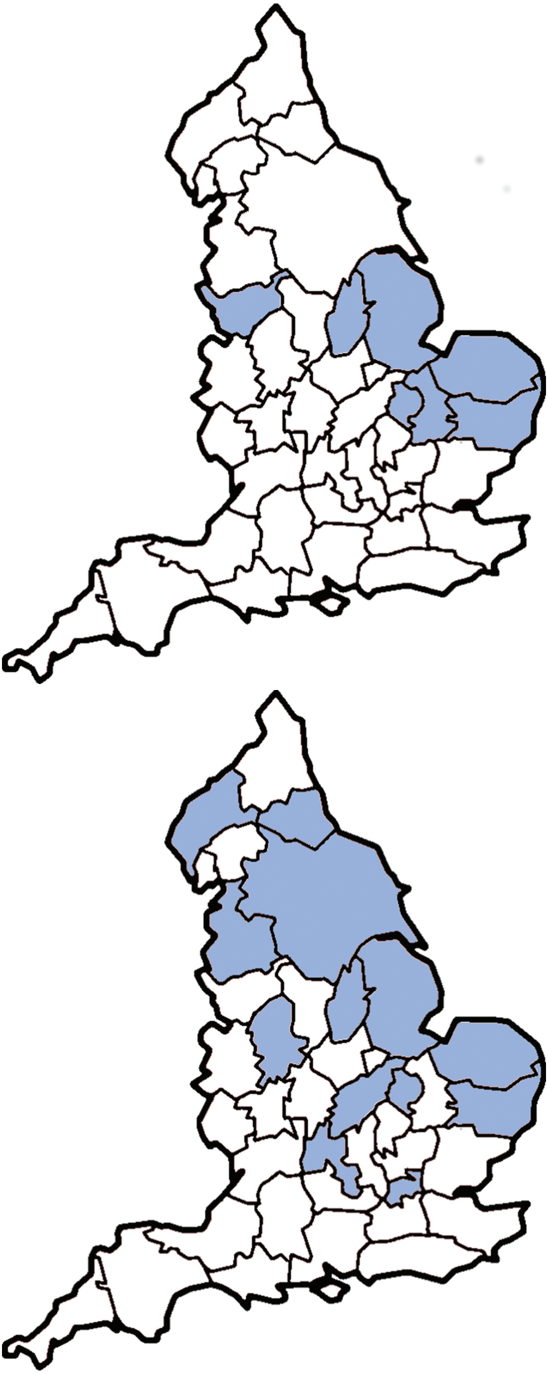


Figure 5.10 Proportions of <o> spellings of LAND, non-northern areas (number of informants: MEG-C 12 – 27, MELD 39 – 119 – 97)

perhaps reflecting the role of this feature in localizations using the "fit-technique" (See Figure 5.11).

As both LOND and the different forms of ANY show relatively widely dispersed distributional patterns, it may be worth considering some of the most clear-cut dialect markers of the fourteenth century. Typically northern dialect markers in the present material include *haly* HOLY and *sal(l)* SHALL; unsurprisingly, these forms are limited to the northern materials, with only a few occurrences of *sal(l)* on the northern edges of the other areas. The form *haly*, suggesting the unrounded variant of OE *ā*, seems to be much more frequent in the literary texts than in the documents; however, the figures are here too small to be strictly comparable (see Figure 5.12). For *sal(l)* SHALL, on the other hand, data are plentiful; here the two corpora show approximately the same proportion of <s> forms, which is the clear majority variant in the northern area. In the second half of the fifteenth century, however, the MELD material shows a drop in the proportional frequency of *sal(l)* to 41% in the North.



(a)

(b)

Figure 5.11 The distribution of *ony* ANY in MEG-C and MELD

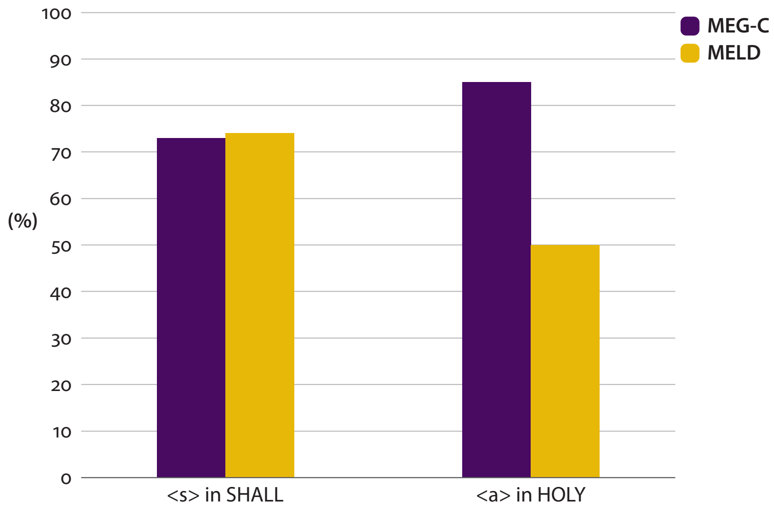


Figure 5.12 Proportions of *sal(l)* SHALL and *haly* HOLY (%) in the northern area (number of informants: MEG-C 15, MELD 78 for SHALL, MEG-C 13, MELD 6 for HOLY)

One of the most stable dialect markers in the history of English seems to be the rounding of OE *a* before nasals, as shown in the form *mon* MAN. The spelling <mon> shows more or less the same West Midland distribution in LALME as the [ɒ] pronunciation in the *Survey of English Dialects* Atlas (Orton et al. 1978, Ph5; see also Wakelin 1982: 8). Judging from the spelling practices, the rounding of OE *a* before nasals may have been widespread in Old English; in Middle English, <o> spellings only seem to be found in the West Midland area north of the River Wye. There could have been a suspicion that the clean-cut pattern in LALME might reflect the prominent use of this specific dialect marker in the localizing process (the compilers were certainly familiar with the SED data); however, the geographical distribution of the <o> spellings in the MELD material, localized purely on non-linguistic grounds, fully agrees with the LALME and SED ones, apart from two individual outliers, in London and Dorset respectively (see Figure 4.5, p. 90).

The *mon* forms also show a remarkable stability in their persistence through time. While a straightforward comparison of the two corpora suggests a higher frequency in the literary texts (36% vs 20% in the western area), a diachronic comparison shows that the MELD proportion remains constant over the following century (Figure 5.13).

All the S-features discussed so far might be considered to represent traditional Middle English dialect features: the "conventions of a century before" referred to by Benskin. As many of these features were recessive by the fifteenth century, studying their development easily gives the impression that the history of written English in this period simply consisted of the gradual replacement of

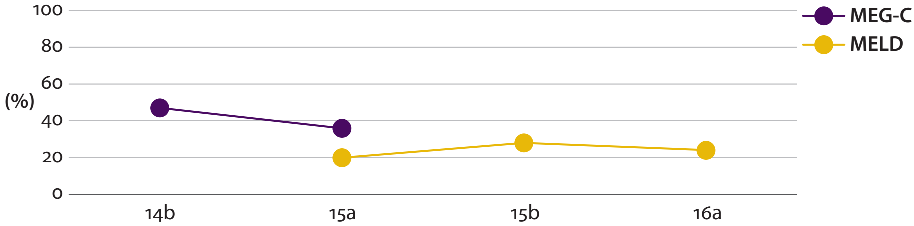


Figure 5.13 Proportions of <o> spellings of MAN in the western area (number of informants: MEG-C 17 – 28, MELD 15 – 43 – 29)

“conservative” forms with “innovative” ones, generally in the direction of the future standard. It will therefore make sense to look at a variant which represents innovative usage but does *not* end up in standard English.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, two seemingly contradictory developments took place in the spelling of dental consonants. In one group of words (A), including FATHER, MOTHER and TOGETHER, Old English medial [d] became a fricative, a development confirmed by the present-day pronunciation in most varieties of English. In another group of words (B), the opposite development took place: words such as BROTHER, EITHER, OTHER and WHETHER, which had [ð] in Old English, begin to appear with medial <d>. The reality of the second change has sometimes been questioned, as the <d> spellings might be interpreted as “back spellings” caused by the [d] > [ð] change. There are, however, reasons for assuming that this was not the case.

First of all, the appearance of <d> spellings for the words of the B group is considerably earlier than the appearance of <th> and (rarely) <y/þ> spellings for the A group, as shown in Thengs (2013: 216–223). Thengs’ study of West Midland materials also shows that the spread of <d> spellings in the B-group words follows a clear pattern in time and space, appearing first in Staffordshire in the mid-fifteenth century and only spreading westward to Shropshire and Cheshire in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. While orthographic W-features may show geographical patterns, such a relatively orderly spread across geography would seem more likely to indicate a spoken change.

In the present material, the written variation in OTHER also shows a progression through time and space, starting from the east; in addition, it seems to show a difference between the two corpora (Figure 5.14). While the absolute figures involved are relatively small in the subcorpora compared, they are consistently lower in MEG-C. A detailed discussion of the significance of this development will, it is hoped, be carried out elsewhere; for the moment, however, it may be noted that, in the case of OTHER, the regionally marked, non-mainstream development takes place in the documentary materials rather than the literary ones.

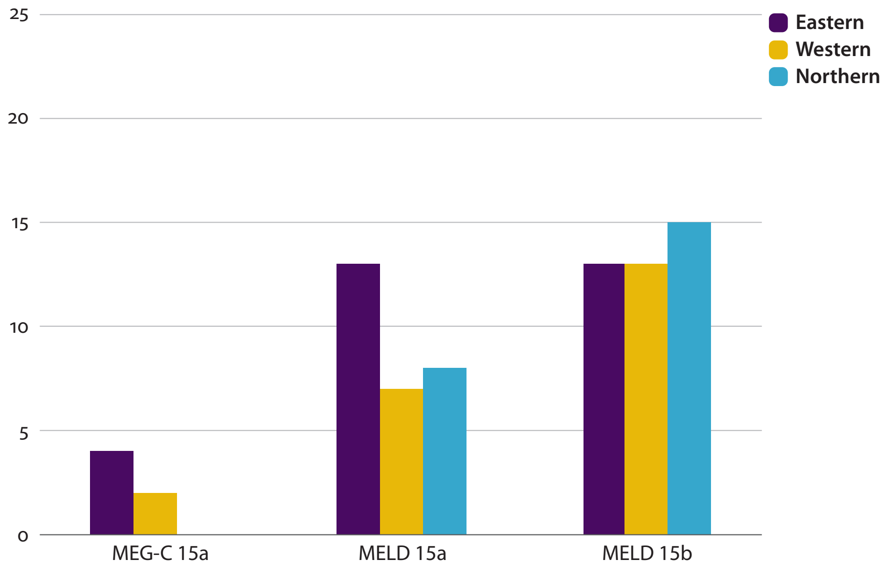


Figure 5.14 Proportion of <d> spellings of OTHER (number of informants: MEGC 70, MELD 209 – 375)

Morphology: THEY, THEM, ARE *and the past participle prefix* y-

The displacement of the Old English *h-* forms of the third person plural pronoun by innovative *th-* forms (spelt variously with <th>, <þ>, <y> or other variants of (th)) is one of the most familiar linguistic changes of the Middle English period, traditionally ascribed to Scandinavian borrowing (see also p. 162). The change may only be properly observed in the non-northern areas, as *th-* forms are dominant in the northern area from the earliest Middle English sources; elsewhere, the spread of *th-* forms in the subject pronoun (THEY) predates the equivalent change in the objective and possessive pronouns with at least a century.

In the present material, the form *hy* is the only *h*-type form of THEY that appears in either corpus, and it is extremely rare in both: in MELD it appears as the only form of THEY in two southern texts (Kent and Dorset) while in MEG-C it appears as a variant form in seven texts localized in the South or Southwest Midland areas; the forms make up 2% and 4% respectively of the non-northern data in the two corpora, counted in terms of informants.

The situation with regard to THEM is very different. While the northern area, unsurprisingly, shows mainly *th-* forms (the few *h-* forms appearing in the southwestern margins, in Lancashire, the West Riding of Yorkshire and the Isle of Man), both corpora show a predominance of *h*-forms in the non-northern areas. The *th-* forms are considerably more frequent in the documentary material, but they are still in minority (see Figure 5.15).

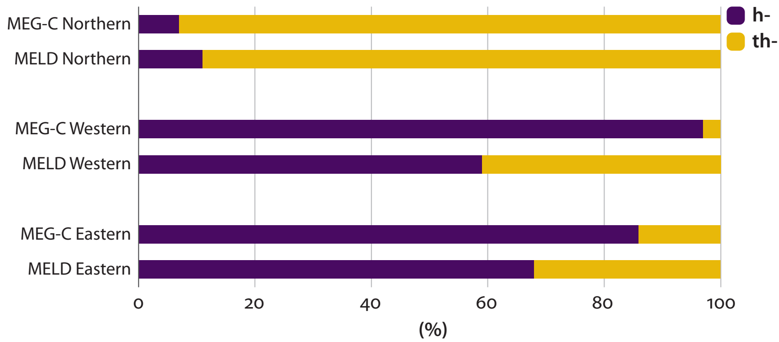


Figure 5.15 Proportional frequencies of *h*- and *th*- forms of THEM (number of informants: MEG-C 14 – 29 – 29, MELD 54 – 54 – 44)

Perhaps the most striking example of the similarity between the corpora is the present plural indicative ARE. Unlike most items included in this study, ARE shows several variants that are relatively common, and which pattern geographically. The entire range of variants found in the material is as follows:

> *ar, are, aren, arn, arne, arr, ben, bene, beon, beoþ, beth, bethe, beþ, beþe, beyn, bith, buth, buthe, byn, byth, bythe, er, ere*

To work out the overall pattern, these variant forms have been merged into five main types:

> *{are, arn, ben, beth, er}*

Figures 5.16 and 5.17 show the distribution of these main types in the northern and non-northern areas respectively in both corpora. The similarities between the figures are remarkable, both considering the differences between the corpora and the highly divergent spelling conventions suggested by the findings in 5.5.1. Comparisons become difficult, however, when dealing with the fine detail of the variation, as the less frequent forms appear in too small quantities to be strictly comparable: still, it may be noted that the forms *buth* and *byn* appear in both corpora showing similar geographical ranges, in the southern and western areas respectively.

It might, finally, be noted that the distribution of the forms of ARE in the MELD material of the following half-century – the second part of the fifteenth century – remains virtually identical to that shown in Figures 5.17 and 5.18, with the only exception that the majority forms in each area – *er* and *ben* respectively – make up an even higher proportion of the total (57% and 66% respectively, out of a total of 58 and 104 informants), with the proportion of the eventual standard form, *are*, lower than it was in either corpus in the preceding half-century (28% in the North and 14% in the non-northern area).

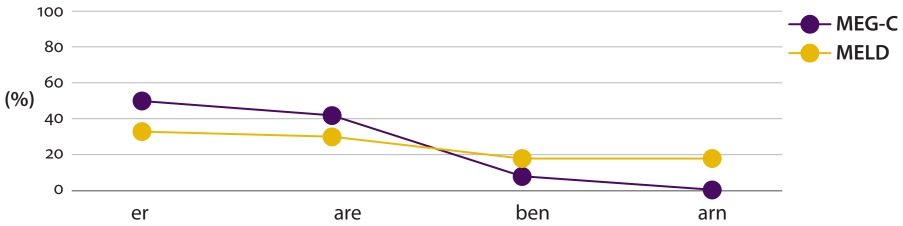


Figure 5.16 Forms of ARE (%), northern area (number of informants: MEG-C 14, MELD 39)

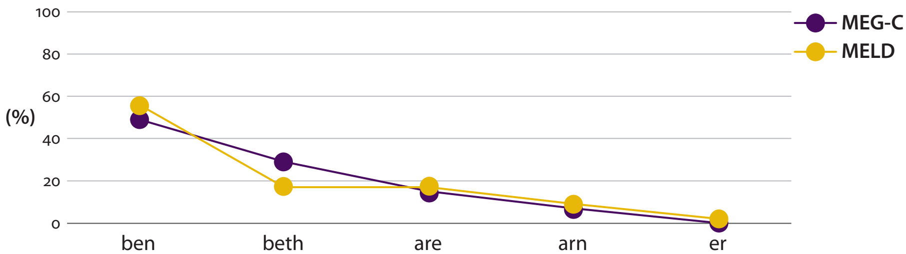


Figure 5.17 Forms of ARE (%), western and eastern areas (number of informants: MEG-C 55, MELD 54)

Finally, the past participle prefix *y*-, occasionally spelt *j*-, appears as a minor feature in all the non-northern subcorpora, while it is completely absent from the northern texts. In the western area, it shows a slightly higher proportional frequency in the MEG-C corpus (17% as against 8% in MELD); in the eastern area both corpora show a 6% frequency, dwindling to 4% in both areas in the later fifteenth-century MELD material. It might be noted that some, although not all, of the occurrences of the prefix in MEG-C are in verse texts, where their use might be motivated by metre. On the whole, patterns here clearly reflect the tail end of a change, and while the figures are too small to be strictly comparable it may be noted that these minor leftovers of the past participle prefix appear both in literary and documentary texts.

Vocabulary: Clepe *and* call CALL

The verbs *clepe* and *call* (OE *clipian/cleopian*, OE *ceallian*/ON *kalla)* seem to have been competing synonyms in the Middle English period: they appear in the same collocations and are seldom found in variation within the same text. In the present material, only *call* is found in the northern subcorpora, while the non-northern areas show *clepe* as a minority variant in both corpora (Figure 5.18). It may be assumed here that the distribution of the two verbs in the MEG-C material to a large extent reflects textual tradition: different manuscript copies of the same text tend to have the same vocabulary, even though they may differ greatly in morphology and orthography, and thus be localized in different places in LALME (on the different "levels" of scribal translation, see Benskin & Laing, 1981: 96–97). The extent to which this is the case is, however, difficult to ascertain from MEG-C, which contains relatively small samples of the texts; a much more detailed study considering the entire manuscripts would be required. In the MEG-C samples, *clepe* is found in texts such as *The Chastising of God's Children*, the *Castle of Love* and Mandeville's *Travels*, while *call* appears in *Piers Plowman* and the Prose *Brut:* only the *Prick of Conscience* and Rolle's *Psalter* show both.

Because of the close association between vocabulary and textual tradition, it is uncertain to what extent the MEG-C data can say anything about geographical distribution; indeed, there seems to be no specific pattern in the spread of *clepe*. In MELD, on the other hand, the occurrences of *clepe* are clearly geographically focussed: both in the first and second parts in the fifteenth century, they are limited to the East Midland area, London and its surroundings as well as the Southwest (see Figure 5.19). This pattern presumably reflects the southward spread of the form *call*, with the survival of the recessive form in some western and eastern areas; that it also shows up in the London area is not surprising in view of the varied linguistic make-up of the capital.

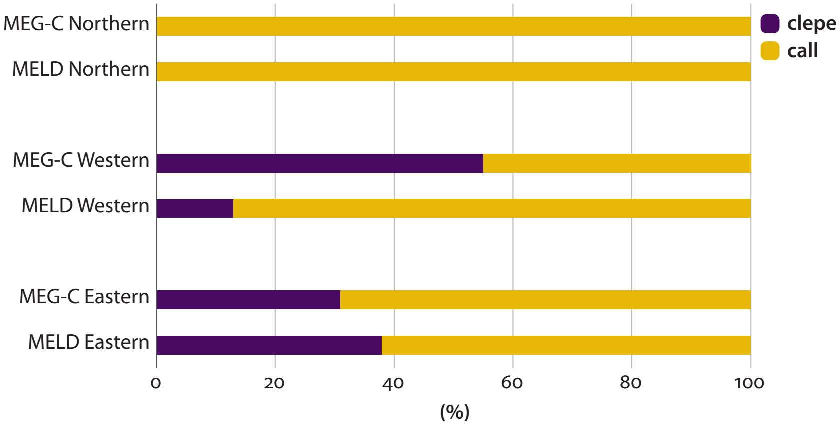


Figure 5.18 Proportions of *clepe* and *call* CALL (number of informants: MEG-C 8 – 22 – 16, MELD 9 – 15 – 24)

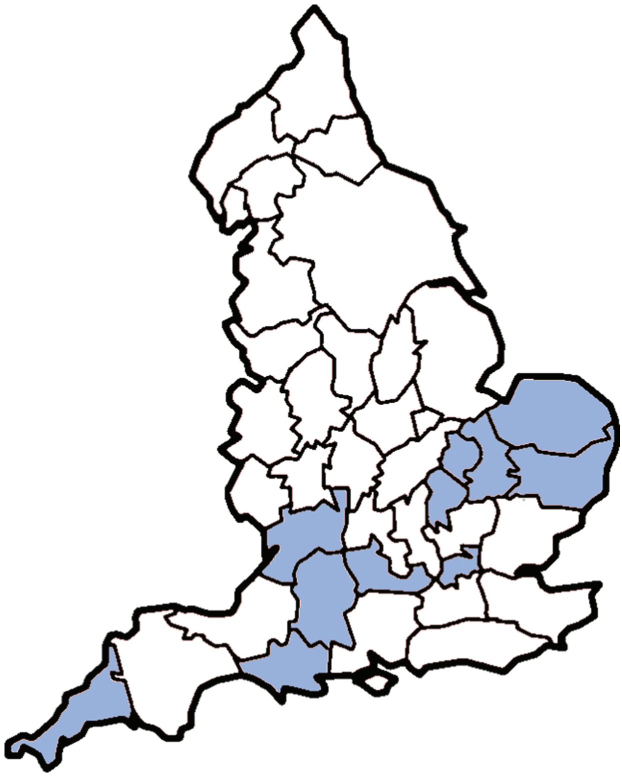


Figure 5.19 The geographical distribution of *clepe* in MELD

5.6 Discussion: Literary vs documentary texts

This study set out to enquire into how far the fifteenth-century documentary material contained in MELD shows the "loss of written dialects" referred to in LALME: to what extent do the administrative texts show a process of supralocalization, and how do they compare to other types of text in this respect? In order to provide a clear comparison between administrative documents and literary texts, epistolary texts were purposely left outside the study. One of the starting points was the assumption that local documents might have been "leading" a process of supralocalization in the fifteenth century, and the concomitant idea (expressed in LALME) that their language might be of little interest for the study of dialectal variation.

The questions to be answered might, then, be phrased as follows:

– Are there differences between the language of local documents and other types of texts?
– Do these differences relate to supralocalization?

The present data show several highly significant differences between the literary and documentary texts with regard to orthography, all involving purely orthographic features (W-features). On the other hand, the findings show virtually no significant differences in usage with regard to variation that relates to spoken forms; here, proportional differences are for the most part minor, with the documentary texts to some extent showing a more "advanced" state both with regard to the loss of recessive forms and the spread of innovative ones.

The differences in W-features pose various intriguing questions. First of all, it may be noted that the scribes of documentary texts show a marked disinclination to use the letters thorn and yogh ('þ' and 'ȝ'). The letter yogh is virtually absent from the documentary materials, and is also rarely used in the northern literary texts; thorn is similarly rare in the documents, even though the merged form 'y' is used commonly in the North. Instead, the dominating pattern in the documents is to use *h*-digraphs such as *sh, th, gh*. As it is these digraphs which eventually become the standard spellings, it is easy to label this difference as reflecting the "standardization" of administrative texts; however, the fact that these forms are used does not in itself imply that standardization – in any sense of the term – has taken place (nor does the label explain the difference in any way).

Instead, the difference might be related to the fact that the documentary texts formed part of a different context of text production compared to the literary texts. The clerks who produced administrative documents in the fifteenth century worked mainly in Latin and had been trained in Latin; to judge from the survival of documents in archives, one might estimate that, on the desk of the average clerk, perhaps one document in a hundred would have been in English. It would surely have been less natural for clerks to use specifically English letter forms, which they would seldom encounter, than it was for scribes copying English literary manuscripts within a tradition that abounded in thorns and yoghs.

It is also worth noting that the tradition of English text production before the fifteenth century almost exclusively involved literary texts (in the broad sense here applied). By the early fifteenth century, administrative documents are a whole new area of English writing, carried out by scribes who may have had little direct contact with the tradition of copying literary texts: even though some scribes copied both kinds of texts, it is probable that the vast majority of local clerks over the country did not. For them, even though they were English *speakers*, yogh and thorn might have been quite foreign, at least in terms of active use. As Benskin (1982: 19) has pointed out, the digraph <th> would always have been a readily available spelling of the dental fricative for scribes used to writing Latin, as it had been used for centuries to write English names and phrases within Latin texts.

The (at least relative) absence of reinforcement from the literary spelling tradition would also help generalize the use of *h*-digraphs: a scribe used to <th> and

<wh> will presumably be more likely to also use <sh>, unless the longer alternative <sch> is reinforced by exemplar texts, as it would have been for the literary copyist. As for the other, less pronounced, differences in W-features, the partial isolation of the two traditions of text production will in itself explain why some purely orthographic developments would diverge; however, it might not be unthinkable that the constant writing of Roman numerals, ubiquitous in administrative texts, might lead to a general reluctance to end a written unit in short <i>, and accordingly to the generalization of final <y>.

On the other hand, conventions concerning forms that relate to spoken variation are less likely to diverge dramatically in the two text categories, unless active standardizing pressures are present within the one community rather than the other. What the material shows is, indeed, a rather close correspondence between the two corpora in terms of speech-related variation, including variants with geographically marked distributions; in fact, all minority variants collected for the study appear in both corpora, usually in fairly alike proportions.

Two general patterns emerge from the comparison of the two corpora in terms of speech-related variation. Firstly, the MELD data show, for the most part, a somewhat more advanced reduction in recessive forms (e.g. *h*- forms of THEM, the past participle prefix *y*- and <a> spellings of HOLY), as well as a more advanced spread of innovative forms (e.g. <d> spellings of OTHER). Secondly, for some of the variants, the documentary materials show a somewhat wider geographical spread (e.g. *ony* ANY). Neither of these patterns are unexpected considering both the differences in text production discussed above and the actual compilation of the corpora.

The copying of literary texts will naturally tend towards a reinforcement of "conservative" forms. Most of the MEG-C texts represent scribal copies of older texts: for example, the material included in the present study contains several copies of *Piers Plowman*, the *Prick of Conscience* and writings by Richard Rolle, all of which were composed in the fourteenth century. The situation with regard to document production would be entirely different: even if some scribes might have used English models rather than translating from Latin ones (which is uncertain), such models would be restricted to brief formulae, and most types of English documents would involve a large proportion of original composition (see p. 62). The framework of text production would, accordingly, favour the retention of older forms in literary texts, but not in documentary ones.

Finally, as was noted in 4 above, the different compilation principles of the two corpora mean that all the texts included in LALME (and MEG-C) have already been selected on the basis of their dialectal characteristics, while the documentary texts in MELD are included without reference to their language. Assuming that fifteenth-century local documents show a large amount of supralocal ("colourless" or "standardized") usage, as suggested in LALME, one might have expected a considerable difference between the two corpora. As it turns out, hardly any of the differences found between the corpora relate directly to geographical variation; the few exceptions, such as <o> and <e> in ANY and <d> in OTHER, in fact show a higher proportion of regionally marked forms in the documentary texts, in agreement with Rissanen's 1999 study.

5.7 Conclusions

As the findings presented above are based on a limited set of items and need to be corroborated by further studies, any conclusions must be tentative. However, these preliminary findings suggest the following conclusions about the language of Late Middle English local documents, as compared to literary texts of the same period:

- With regard to purely orthographic features, the documentary material shows partly different conventions compared to the literary texts; these conventions are not in themselves the result of a change, as the production of English documents has no earlier tradition
- In other features, both text categories seem to show the same diachronic and diatopic patterns, but the documentary texts show a slightly more advanced stage; innovative forms (whether they end up in the standard or not) are more likely to appear in the documentary texts
- The language of the documentary texts is not substantially more supralocal than that of the literary texts

The differences between the two corpora may be related to the different circumstances of text production, in particular the Latin context of document production, the short tradition of documentary texts, the different working practices (most importantly copying vs composition), and the partly different communities involved in this production.

Three implications may be drawn from these points. First of all, the similarities between the geographical distributions in the two corpora suggest that both corpora, at least in broad terms and to a considerable extent, reflect the same spoken linguistic reality. Secondly, as documentary texts are more likely to reflect active usage and innovation, while still showing geographical patterns, they may be expected to provide better evidence of changes ongoing both in the written and spoken language. Finally, the findings show that geography is still an important variable in fifteenth-century documentary language. Even though the documents show certain spelling conventions that are closer to the eventual standard than those of literary texts, their linguistic usage on the whole is neither uniform nor supralocal, and regional variation remains alive in documentary language at least into the following century.

CHAPTER 6

Cambridge

A University town

Geir Bergstrøm
University of Stavanger

6.1 Introduction

The aim of the present chapter is to study late medieval Cambridge as a text community, and to relate the linguistic variation and change found in administrative texts from late medieval Cambridge to the historical contexts of text production. The study is based on the Cambridge section of MELD, compiled by the present author and henceforth referred to as the Corpus of Cambridge Documents (CCD). By comparing the linguistic forms found within the CCD to those found in the rest of the Eastern Counties in MELD, the study seeks to ascertain whether Cambridge is more or less innovative or whether its forms are typical of that of the rest of the Eastern Counties;[1] and thus enquire into what role Cambridge might have played in the development of Standard English.

Davis (1954: 125), in his classic study of the Paston letters, suggested, when comparing the writings of the Paston brothers who went to Cambridge to those who worked in London, that "[p]erhaps Norfolk spellings were accepted at Cambridge". What the findings of the present study would seem to suggest is that although such spellings did not enter the active inventory of most Cambridge scribes, they were most certainly tolerated. Moreover, it is shown that the Cambridge texts are, in many respects, different in their linguistic characteristics from comparable texts from the surrounding region, suggesting that Cambridge might have been a locus of scribal innovation. Together with the comparatively large amount of surviving English documents, this makes medieval Cambridge a community of great interest for sociolinguistic study.

1. The Eastern Counties here refer to the twelve counties included in the first public instalment of MELD; see p. 85, note 9 and Table 6.1.

https://doi.org/10.1075/ahs.11.06ber

6.2 Material and methods

Cambridge, like most urban centres in England, has traditionally been ignored in the study of Middle English dialects. On the whole, there seem to be relatively few dialectal studies of Cambridge and Cambridgeshire: Edwards (1993) lists only three sources from Cambridgeshire in his directory of English dialect resources. Vasko (2005: 36), in her thesis on the modern Cambridgeshire dialect, notes that Cambridge has often been treated simply as a part of East Anglia, usually being grouped together with Norfolk and Suffolk or, just as often, ignored entirely (see also Trudgill 1990: 44). She also cites Conybeare (1906: viii): "Cambridgeshire is commonly held to be a district singularly devoid of interest, both physically and historically", a statement that is reflected in the fact that the majority of the historical works on Cambridge and Cambridgeshire are old. Of note are Cooper (1843), Page (1948), Roach (1959); the latter two works largely refer back to Cooper (1843). More recent historical work has primarily been focussed on specific aspects and institutions, such as the University. Cambridge is also occasionally mentioned in more general works, such as *The Cambridge urban history of Britain* (Palliser 2000) and *Medieval schools from Roman Britain to Renaissance England* (Orme 2006). Sixteen texts were localized to Cambridgeshire in LALME; of these, only two are documentary texts (LPs 64 and 282).[2]

The CCD consists of 143 documents that may be localized on non-linguistic evidence to Cambridge or to its immediate surroundings, here defined as the surrounding parishes of Cherry Hinton, Chesterton, Coton, Fen Ditton, Grantchester and Trumpington, all within five miles of medieval Cambridge. While the study is primarily focussed on Cambridge, it proved difficult to separate Cambridge from its more immediate surroundings: not only do a great many of the documents found within the archives concern properties in the surrounding parishes, but the boundaries of two Cambridge parishes, St Giles and St Andrew the Less, extend well beyond the centre of Cambridge, encompassing lands at the same distance from Cambridge as the parishes of Grantchester and Chesterton. The chronological span of the corpus is 1414 to 1525.[3]

The following archives were selected and searched on the basis of a preliminary survey of the online catalogues pertaining to the college and county archives: the Cambridgeshire Archives, Cambridge University Library (University Archives), King's College Archives and St John's College Archives. The initial survey revealed

2. See LALME I: 176–177; the two documentary texts are included in the CCD as L0064#1–3 and L0282, see Bergstrøm 2017: 440–444.

3. An expanded version of the CCD, including texts up to 1546, was used for Bergstrøm 2017.

these to be the most likely to contain medieval materials of the appropriate date, locality and language.[4]

The Cambridge texts included here form part of the initial release of MELD: 2017.1 – Eastern Counties (henceforth EC-MELD). This larger corpus contains in all 571 texts from the counties listed in Table 6.1. The 143 Cambridge texts have in the present study been excluded from EC-MELD when carrying out comparisons with the CCD.

It should be noted when comparing the corpora that the coverage for the various counties and time periods is not quite even. Very few counties are well represented in the early half of the fifteenth century; more than half the texts from the first quarter of the fifteenth century are from London, and only one from Cambridgeshire. It is important to keep such skewing in mind when carrying out comparisons between the counties. For instance, while *eny* would seem to be a common spelling of ANY in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, this is because this particular spelling is especially frequent in the early London texts, not necessarily because it was common overall – the item ANY is simply not well attested in the early period.

Table 6.1 Overview of EC-MELD: Distribution of texts by county and quarter century

	15a1	15a2	15b1	15b2	16a1	No date	Total
Bedfordshire	0	1	7	2	8	2	20
Berkshire	0	3	13	11	16	0	43
Buckinghamshire	0	0	1	2	26	0	29
Cambridgeshire	1	17	15	18	102	5	158
Ely	0	0	2	1	1	0	4
Essex	2	3	11	9	6	1	32
Hertfordshire	0	3	5	2	20	0	30
Huntingdonshire	0	1	0	3	1	0	5
Middlesex	12	9	13	20	26	1	81
Norfolk	3	8	13	14	42	1	81
Northamptonshire	2	4	9	5	12	0	32
Suffolk	0	3	10	8	31	4	56
Total	20	52	99	95	291	14	571

4. Due to the amount of texts that were found to be in English, as well as the time constraints, it was decided not to search the Corpus Christi College Archives, even though its online catalogue shows it to contain a considerable number of documents of relevant date. As the catalogue of the Corpus Christi College Archives does not indicate the language of the texts, it is unknown how many of these texts would have turned out to be suitable for inclusion in the CCD or MELD.

This chapter presents the findings of a study of linguistic variation within the Cambridge material, based on selected orthographic features, and compares it with the variation within EC-MELD, as well as with the findings of previous studies of eastern materials, such as Kristensson (1995) and LALME.

The data were collected using the concordancing programme AntConc 3.2.1 (Anthony 2007) and correlated with metadata from the MELD searchable catalogue. The absolute frequencies of the variants of each item within each individual text were then turned into percentages for each informant (see Chapter 5, p. 108).

6.3 Cambridge as a community: The historical context

In terms of its wealth, prosperity and estimated population, medieval Cambridge appears to have been of a fairly modest size for an urban centre in medieval England. Based on surviving tax records, it appears to have been of about the same size and prosperity as Oxford, but much smaller and not nearly as prosperous as Norwich or Lynn (see Table 6.2; also Palliser 2000). Medieval records are, however, generally based on the ownership of land and would therefore not include temporary labourers, scholars or travelling merchants; the sort that, if taxed at all, were taxed via fines and fees going to the local borough, court, or in the case of Cambridge, the University. Evidence from other sources, including the local documents in the present study, suggests that Cambridge must have been a vibrant place: not only were significant amounts of trade passing through, but there were also large ongoing construction projects, requiring labourers and skilled craftsmen. In other words, while the static tax-paying population of medieval Cambridge might have been average, its total day-to-day population is likely to have been relatively large and probably diverse; it has, for instance, been observed that Cambridge University had remarkably high percentages of northerners amongst its students (Aston, Duncan, and Evans 1980).

The entries in Table 6.2 are based on different sources: the population estimates are based on the poll tax of 1377 and the subsidy of 1524–1525. The figures for 1377 should in theory include every layperson over the age of 14 (except the very poor), while the figures for 1524–1525 record the maximum number of taxpayers in either year. The subsidy of 1524–1525 was assessed on landed income, moveable goods and what amounts to a poll tax on the better-off wage earners (see Palliser 2000: 758–764). The entries in Table 6.2 therefore provide an indication of the relative size and wealth between the various cities and towns in, respectively 1377 and 1524–1525, but not an accurate record of growth or decline.

At the time of the Domesday survey (see e.g. Darby 1957: 310–311), Cambridge appears to have been a predominately agricultural area. By the time of the present

Table 6.2 Taxpayers in 1377 and 1524/5 in Cambridge and other cities (after Palliser 2000: 442–44)

	Taxpayers 1377	Taxpayers 1524/5	Taxable wealth 1524/5
Cambridge	1,902	550	£ 97
Ely	1,394	300	–
London	23,314	–	–
Lynn	3,127	–	£ 302
Norwich	3,952	1,423	£ 749
Oxford	2,357	542	£ 105
Peterborough	850	–	£ 44

study, the town had a thriving industry, particularly in butchery and leatherworking, as is evidenced in several of the documents, which also include frequent complaints between the town and the University.

Cambridge University was established sometime in the early thirteenth century; the earliest reliable written records related to the University date to the reign of Henry III (1216–1272) (see e.g. Leedham-Green 1996: 3; Atkinson 1897: 241; also Orme 2006: 80–81). From the documents here studied, it is evident that the University not only made Cambridge an important centre of education but also functioned as an important centre of economic, administrative and legal activity, both on its own behalf and on behalf of the town of Cambridge, as the two quarrelled over rights and privileges.

Of the Colleges, Corpus Christi, God's House, Jesus, Michaelhouse, King's and St John's are all mentioned within the corpus, the latter two being especially prominent as a consequence of the archives searched. No foundation charters have been included in the present study or corpus, either because they have not been located within the archives searched, were not in English, or were issued by the Crown and therefore not local documents by the definition used by MELD (see p. 12). A few documents related to the establishment of St John's College have, however, been included, including a document where King's Hall (now a part of Trinity College) quitclaims a parcel of ground in favour of the soon to be established St John's College (Cambs D6068).

Several of the documents relate to properties owned by the Colleges. King's College appears to have owned a substantial amount of land in the parishes south of Cambridge, particularly in Grantchester: many of the earliest documents within the corpus are documents inherited by King's College from the Manor of Grantchester, which appears to have entered into the possession of King's College at around the time of its foundation or enlargement in respectively 1441 and 1443. Few manorial documents have otherwise been included in the corpus: with the exception of Grantchester, manors fall, on the whole, outside the catchment area of the present study.

While Cambridge appears to have had a fairly extensive self-government and enjoyed relatively wide liberties, very few documents produced by and for the municipal government itself appear to have survived.[5] In the present material, the municipal government and its officials are mostly encountered in conveyances with third parties, or as witnesses, either in private capacity or as representatives of the town of Cambridge.

In other words, while there are a few manorial documents, court rolls, rentals and so forth, the majority of the documents within the corpus are the sort that relate directly or indirectly to the construction and expansion of the colleges, the sale or lease of lands or the ongoing conflict between the University and the town of Cambridge.

Very little is known about the scribes who produced the various documents included in the present study: most of them are anonymous and the few whose names are known have left little record. Nevertheless, there is a handful of scribes whose names are known and of which there is sufficient record to make it possible to reconstruct, to a certain degree, what sort of social networks they had within Cambridge. For example, while the office of town clerk is predominantly anonymous, one of the clerks left his name and some record of his life and social circle. John Thirleby habitually autographed the texts he wrote, including a great many in Latin, currently held at St John's College Archives. Based on the record provided by the documents, as well as secondary sources, such as Cooper (1843), it is evident that John Thirleby associated with members of the administration of the University. He was one of the churchwardens of St Mary the Great in 1514–1515 along with Robert Hobbys, one of the bursars of King's College. Moreover, his own prosperity allowed his son to go on to study at Trinity Hall in Cambridge, be elected a fellow and graduate in law, and eventually go on to become the first and only bishop of Westminster, later transferred to Norwich and finally Ely (see e.g. Cooper 1843: 262–263).

In being churchwarden of St Mary the Great, John Thirleby would also have associated with one John Erliche: however, whether this would be the John Erliche who was one of the bursars of King's College or the one who was mayor of Cambridge and later MP or possibly a third John Erliche is difficult to establish from the surviving record. Several members of the same family, all named John

5. Most are found in a cartulary from the first half of the sixteenth century, known as the Corporation Cross Book (Cambridgeshire Archives: PB Box I/4). Its texts turned out to be difficult to date and the few that include a date are unlikely to be contemporary copies. No texts from it were included in the present study.

Erliche, held important positions within the municipal government of Cambridge. What is evident is that the town administration and that of the colleges were intertwined, both by relation and socially, and that the two communities were largely overlapping, despite the continued and ongoing quarrels. In short, assuming that it is possible to extrapolate from the few identifiable scribes to the unnamed and unidentified ones, it is evident that the scribes of the various documents did not live and work in isolation, but took an active role in the life of the town and had connections to both the town and the University.

On the basis of the historical context, one could, in short, expect the Cambridge texts to show a configuration that differs at least somewhat from that of the surrounding region, considering the large numbers of residents coming in from elsewhere; at the same time, a tendency towards homogeneity might be expected, as the various scribal communities within Cambridge appear to have been close-knit.

6.4 The findings

6.4.1 Preliminaries

One perceived problem with documentary texts is that they are short and often formulaic (see p. 8–10). However, if available in large enough numbers, they nevertheless provide good material for at least a limited number of linguistic forms. The set of linguistic features selected for the present study is therefore based primarily on the frequency and variability of those features, as well as on their suitability for the method of analysis. In addition, the features selected for this particular study should be relevant for a comparison with the rest of EC-MELD. For this purpose, the following features were selected: initial (wh), medial (gh) and the non-final vocalic elements in the Middle English lexical items ANY and SAID, two words which occur frequently and show variation within the corpus.[6]

6. The larger study in Bergstrøm (2017) included a further four orthographic features, as well as carrying out a detailed survey of personal pronouns and verb morphology. A study based on only four features may appear limited: however, it should be noted that all four features considered here are extremely frequent in the documentary material, much of which consists of texts with a relatively restricted range of vocabulary. Accordingly, the features give a fair (if far from comprehensive) picture of patterns of linguistic variation in the Cambridge and East Counties corpora.

6.4.2 The first vocalic element in ANY

In the Middle English period, there were three main spellings of the stressed vowel of ANY: *any, eny*, and *ony*. The first two spellings are considered to relate to the reflex of the most frequent form found in Old English: *ǣnig*. The variation between <a> and <e>, and the divergence between the present-day spelling *any* and the pronunciation /ɛni/, reflect qualitative and quantitative changes at different stages of development. Forms with Middle English short /a/, giving rise to the modern spelling *any*, reflect early shortening, i.e. in Late Old English, whereas forms with Middle English short /e/, giving rise to the modern pronunciation /ɛni/, reflect later shortening of /ɛ:/; both shortened forms could sometimes be subjected to later lengthening (see e.g. *OED* s.v. ANY; Dobson, 1968: § 70). Both forms reflect i-mutation in Old English from Proto-Germanic *ā*. The forms with <o>, on the other hand, reflect a continuation of the less common un-mutated Old English form *ānig* as well as continuing influence from *ān* 'one', followed by the rounding of *ā*, the same development affecting words such as *stān* 'stone'.

Table 6.3 shows the number of attestations of each form in the CCD as well as in the rest of EC-MELD. As may be observed from the table, *eny* is the most common variant in the CCD, at 44%, with *any* and *ony* making up, respectively, 36% and 21%. In the rest of the Eastern Counties, in contrast, *any* is the primary variant, the proportions being 44/34/22. *Ony* trails a distant third in both corpora and is frequent only in Suffolk and Norfolk, where the mean percentage per text amounts to 42%. Figure 6.1 gives the distribution within the CCD broken down into quarter centuries.

Table 6.3 Spellings of the initial vocalic element of ANY in the CCD and EC-MELD

Corpus	Number of texts	Attestations				Mean % per text		
		any	*eny*	*ony*	Total	*any*	*eny*	*ony*
CCD	59	98	336	74	508	36%	44%	21%
EC-MELD	131	176	133	69	378	44%	34%	22%

Spellings with <e> become increasingly common throughout the survey period, constituting a clear majority in the Cambridge texts by the sixteenth century (Figure 6.1). Outside of Cambridge, this would not seem to be the case: while *eny* is the primary spelling early on, it ceases to be so by the second quarter of the fifteenth century and never becomes the primary variant again (Figure 6.2). Moreover, nearly all of the early attestations of *eny* are from Middlesex (mostly London), which exhibits a very different pattern from most of the other counties (Figure 6.3).

What the present materials would seem to show, then, is a shift where, during the fifteenth century, the form *eny* increasingly replaced *any* in Cambridge; this development differs clearly, if not dramatically, from the overall development in the Eastern Counties.

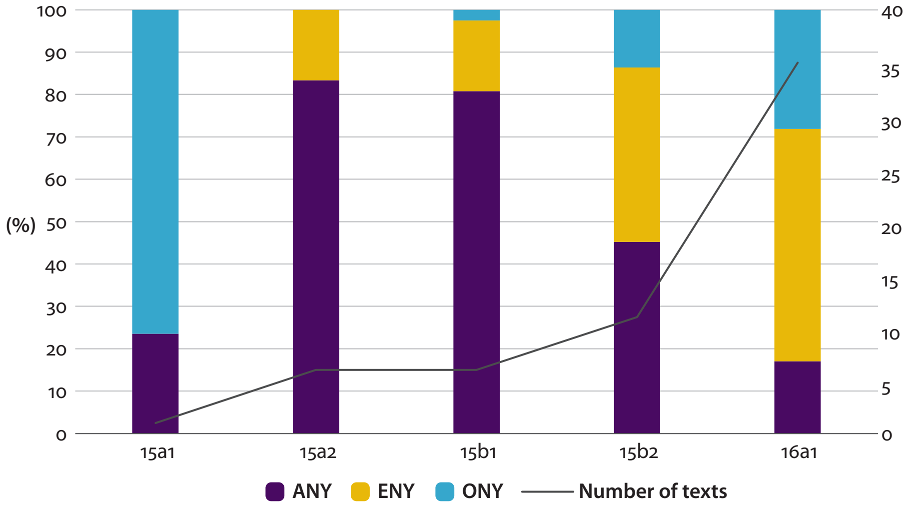


Figure 6.1 ANY in Cambridge, by quarter century

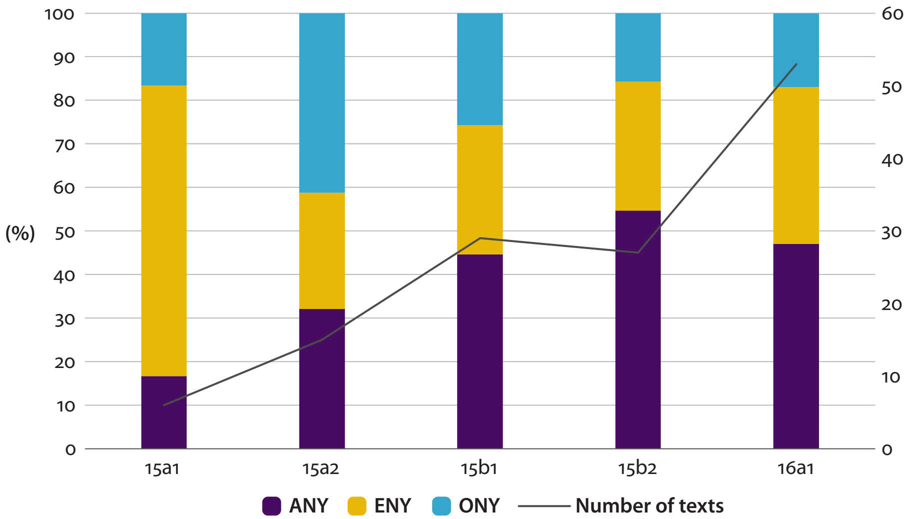


Figure 6.2 ANY in EC-MELD (not including Cambridge), by quarter century

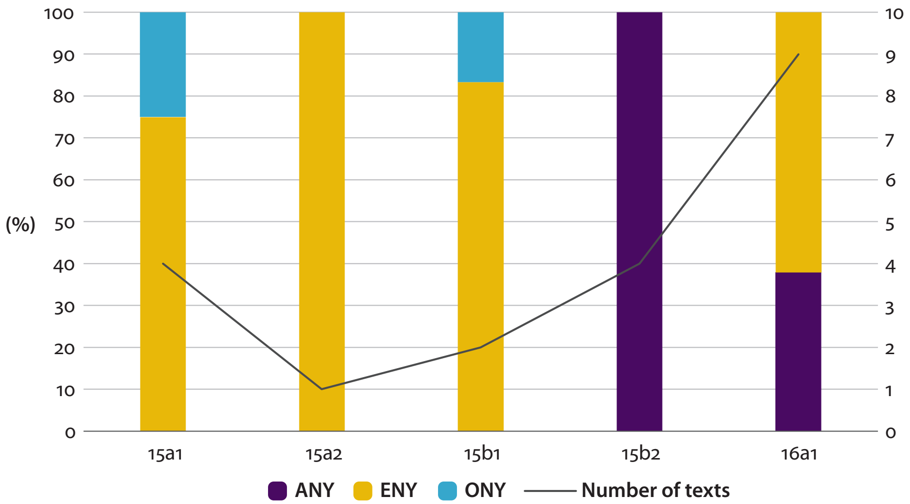


Figure 6.3 ANY in Middlesex, by quarter century

6.4.3 The vocalic element in SAID

One feature in which Cambridge differs markedly from the surrounding areas is the spelling of the item SAID; in the neighbouring counties, and the parts of Cambridgeshire not included in the CCD, the primary spelling is with <ei> or <ey>, whereas in Cambridge, the same word is overwhelmingly spelled with <ai> or <ay> (see Table 6.4). Ratios are 72 : 27 in Cambridge and 33 : 67 in the rest of EC-MELD. The rare forms <a> and <e> are included in the totals and in the calculations for the mean percentage per text. It may be noted that the items SAY, DAY and WAY also show somewhat higher proportions of <a> in Cambridge compared to the other counties; however, the difference is not nearly as dramatic (see Bergstrøm 2017: 178).

Table 6.4 Spellings of the vocalic element in SAID in the CCD and EC-MELD

Corpus	Number of texts	Attestations			Mean % per text	
		<ai>	<ei>	Total	<ai>	<ei>
CCD	105	2048	560	2613	72%	27%
EC-MELD	289	1051	2197	3250	33%	67%

The vowel in SAID goes back to OE /æ/ in *sægde* (Late West Saxon *sæde*). As with OE /e/ and /e:/ followed by /j/, the combination /æj/ developed into a diphthong by Early Middle English.[7] According to Dobson (1968: § 225), /ei/ (from both /e:j/ and /ej/) merged with /ai/ sometime during the second half of the thirteenth century (see also Jordan 1968: § 95); from then on, the resulting sound developed through several stages. In the first stage, the second element seems to have had an assimilatory influence on the first element, attracting it through [æ] to [ɛ], resulting in the diphthongs [æi] and [ɛi]. In the second stage, the first element, now [ɛ], would absorb the second element, giving the long vowel [ɛ:]. Going by the evidence provided by spelling and rhymes, Dobson (1968: § 225) claims that the monophthong was in common use from the early sixteenth century; it follows that the modified diphthongal pronunciations [æi] and [ɛi], must have developed earlier, probably sometime during the fifteenth century. Given the transitional state, it is perhaps not surprising that the spelling should oscillate; especially when it is also taken into consideration that the monophthong [ɛ:] was in Old French orthography usually represented by either <ai> or <ei> (see e.g. Scragg 1974: 49). Both graphemes appear in French loanwords which now have the diphthong /eɪ/, but only the second occurs in loanwords which have /i:/ from earlier /ɛ:/ (see e.g. Scragg 1974: 49).

Given the uneven coverage within the corpora, it seems prudent to single out the period of time with the most even coverage between the counties, that is, 1450–1475 (see also Table 6.1). Figure 6.4 compares the spellings of SAID in texts from 1450–1475; 69 texts from EC-MELD and 14 from the CCD. It is evident that there is a genuine difference in the preferred spelling of SAID between Cambridge and the surrounding counties and the parts of Cambridgeshire not included in the CCD. In its use of predominately <ai> and <ay> spellings, Cambridge is much more in line with texts from the northern parts of England; the counties of Cumberland, Durham, Lancastershire, Northumberland, Westmorland and Yorkshire (see Table 6.5).

While there is no clear geographical patterning within the East Midlands and East Anglia within EC-MELD, there evidently is a difference between the region and Cambridge. Whether this might reflect a phonological difference – Cambridge resisting the merger of /ei/ and /æi/ longer than the surroundings – is doubtful if not impossible. It is perhaps more probable that scribes in Cambridge simply retained the <ai> spelling, perhaps reinforced by the large numbers of northerners known to have been present in Cambridge, studying at the University (see Aston, Duncan and Evans 1980). The <ai> spelling, of course, eventually ended up in Standard English; however, the present figures give no indication of an increase

7. Minkova (2014: 205–206), postulates three diphthongs [ej], [ɛj] and [æj], from OE /e:/, /e/ and /æ/ respectively, with some doubt as to whether they were ever properly distinguished (Minkova 2014: 269).

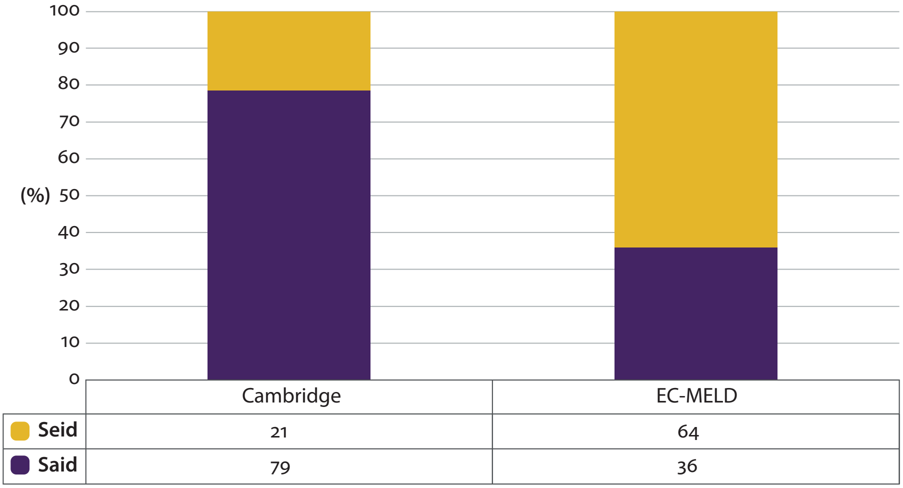


Figure 6.4 Spellings of the vocalic element in SAID in the CCD and EC-MELD, 1450–1475

Table 6.5 Spellings of the vocalic element in SAID in the northern counties, from MELD 2016.1

Item	Number of texts	Attestations			Mean % per text	
		<ai>	<ei>	Total	<ai>	<ei>
SAID	177	1,387	517	1,904	74%	26%

in its use, either in Cambridge or in the rest of the East Midlands and East Anglia. Instead, the <ai> spellings in Cambridge remain more or less at the same proportion throughout the last century here considered (not counting the first quarter century, for which data are insufficient), whereas in the neighbouring counties, <ei> is the primary variant and also stays at more or less the same proportion – between 60% and 80% – throughout the period (see Figures 6.5 and 6.6). Given that SAID is also one of the most frequent and widely attested items within both corpora, this difference cannot be due to the personal choices of a few scribes, but must indicate a genuine difference between Cambridge and the rest of the East Midlands and East Anglia; that the difference is not reflected to the same extent in the items SAY and DAY may suggest a phonological divergence, or simply different orthographic developments, perhaps related to the extreme frequency of SAID in documentary materials.

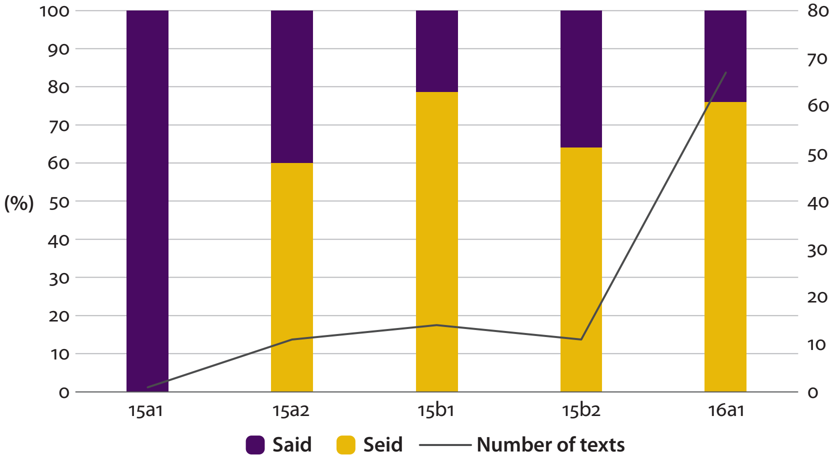


Figure 6.5 Spelling of the vocalic element in SAID over time in the CCD

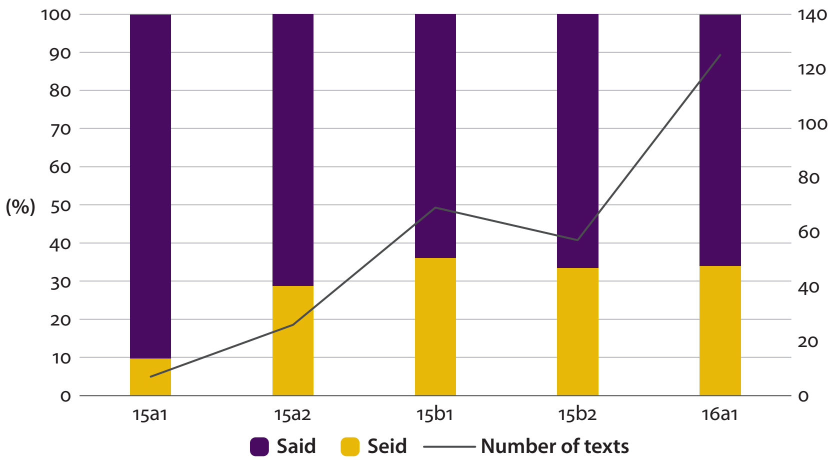


Figure 6.6 Spelling of the vocalic element in SAID in the neighbouring counties over time: EC-MELD

6.4.4 The consonantal element (gh)

The variable (gh) is here defined as the consonantal element that is functionally equivalent to <gh> in PDE and to word-medial and final <h>, as well as intervocalic and occasionally final <g>, in OE. In the present corpus, (gh) is attested not only in words that contain reflexes of Old English <g> and <h>, but also in several words that do not contain reflexes of either: words where <gh> constitute an unetymological spelling.

The Old English spellings, in these contexts, are generally considered to have mapped onto the palatal and velar fricatives, [ç] and [x] (see e.g. Scragg 1974: 23–24; also Wells 1982: 371, 408). The palatal and velar fricatives have disappeared from most present-day dialects of English, but may still be heard in traditional varieties of Scots. In a few words, the sounds were not lost, but merged with /f/, hence the seemingly anomalous <gh> for /f/ in words such as *cough, laugh*, and *tough* (see Scragg 1974: 23; also Dobson 1968: § 371).

In Middle English orthography, the variable (gh) is usually realized by <h>, <ȝ>, <ȝh> or <gh>; in the Early Middle English period, <s> is found as well (see e.g. Scragg 1974: 23–24; also Laing & Lass 2003; Wells 1982: 371, 408). By the fifteenth century <gh> had become the established form, presumably in analogy with <ch>, <sh> and <th>. In the present corpus (gh) is realized as <g>, <gh> and -Ø.

The data were collected in two stages. First, scanning an alphabetized list of all forms in the CCD and EC-MELD corpora with a questionnaire of words containing <h> in Old English, so as to capture all reflexes of OE medial and final <h>. The second stage consisted of a wildcard search that would capture all words containing the consonantal cluster <gh>, with the intent to capture any inverse spellings; that is, ones where <gh> is used in contexts where it is not a reflex of OE <h>. The search was finally expanded to include all variants of those words which were found to contain <gh>. The matches are listed below, divided into two sets; the first set consisting of words where the presence of <gh> is etymological, the second where it is not. Both sets are sorted alphabetically by headword.

1. *bough, boght, bought, boughte, bowght* BOUGHT; *brought, broughte, browght* BROUGHT;*doghter, doughter, doughter, doughter', doughters, dowghters* DAUGHTER; *draught, draughte* DRAUGHT; *aight, eight, eyght, eyghte, eyght-, heyght* EIGHT; *heigh, high, high-, highe, hye, hygh, hygh-* HIGH; *knyght* KNIGHT; *law, lawe, lau-*, *law-, le-, lie-* LAW;*lightes, lyght, lyghtes, lyghtys* LIGHT; *mught, myght, myghten, -myghty* MIGHT; *neighbores, neyghebores, neyghbor-* NEIGHBOUR; *nygh* NIGH; *-nightes, nightes, nyght, nyghtes* NIGHT; *naughte, nought* NOUGHT; *ought, ought, oughte, oughten, owght* OUGHT; *awn, awne, oune, own, owne*, OWN; *plo-, plog-, plogh, plogh, plogh-, plough, plough-, ploughe, plougheȝ, plow-, plowgh, plowghe, plowgheȝ, plowis, plowys* PLOUGH; *right, right-, right, righte, ryght* RIGHT; *sight, -sight, sight-, syght, -syght* SIGHT; *slawghter'* SLAUGHTER; *thoughte* THOUGHT; *thourgh, thourght, throgh-, through, -thurgh* THROUGH; *trough* TROUGH; *weyghtes, weyghtes* WEIGHT; *willoughes, willowes* WILLOW; *wright, -wright, -wrught* WRIGHT; *wrought* WROUGHT
2. *about, aboute, abowght, abowt, abowte* ABOUT; *above-, aboue, aboue-, abowe, abowe- abowen, abowght* ABOVE;*benefighttes* , BENEFIT; *chipcloughtes, cloughtes, clowghtes* CLOUT; *couerlyght, couerlyght couylyght* COVERLET; *dought,*

doughted, doughtted, dowghted, doute DOUBT; *lenghth, length lengthe*, LENGTH; *lougher* LOWER; *-ought, out, out-, oute, oute-, owt, owt-, owte, owtt, ught, ught* OUT; *profett, profight, profite, profites, profites, profitte, profittes, profyt, profyte, profytes, profytte, profyttes, proufitties* PROFIT; *strengh, strenghe, strenght, strenghth, strength, strengthe, strengthyng* STRENGTH; *trough, trought, trouthe, trowth, troyth, truthe* TRUTH; *whight, -whight, whighte, whit white, white-, qwit-, qwyte* WHITE; *wrighting, wrightyng, wrightynges, writinges, writyng, writyng, writynges, wryting, wrytyng, wrytynges* WRITING

The appearance of <gh> in words such as LENGTH and STRENGTH appears to be simply a case of more or less spontaneous reversal of elements, a phenomenon that may be seen as the equivalent to the process known as metathesis in the spoken mode (see e.g. Minkova 2014: 48, 119–20). It is highly unlikely that <ght> should here signal anything different from <gth> and the items STRENGTH and LENGTH have therefore not been considered further.

In the present material, the loss of the two medial fricatives, [ç] and [x], is reflected in a series of occasional spellings. Firstly, in the presumably more "phonemic" spelling of the word HIGH as *hye*, found in several texts (D6006, D6090, D6141#4 and D6141#6). The same spelling is also attested in a text from Landbeach, a couple of miles north of the catchment area of the CCD. Apart from the form *hye*, words with historical <h> are universally found with the spelling <gh> within the CCD.

Secondly, it is reflected in a series of inverse spellings. Variant spellings with <gh> of the words ABOUT, CLOUT, DOUBT, OUT, TRUTH, WHITE, WITHOUT and WRITING are found in fourteen different texts from Cambridge, belonging to different functional categories and time periods. This suggests that the spelling <gh>

Table 6.6 Items with unhistorical <gh> spellings: Number of occurrences and number of texts

Item	Etymology	<gh> spellings	Texts with <gh> spellings
ABOUT	OE onbūtan	4	3
ABOVE	OE abufan	1	1
CLOUT	OE clut	3	2
COVERLET	OF covre-lit	3	2
DOUBT	OF doute	7	5
OUT	OE ūt	3	3
TRUTH	OE trēowð	2	1
WHITE	OE hwīt	8	5
WITHOUT	OE wiðutan	3	3
WRITING	OE wrītan	9	5

was free and available to be used for different purposes in the orthographic system. The words appearing with unhistorical <gh> are listed in Table 6.6 with their etymology, the number of <gh> spellings, and the number of texts containing them; names such as "Whitewell" have been excluded. Table 6.7. gives a complete list of the texts containing inverse spellings with (gh) and the number of inverse spellings within those texts.

Three inverse spellings are attested for the word OUT in the CCD: the variant form *ught* is found in two texts, D6019 and D6037, dating, respectively, from 1478 and 1489. Both texts provide an explicit provenance, stating that they were given at

Table 6.7 Texts with unhistorical <gh> spellings

County	MELD code	Number of inverse spellings
Buckinghamshire	D5005	1
Cambridgeshire	D6001#1	1
Cambridgeshire	D6001#4	1
Cambridgeshire	D6001#8	1
Cambridgeshire	D6018	1
Cambridgeshire	D6019	1
Cambridgeshire	D6037	1
Cambridgeshire	D6041	1
Cambridgeshire	D6042	3
Cambridgeshire	D6063	6
Cambridgeshire	D6082	5
Cambridgeshire	D6083	1
Cambridgeshire	D6094	4
Cambridgeshire	D6103	1
Cambridgeshire	D6105	2
Cambridgeshire	D6130	1
Essex	D2674	2
Norfolk	D0858#12	1
Norfolk	D0873	1
Northamptonshire	D4227#20	1
Suffolk	D0518	1
Suffolk	D3014	3
Suffolk	D5035	1
Suffolk	D5040#6	2
Total	Texts: 24	Occurrences: 43

King's College, and both relate to a property by Baynard's Castle in London. While the two texts are written in different hands, given that they relate to the same property, it is none too unlikely that the author of the second text may have consulted the earlier. Nevertheless, he evidently did not see the spelling *ught* as problematic. A third text, D6130, contains the variant spelling *withought* 'without'. This is a draft or copy of a sale by which Clare Hall sells St Martin's Hostel to King's College, dated to 1465. It also provides an explicit provenance, stating that it was made at Cambridge. None of the three texts contain any other spellings or occurrences of the word OUT. Outside of Cambridge, the spelling *ought* is attested in a lease from Buckinghamshire (D5005), dated to 1480. The spelling *w^{t}ought* of the related word WITHOUT is attested in a 1498 lease from Suffolk (D0518) and in a copy of a rule from Northampton, dated to 1509 (D4227#20).

Seven inverse spellings are attested for WHITE in the CCD, all in the form *whight*, spread across four texts; two of these are found in the same codex (D6001#1 and D6001#4) while the other two are consecutive accounts from the Manor of Grantchester, covering the years 1464–1466 (D6063 and D6082).

Inverse spellings of WHITE are not attested outside Cambridgeshire; however, the variant spelling *wight* appears in a text from outside the CCD, D6018, localized to Anglesey Abbey, in Cambridgeshire, to the northeast of Cambridge.

Inverse spellings of DOUBT are attested in three Cambridge texts as well as one text from Suffolk; the forms are *doughted, dowghted* and *doughtable*. While not direct copies of each other, the three Cambridge texts are closely related and two of them (D6103 and D6105) cite large passages of the first (D6094); all three date from 1503. It is possible that the origins of the spellings *doughted* and *dowghted* are attributable to the scribe of D6094; however, the other two scribes evidently did not find the spellings problematic, as they were happy to copy them even though the shared passages are not otherwise identical in spelling. *Doughtable* is found in an affidavit from Mendelsham in Suffolk, some thirty miles directly east of Cambridge (D3014), dated to 1457 and produced by a scribe who also used an inverse spelling of WRITING, *wryghtyng*. Outside these texts, the word DOUBT is spelled *doute* throughout the CCD and EC-MELD.

Five inverse spellings of WRITING are attested within the CCD, rendered as *wrightyng* or *wrighting*, and found in three separate texts: D6001#8, a note in the account book of the Great Church of St Mary Near the Market from 1518, and in two awards, D6041 and D6042, associated with Grantchester and dating from, respectively, 1499 and 1519. The note is found in a codex containing several other texts which also contain inverse spellings with <gh>; as these texts are in different hands, this might suggest that inverse spellings of WRITING with <gh> may be associated with the text community centred around the Great Church of St Mary Near the Market in Cambridge.

Outside Cambridge, inverse spellings of WRITING are attested in two texts from Suffolk, in the Mendelsham affidavit (D3014) and in a financial account from Bungay, some twenty kilometres southeast of Norwich and twenty northeast from Mendelsham, dated to 1524.

The inverse spellings *trough* and *trought* TRUTH are attested in a single text from Cambridge, D6094, also containing inverse spellings of DOUBT; none have been identified outside of this specific text anywhere in MELD.

Finally, inverse spellings of ABOUT and CLOUT are found in two closely related set of texts in Cambridge: consecutive accounts from the Manor of Grantchester, covering the fourth and fifth years of the reign of Edward IV (D6063 and D6082). ABOUT is, in addition, found in a text from Norfolk, an appointment from 1469 (D0858#12). Inverse spellings of CLOUT are also referenced in the *OED* in the writings of Thomas Elyot, who had estates in and became an MP for Cambridgeshire (see *OED* s.v. CLOUT). Of the words found to contain inverse spellings with <gh>, only two are not attested within the Cambridge materials: the spelling *coverlight* COVERLET is found in Essex and Suffolk and *abowght* ABOVE in Norfolk.

In addition to the items discussed above, there are attestations of <gh> in two words borrowed from French, PROFIT and BENEFIT. *Profight* appears to be a fairly common variant, attested in four texts from outside Cambridgeshire in MELD as well as in the *OED*. However, it probably goes back to the Latin *profectus* (cf. also the Old French by-form *profict*) and as such might have historic and etymological reasons to contain <gh>. *Benefighttes* seems to have had the same sort of origins, however, no other <gh> spellings of BENEFIT are attested in MELD.

In contexts where no historical consonantal element is present, <gh> spellings appear to be primarily a Cambridge feature, with some presence also in Suffolk. While there are scattered attestations elsewhere, in Cambridge, unhistorical <gh> spellings are found in a wide variety of texts, spanning a long period of time and representing a wide range of contexts. Within the Cambridge corpus, it is far more common for <gh> to be added than it is it to be removed: this clearly indicates that the digraph was perceived to serve at least some other purpose beyond merely reflecting a lost pronunciation. With the loss of the palatal and velar fricatives, the consonant cluster <gh> would have been available to be re-appropriated for new uses. In Cambridge, it seems that <gh> might have come to be used as a diacritic marker, indicating a long preceding vowel. After the loss of the palatal and velar fricatives, the presence of <gh> in words such as *bought* and *night* could be reinterpreted as a part of the vocalic element, and it seems that its use was then extended to other similar contexts, much in the same way that final <e> continues to be used in Present-Day English.

Given that unhistorical <gh> is such a rare feature outside Cambridge and that Cambridge was and is a centre for education, it might be that the feature arose and spread from there; such a reinterpretation of the function of <gh> may of course have taken place elsewhere as well, but it seems not to have become common in other areas.

6.4.5 The consonantal element (wh)

The written variable (wh) corresponds to Old English <hw>[8] and is now universally written <wh>; it mostly maps to the sound [w] in Present-day English accents, except for those accents (including most Scottish ones) where it corresponds to [hw] or [ʍ].

The majority of words which are spelled with initial <wh> in present-day English are the descendants of Old English words whose normal spelling in Late West Saxon (as given in Bosworth & Toller 1898) has initial <hw>. The spelling <wh> appears occasionally from the eleventh century onwards; it is first found in regular use in the *Ormulum* (Oxford, Bodleian Library: MS Junius 1; see e.g. *OED* s.v. WH; also Bliss 1983: 11). It becomes the dominant spelling towards the end of the thirteenth century (see Bliss 1983: 11; *OED* s.v WH) and has been very stable: all Old English words with initial <hw> that still survive are now spelled with <wh> (see e.g. Scragg 1974: 47).

Initial <w> for (wh) is very occasionally found in surviving Old English materials: *OED* (s.v. WH) cites examples from the Épinal glossary and from ninth-century Bede glosses, as well as the eleventh century *Rule of St. Benedict*. It becomes more frequent in the twelfth century, chiefly in interrogatives; and continues to be in widespread use in Middle English (see e.g. Bliss 1983: 11).

Spellings with initial <q> (such as <qw>, <qu>, <qwh> and <quh>) are found as early as the thirteenth century in East Anglia: the word *qual* 'whale' occurs in a bestiary from Norfolk (British Library MS Arundel 292). In the *Linguistic Atlas of Early Middle English* (1150–1325), <q> spellings only appear in a limited area – Norfolk, North Lincolnshire and Yorkshire – and only in the latest texts (Laing & Lass 2019: 101). After 1300, as evidenced by LALME, they become a characteristic feature of northern texts. While this may merely be a reflection of the fact that there are very few northern Middle English texts surviving from before 1400, Laing and Lass (2016: § 1.2.1) suggest that the distribution "also (at least partly) reflects the chronology of the development". The <q> spellings were common throughout the Middle English period in the northern and North Midland areas, including Norfolk, and they continued to be used in Scotland until the eighteenth century.

In his survey of place-names in thirteenth-century Lay Subsidy Rolls, Kristensson (1995: 143–146) finds <wh> or <w> for OE <hw> in Cambridgeshire;

8. For a list of Old (and Middle) English spelling variants, see Laing & Lass 2019: 99.

he finds *Wetewell* for Whitwell (from OE *hwit*), which also has three attestations in the present corpus as *Whitewell*. Forms with <qw> are, in his East Midland materials, only attested in Norfolk. In the present material, <qw> is found in one place-name, *Qwitdichfurlong*', in a text that also refers to the *qwyte chanons* 'white canons' of Cambridge (D6088#1). In the larger corpus, the name *Qwydman*', appears in a text from Suffolk (D5040#6).

Initial (wh) is attested in the following words and forms within the CCD:

> *qwhat, what, whatt* WHAT; *wheate, whete, wheete, whet* WHEAT; *wheles, whelford, wheliʒ* WHEEL; *qwhan, qwhen, whan, whan', whane, whann, whanne, when, when', whenn, whun'* WHEN; *qwhar, qwher, wher, wher', wher-, where, where-* WHERE; *wether, wheder, wheder, whether'* WHETHER; *qwich, qwych, which, whiche, whych, whyche, wich, wiche, wych, wyche* WHICH; *while, whill, whils, whyle* WHILE; *witsonday* WHITSUN; *qwit-, qwyte, whight, whighte, whit, white, whyt, wyte* WHITE; *qwho, qwo, who, whoo* WHO; *whole, wholl* WHOLE; *whom, whom', whome* WHOM; *whos, whose* WHOSE

There is also a single attestation of <wh> in a word which is otherwise spelled with <w>, *whythold* 'withhold', in D6096. In the larger corpus, <wh> is in addition found in the words WHARF and WHY.

In addition, <qw> is attested in several words where it corresponds to <qu> in PDE; such words go back to either OE <cw> (QUICK), or Old French <qu> (QUIT, QUART). Spellings with <qwh> are only attested in the context of (wh). In the following, <qwh> spellings are collapsed with <qw>.

Table 6.8 Initial (wh): Distribution between spelling variants in CCD

PDE	Total	<wh>	<w>	<qw(h)>
which	171	154	14	3
where	209	207	0	2
when	39	35	0	4
whose	33	33	0	0
wheat	28	28	0	0
what	19	15	0	4
white	19	16	1	2
whom	17	17	0	0
who	16	13	0	3
whether	8	7	1	0
while	7	7	0	0
wheel	5	5	0	0
whole	4	4	0	0
whitsun	1	0	1	0
Total	576	541	17	18

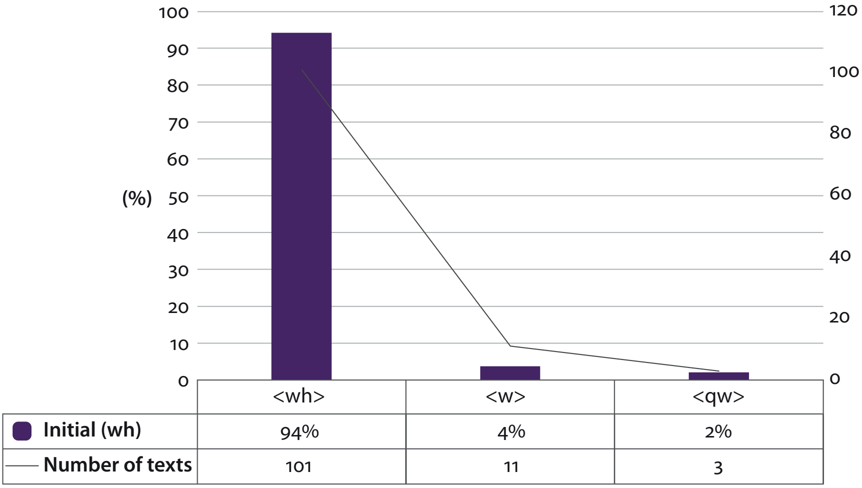
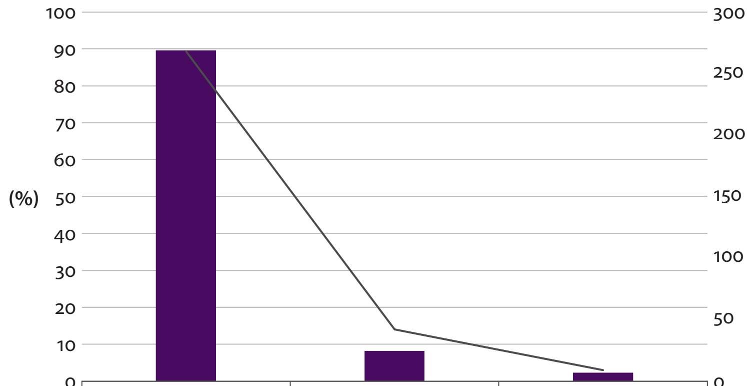


Figure 6.7 Initial (wh): Distribution of spelling variants in CCD (mean % per text)

Table 6.9 Initial (wh): Distribution between spelling variants in EC-MELD

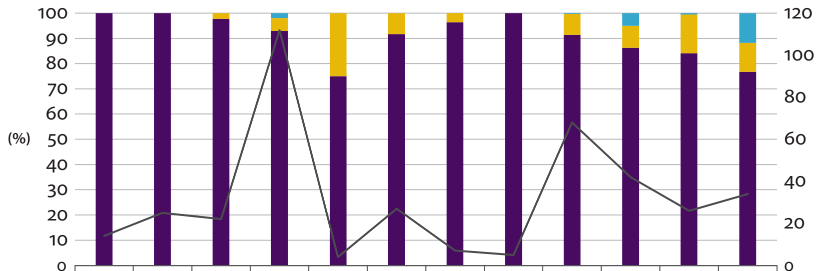
PDE	Total	<wh>	<w>	<qw>
which	412	315	83	14
where	262	260	0	2
when	69	66	1	2
whose	12	11	0	1
wheat	25	25	0	0
what	37	37	0	0
white	29	27	2	0
whom	21	20	0	1
who	9	9	0	0
whether	2	2	0	0
while	10	10	0	0
whole	4	4	0	0
whitsun	2	1	1	0
wharf	4	4	0	0
why	4	4	0	0
Total	909	795	87	20

An overview of the variation found within the CCD is provided in Table 6.8 and Figure 6.7. The clear majority spelling within the Cambridge materials is <wh>; the other two spellings, <qw> and <w> are each only found in a handful of items and texts within the CCD. A similar pattern may be found in the larger corpus (see Table 6.9 and Figure 6.8). The majority of the <qw> spellings are found in texts from East Anglia (see Figure 6.9).



	<wh>	<w>	<qw>
Initial (wh)	90%	8%	2%
Number of texts	268	42	9

Figure 6.8 Initial (wh): Distribution of spelling variants in EC-MELD (mean % per text)



	Beds	Berks	Bucks	Cambs	Ely	Essex	Herts	Hunts	Middx	Norfolk	Norths	Suffolk
QW	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%	0%	12%
W	0%	0%	2%	5%	25%	8%	4%	0%	8%	9%	15%	11%
WH	100%	100%	98%	93%	75%	92%	96%	100%	91%	86%	84%	77%
Number of texts	14	25	22	112	4	27	7	5	68	42	26	34

Figure 6.9 Initial (wh): Distribution by county

In most present-day accents, words with initial (wh) have [w], reflecting the merger that has made "Wales" a homophone of "whales". The loss of preaspiration in the onset of stressed syllables represents one stage of the continuing lenition process of [h] (see Schreier 2005: 100), which has been an unstable element throughout the history of English. It has been suggested that such unstable phonetic elements are typically either lost or strengthened (see e.g. Lutz 1989). Thus, in earlier varieties of English, it may be assumed that [hw] or [xw] could either merge with [w] or be strengthened to a cluster such as [kw]. On the basis of alliterative evidence (e.g. Minkova 2004: 20; cf. also Laing & Lass 2019: 103), it has been suggested that in some northern varieties the sound merged not with [w], but with [kw]; that is, initial [h] was not lost as it was in the South, but strengthened to [k].

No text within the CCD contains exclusively <qw> or <qwh> spellings, and only one text, the Statutes and Ordinances of the Guild of All Saints (D6014#1), makes consistent and significant use of them. In the larger corpus, five texts use exclusively <qw> spellings, all from East Anglia: D0406 and D0522 from Norfolk and D3008, D4422, and D5031 from Suffolk. Of these, only D4422 contains more than one item with attestations of (wh).

The twelve attested <qwh> spellings and three of the six attested <qw> spellings in the CCD are all found within the All Saints text. With the exception of the two words *qwo* 'who' and *qwych* 'which', <qwh> would, within D6014#1, seem to contrast with <qw>, which is otherwise used consistently in words which in Present-day English are spelled with <qu>, pronounced /kw/, such as *qwyke* 'quick' and *qwarte* 'quart'. This provides a strong indication that <qw> (but not <qwh>) was associated with /kw/. However, since "who" and "which" are also found spelled *who* and *wych*, it seems unlikely that these two words should have had the same initial sound as *qwyke* and *qwarte*.

Other examples from the same geographical area suggest that spellings with <qw> are merely an orthographic convention (a W-feature; see McIntosh 1974: 603 and p. 106 in the present volume); Davis makes this point about the use of <qw> in the letters of William and Clement Paston, both of whom studied at Cambridge:

> the alternation with *w-* [in the letters of Clement] is enough to show that the *qw-* form is purely conventional and that the pronunciation was [w]; and this is confirmed by William's spelling of 'was' as *qwas* (Davis 1954: 124)

Spellings with <qw> or <qwh> may, therefore, relate to spoken-language features in the writing systems of some medieval writers, but do not necessarily do so in the writing systems of others. Given that there are no examples in the All Saints text (D6014#1) or in the whole of the CCD of a reverse spelling of <qw>, it would seem most probable that the <qw> and <qwh> spellings of (wh) in D6014#1 are conventional and that the pronunciation was [w] or [hw], as in the letters of William and Clement Paston. In short, there is no evidence to suggest a merger of [w]/[hw] and [kw]. Rather, the All Saints scribe had both spellings available to him, and although he clearly preferred <qwh>, he would use <qw>, <w>, or <wh> where the situation demanded it, especially in terms of the physical writing area (see Bergstrøm 2017: 199).

The three remaining <qw> spellings in the CCD are incidental spellings in texts where <wh> spellings otherwise constitute the norm; once in an addition in a different hand to D6140, a note dated to somewhere between 1447 and 1465, and in two names, only six words apart, in an account from 1436–37:

(6.1) lying' in qwitdichfurlong' betwex y^{e} lond of y^{e} qwyte chanons of Cambrigg' (D6088#1)

'lying in White Ditch Furlong, between the land of the White Canons of Cambridge'

These spellings would not seem to be part of a wider pattern; even within this account (which is of a substantial length) they appear only in the single line cited. While <qw> and <qwh> are typical of both Norfolk and the North, it would seem that these spellings did not spread effectively into Cambridge materials. Nevertheless, the presence of the forms here discussed shows that, although rare in Cambridge, the <qw> and <qwh> spellings were at the very least considered acceptable spellings and not in need of immediate correction. Given that the spellings are rare within Cambridge, it seems likely that the scribe of D6014#1, while undoubtedly a resident of the town, had a linguistic background from somewhere outside Cambridge, for instance, from the extreme north of Cambridgeshire or northern Norfolk (see Bergstrøm 2017: 192 and Bergstrøm 2013: 56–57). It may be noted that the same text also otherwise contains forms more typical of the northern parts of East Anglia and of the North, such as *noth* NOT, *thar* THEIR and *theis* THESE.

6.5 Discussion and conclusions

In the discussion of medieval Cambridge (6.3), it was suggested that Cambridge, with its considerable number of temporary residents, might be expected to differ linguistically from the surrounding areas; it was also suggested that one might expect the materials to be fairly homogenous, given the close-knit and overlapping character of the scribal communities.

The present study has focussed on three features where Cambridge differs, sometimes markedly, from the surrounding region and, in the case of (gh), from much of the rest of England, as well as one feature, (wh), which suggests that variation was nevertheless tolerated and that both scribes and readers must have had a large passive repertoire of variants available to them. These four features alone do not, of course, allow for any firm conclusions about the written language of medieval Cambridge; however, they do suggest certain tendencies, also suggested by the larger study in Bergstrøm (2017).

First of all, the linguistic patterns shown in the Cambridge materials differ in several respects from the surrounding Eastern Counties area. Most notably, the primary variant of SAID within the Cambridge material is the form spelled with <ai>, which aligns more with materials from the northern parts of MELD than with materials from the rest of the Eastern Counties, the item SAID being one of the best attested within MELD. When it comes to minority forms, it should be pointed out that the coverage of Cambridge is more complete than that of most other places within MELD; minor Cambridge forms lacking in the surrounding area may therefore simply reflect the comparatively more sparse materials from those areas. Within the Cambridge materials, for instance, there are rare but occasional <a> spellings of the third person plural pronouns, typical of the North, which were not attested at all in the neighbouring counties within MELD 2016.1 (see Bergstrøm 2017: 114–15, 121–23). Such evidence might nevertheless be suggestive and compound the evidence provided by other better attested features.

If taken together, such features might suggest that there is a pattern of northern configuration present in the Cambridge materials that is not present in the materials within the rest of EC-MELD. However, in other items there are patterns of a clearly southern or western configuration, as in the case of ANY, which also shows patterns that are different from those in the surrounding areas.

This complexity has to be seen in conjunction with the historical context and the scribes and language users within Cambridge. As a university town, Cambridge was unlike any other town within the Eastern Counties. If we assume that Cambridge was a place that people travelled to, studied in, but did not necessarily grow up in, it is perhaps none too surprising that the spellings attested in the Cambridge materials should not entirely align with what is attested in texts from the surrounding region in MELD. Some of the scribes were local and are known to have grown up and lived in Cambridge; at the same time, it would seem natural to suppose that some of the students who travelled to Cambridge from the North and elsewhere should have stayed on as administrative staff such as clerks and receivers, and as masters and doctors find themselves elected or appointed to various offices within the University. Cambridge was also situated along the trade route between the North and London, and thus would have participated in the chains of weak-tie networks that may be assumed to lie behind the numerous northern forms which ended up in standard English (see Wright 2001).

On the whole, it would seem that scribes in Cambridge picked up forms both from across the region and from the northern parts of England and created an amalgamation that might be seen as cosmopolitan but which, on the whole, is also representative of the Eastern Counties; of the items examined, it is only SAID where Cambridge truly does not fit in with the neighbouring counties. Several of the differences are due to a difference in pace when it comes to adopting new and innovative forms. Cambridge appears to have adopted the innovative form *eny* ANY more readily and thoroughly than much of the rest of England; showing a shift from *any* to *eny* between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (see Figures 6.1 and 6.2, p. 137).

Both the rise of *eny* and the development of (gh) suggest that Cambridge might have been a locus for scribal innovation. This is suggested in particular by the development whereby (gh) is adopted in what seems to be a diacritic function, indicating a long preceding vowel; presumably in analogy with words such as "knight" and "night" that had lost the postvocalic fricative and had a lengthened vowel (see p. 146; also Bergstrøm 2017: 7.4.4). The unhistorical <gh> is only very occasionally attested outside Cambridgeshire, suggesting that it might be an innovation that began in Cambridge, or at least was adopted there, but failed to spread to the rest of England.

The features considered here, accordingly, suggest two basic characteristics of the Cambridge documentary language, also identified in Bergstrøm (2017): it differs from that of the surrounding areas, and it shows a tendency for innovation. What this limited study does not show clearly is a third characteristic found in Bergstrøm (2017): that the written language in the Cambridge documents is very homogenous when compared to the materials elsewhere in MELD, be that the Northwest Midlands studied by Thengs (2013), the North or even London (see Bergstrøm 2017: 9). All these characteristics agree well with the situation of Cambridge as a vibrant centre of education and commerce, forming a tight-knit but regionally mixed community, connected to North and South by weak-tie networks fostering innovation. To ascertain more precisely what role Cambridge played in the development of written English requires further studies of the materials now compiled into MELD, as well as a reference corpus of non-local documents issued by the central government offices in London; what is clear from the present study and from Bergstrøm (2017) is, however, that Cambridge had its own identity, developing at a different pace and in a different direction both from the more rural surroundings and from nearby urban centres, including London.

CHAPTER 7

Knutsford and Nantwich

Scribal variation in late medieval Cheshire

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7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a study of 42 documentary texts from two Cheshire townships, Knutsford and Nantwich. The purpose of the study is to compare the linguistic variation in the Knutsford and Nantwich materials respectively, with particular focus on supralocalizing tendencies in the two scribal communities, and to relate both to the Cheshire materials in MELD as a whole.

Cheshire on the whole is rich in late medieval English documentary texts, 124 of which are included in the MELD corpus. The county was originally part of a three-year pilot study for the MELD project (Thengs 2013), which accounts for its relatively large presence in the corpus compared to most other counties; it is second in number of texts only to Cambridgeshire (see p. 17). The Knutsford and Nantwich areas are particularly interesting because they both provide a relatively large body of material with a good diachronic range, but represent two very different kinds of community. Even though the two townships are situated only 32 km apart (see Figure 7.1), they differ greatly in terms of economy and settlement patterns, something that also seems to be reflected in their linguistic usage.

The present study compares a set of linguistic variables in the Knutsford and Nantwich materials and relates the findings to their geographical and historical context. The variables include both purely orthographic and speech-related features (see p. 106): initial (th) and (wh), the vocalic element in LAND, the third person plural possessive and objective pronouns (THEIR and THEM) and the plural suffix *-x*. These features, which overlap partly with those discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, were chosen both because of their general variability in the Northwest Midland area and their frequency in the present material.

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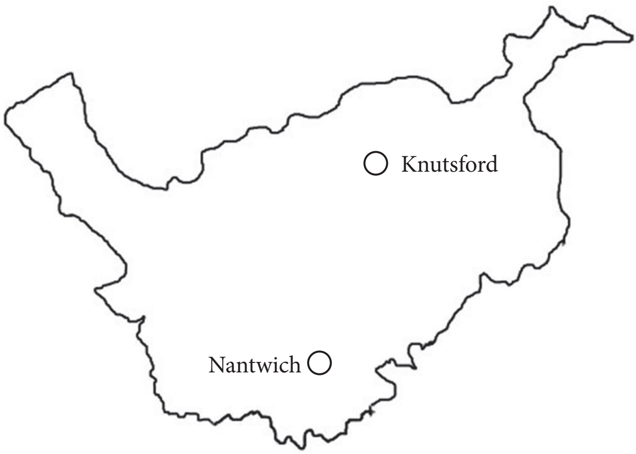

Figure 7.1 Outline of Cheshire, showing Knutsford and Nantwich

7.2 The geographical and historical context

7.2.1 The Knutsford area

Knutsford was a medieval market town in the northeastern part of the old County Palatine of Chester (now Cheshire), situated 10 km northeast of Northwich, 15 km southeast of Warrington, 15 km southwest of Stockport and 15 km northwest of Macclesfield; it lies approximately 40 km to the east of Chester. Its name is found in the Domesday Book as *Cunetesford*, or Canute's (ON *Knútr*) Ford, possibly referring to the crossing either of the river Lily or the Birkin brook near Booths by King Canute (1016–35; Dodgson 1970: 73–74). The town is now the centre of the Knutsford civil parish, created in 1741, which also includes the townships of Ollerton, Toft and Bexton. In the late Middle Ages, Knutsford chapelry, together with Over Peover chapelry, was part of the ancient parish of Rostherne, surrounded by the parishes of Bowdon, Mobberley, Great Budworth and Lymm.

The Knutsford area was, and still is, largely rural. The Cheshire salt belt lies to its southwest and had little bearing on the Knutsford landscape (Freeman *et al.* 1966: 176–77). No monasteries or large administrative centres were situated nearby, which probably meant little direct influence from larger governing bodies on the religious and lay administration of the area.

The texts included in this study are localized to villages situated approximately within a seven-kilometer radius of Knutsford. This delimitation crosses both modern and ancient parish boundaries; however, in order to provide sufficient material to make possible a chronological study of the development of the language of a geographically limited area, it was decided to include texts not only from

Knutsford itself, but from the surrounding villages as well. The delimitation also makes sense from a socio-historical point of view: as will be shown below, most of the families involved are linked in one way or another, either by inheritance, marriage, leases or as parties to an arbitration.[1] Within the seven-kilometer radius are located the townships of Mobberley, Warford, Nether and Over Peover, Allostock, Nether and Over Tabley and High Legh, clockwise from the northeast. Knutsford itself is divided into Nether Knutsford, or Knutsford proper, and Over Knutsford, or Knutsford Booths.

The manor of Over Knutsford, also known as Knutsford Booths or simply the Booths, located one kilometer southeast of Nether Knutsford, was the home of one of the oldest land-owning families in Cheshire, the Legh of Booths family, going back to John de Legh I (d. 1321–22), son of Sir William de Venables of Bradwall and Agnes, daughter of Richard de Legh of West Hall in High Legh. Booths Hall remained their seat until it was sold in the 1930s. The Legh of Booths document collection is now held by Keele University Library in North Staffordshire, and consists of approximately 400 documents dating from the thirteenth to the twentieth century (Harris 1999: Introduction). Of the late medieval documents in this collection, a comparatively high proportion are in English.

Of the 25 documents from the Knutsford area that have been included in this study, ten relate to the Legh of Booths family, represented by Sir John de Legh VI (d. probably at the battle of Blore Heath, 23 September 1459); Roger de Legh, his brother; John de Legh VII, squire (d. *c.*1470), son and heir of John VI; Philip Legh, squire (d. 2 November 1526, aged 72), second son of John VI, and heir in tail to John Legh VIII (d. *c.*1484, with no male heirs), only son of John VII (Harris 1999: Appendix 1). The family owned lands primarily in the area south of Knutsford, but also elsewhere in Cheshire.

Another branch of the Legh family, from which the Legh of Booths line descended, resided in High Legh. The documents in this study do not show any particular connection between the two branches other than the name, and the three documents here included relating to High Legh all involve Henry de Legh (d. *c.*1466). Henry was married twice and had several children by his first wife, but his son Nicholas (d. *c.*1502), by his second wife, Ellen Bruen, seems to have been his heir. Their land holdings seem to have been centred around High Legh, 7 km northwest of Knutsford.

In the later Middle Ages, the two Tableys were separate manors. The Leicester family of Nether Tabley, 3 km southwest of Knutsford, is involved in six of the documents included. Three generations are represented: William Leicester of Tabley

1. The information about Knutsford families in the fifteenth century is based on Ormerod (1819), unless otherwise specified.

(d. 1428); John the elder (d. 1496), son of William; and Thomas, son of John. Their seat, the Manor Hall of Nether Tabley, was built on an island in Nether Tabley Mere in the late fourteenth century. A new building, Tabley House, was erected in Over Tabley in 1769, which, together with their 3,600-acre estate, remained in the holding of the family until 1975. The Old Hall, abandoned as the main seat of the family in favour of Tabley Hall, survived until 1927, when salt extraction nearby led the building to collapse.

Over Tabley, 3 km northwest of Knutsford, was the home of the Danyell family. The family is represented here mainly by Thomas Danyell the elder and his son and heir Thomas, who married Maud, daughter of John Leicester of Nether Tabley in 1440 (Ches D0056). The ties between these two families were tightened by the erection in the mid-fifteenth century of a common chapel for the use of both families and their tenants, halfway between the two manors (Ormerod 1819: 364–66). It appears that the two manors also cooperated in the holding of courts, as may be seen in Ches D0041, which contains the common ordinances for the two lordships given at the court at Nether Tabley in 1496. Over Tabley was divided in three during the thirteenth century, and one of the thirds remained in the holding of the Abbey of St Werburgh in Chester.

Finally, the Mainwaring family were lords of the manor of Over Peover, 5 km south of Knutsford, and appear in two of the present documents. The documents refer to Rondulph and John Maynwaring, both sons of William Mainwaring and Elizabeth, sister of John Leicester of Nether Tabley. Over Peover was a chapelry in Rostherne parish, with a fourteenth-century chapel directly under the mother church of Rostherne, and another smaller chapel built around 1456.

7.2.2 The Nantwich area

Nantwich was also a medieval market town, situated in the southern part of Cheshire, 6 km southwest of Crewe, ca 32 km southeast of Chester and 43 km south of Knutsford. Formerly the administrative centre of Nantwich ancient parish and Nantwich hundred, the town is today the centre of Nantwich civil parish, created in 1866, and houses about 12,000 inhabitants. Unlike Knutsford, Nantwich was a centre of proto-industrial production already from the eleventh century. During the later Middle Ages, it was the centre of the salt and tanning trade in Cheshire, and the most important town in the county next after Chester; the number of salt houses in Nantwich reached its peak at 400 in 1530 (Shaw & Clark 2003: 7). The town was twice ravaged by fire: once in 1438 and again in 1583, but seems to have been rapidly rebuilt both times.

After the Norman Conquest, the town was officially known as Wich Malbank, after the family of William Malbedeng, one of the Norman barons of Hugh Lupus, while the common name of the town was Nantwich, or Namptwich (Lysons & Lysons 1810: 699; Webb 1621, in Ormerod 1819: 154). The first element of "Nantwich" is derived from either Celtic *nant* 'brook, valley', or *nemeton*, denoting a sacred place in pre-Roman Celtic religion (Koch 2006: 1350–51). The second element represents either OE *wīc* 'dwelling-place' (*OED* WICH and WICK[2]) or ON *vík* (*OED* WICK[4]), which, according to the *OED*, are "indistinguishable in place-names" (*OED* WICK[4]). In Cheshire, the element came to be connected to the settlement around the brine pits of the salt-making industry and its surroundings. Allen (1889: 271–86) gives the following explanation for this connection:

> Our English salt supply is chiefly derived from the Cheshire and Worcestershire salt-regions, which are of triassic age. Many of the places at which the salt is mined have names ending in *-wich*, such as Northwich, Middlewich, Nantwich, Droitwich, Netherwich, and Shirleywich. This termination *-wich* is itself curiously significant, as Canon Isaac Taylor has shown, of the necessary connection between salt and the sea. The earliest known way of producing salt was of course in shallow pans on the sea-shore, at the bottom of a shoal bay, called in Norse and Early English a wick or wich; and the material so produced is still known in trade as bay-salt. By-and-by, when people came to discover the inland brine-pits and salt mines, they transferred to them the familiar name, a wich; and the places where the salt was manufactured came to be known as wych-houses.

Following the same reasoning as for the Knutsford area, texts have been included not only from Nantwich proper, but also from the closest surrounding villages: Worleston, Church Coppenhall, Wistaston, Willaston and Henhull (listed clockwise from the north).

Nearly all the documents from Nantwich proper relate to different families, with two exceptions: the Chetwode family and the Leche family. The first of these was a branch of the Chetwodes of Chetwode in Buckinghamshire, who also owned lands in Worleston, 3.5 km north of Nantwich. In total, there are four documents that concern the Chetwodes, two localized in Nantwich, one from Worleston, and one from Church Coppenhall. The documents from Nantwich and Worleston relate to Roger Chetwode, who married Ellen Ree of Ree in Shropshire in 1472, and to their son, Thomas (Betham 1803: 124). The one from Church Coppenhall relates to one Thomas Chetwode and his wife Anne, of whom no further information can be found, and who may originate from a different line of the Chetwode family. There is likewise little information about the Leche family of Henhull (2 km west of Nantwich) and Nantwich, who are party to three of the documents in this study, other than that they seem to be a younger branch of the Leches of Carden (Ormerod 1819, II: 384).

The manor and township of Willaston, 3 km east of Nantwich, was the home and property of the Chanu (or Cheney) family, which is represented in four of the deeds here included. Willaston, in Wybunbury parish, is written variably as Willaston, Wightreston, Wisterson, Wigstanton and Wistaston; the latter seems to be a confusion with the township of the same name in the neighbouring Nantwich parish. The family held the manor from the early thirteenth to the early sixteenth century, when it was sold by John Chanu to William Sneyd, four times Member of Parliament in the reigns of Edward VI and Mary I, and recorder of the city of Chester in 1518 (Ormerod 1819, III: 256).

The manor of Stapeley, 3 km southeast of Nantwich, was held by the Roope family, here represented in two documents: one dated in Willaston and one in Nantwich. This family also held the manor of Rope, 3 km further to the southeast (Ormerod 1819, III: 257). Several other documents in the MELD corpus (L0090, L1140, L1141, L1142; all localized in the Black Country area in Staffordshire) relate to a dispute concerning the right and title to this manor, in which several people attest that John Roope had forged the deeds to his title by stealing the coat of arms of one John Meverell, who claimed to be the rightful heir. This dispute is not mentioned in any of the English documents from the Nantwich area.

Among the more prominent people referred to in the documents from the Nantwich area is John Kingsley, who, during the first half of the fifteenth century, acquired lands in Nantwich and eight other townships in the surrounding area; he was also exchequer of the county. The same John Kingsley is believed to be the founder of Kingsley's Chantry in Nantwich Church (Hall 1883: 91–92).

Another prominent family in the area was the Wilbrahams of Woodhey (7 km west of Nantwich). A branch of this family resided in Nantwich, and Dame Margaret Wilbraham, widow of Thomas Wilbraham, is party to one of the present documents (D0019). This document states the intended union of the Wilbraham and Chetwode families by the marriage of Agnes, daughter of Thomas and Margaret, to Thomas, son of Roger Chetwode. Thomas Wilbraham's brother, Randle, was appointed procurator of Nantwich Church in 1460, a position which he held to 1473, by Roger Plymouth, Abbot of Combermere, as it appears from another document in the MELD corpus, dated at Combermere in 1460 (D0053).

The families mentioned in the deeds from the Nantwich area do not seem to be connected in the same way as the Knutsford families are; also, few families appear in more than one document. Most of the documents relate to transfers of land, and the fact that so many different families are involved as lessors attests to the piecemeal division of the barony of Nantwich, a division that had started already at the death of William Malbank, the third and last Norman baron of Wich Malbank, in the second half of the twelfth century.

7.3 The data collection

In total, the MELD corpus contains 42 texts from the Knutsford and Nantwich areas (see Appendix). The Knutsford material consists of 25 texts, five of which were also included in LALME. The texts seem to have been produced by at least 18 scribes, and span nearly a century, from 1427 to 1521. The Nantwich material consists of 17 texts spanning from 1428 to 1525, four of which are included in LALME. They seem to be produced by 13 different scribes, with one scribe responsible for four texts.

The data on which the present study is based were collected as part of a survey of orthographic and morphological variation in Northwest Midland documentary texts (Thengs 2013). While the survey included a large number of items, not all of these are relevant for the study of variation within Cheshire. The following items will be considered in this chapter:

– the variable (th) in initial position (all items except THE, THAT, THEY, THEIR, THEM)
– the variable (th) in THAT
– the third person plural pronouns THEIR and THEM
– the vocalic element in LAND, HAND, STAND
– the variable (wh)
– final *-x* as a plural suffix

Most of these items are highly frequent in the material, as well as variable throughout the Northwest Midland area. The final item, the plural suffix *-x*, is not as frequent as the others; however, its distribution is of considerable interest in the Cheshire material.

The variable (th) is here defined as the consonantal element that is functionally equivalent to <th> in Present-Day English, and that typically relates, both in Middle and Present-Day English, to the dental fricatives /θ/ or /ð/. (th) is the most commonly attested orthographic variable included in the present study, and should provide good quantitative evidence of the distribution of spelling variants across Cheshire.

(th) in initial position is generally represented in Middle English by three different spelling variants: <th>, <y> and <þ> (for a detailed account, see p. 109 and Benskin 1982: *passim*). From the Late Middle English period, <þ> and <y> were gradually replaced with <th>; while it has been traditional to connect this replacement with the needs of early printers, the development started much earlier (see Stenroos 2007: 10–11). In Chapter 5, it was shown that the patterns of spelling variation for initial (th) in THEM differed greatly between documentary and non-documentary texts (see p. 111); the same difference was shown in Thengs'

(2013: 117–126) study of the Northwest Midland materials which included THE, THAT, THIS and THESE (cf. also Stenroos & Thengs 2012 on Staffordshire and Jensen 2010, 2012 on West Yorkshire). As with the variable (sh), it appears that English documentary texts were adopting the eventual standard form at an earlier stage than literary texts; in Chapter 5, it was suggested that this difference might reflect the overwhelmingly Latin tradition of the text communities that produced documentary texts, in which the English letters thorn and yogh seem to have been used only rarely (see p. 126).

For the present study, all occurrences of an initial consonantal element corresponding to PDE <th> have been included; a fuller study of (th) in the Northwest Midland area, including medial and final positions, appears in Thengs (2013: 198–229).

As has been noted in earlier chapters, the present-day forms of the third person plural possessive and objective pronouns with initial dental fricative are generally thought to represent Scandinavian borrowings (see p. 121; see also Lass 1992: 120; Werner 1991: 369 and *passim*). Alternatively, they may simply represent native analogical formations introducing the initial dental fricative from the subject form (Werner 1991: 389–391, Stenroos 2005: 72). For simplicity, and to avoid making assumptions about their background, the two sets will be referred to as "*th*-forms" and "*h*-forms" respectively in what follows.

Lass (1992: 120) describes the Middle English situation with regard to the third-person plural pronouns as follows:

> Northern Middle English dialects generally show a full Scandinavian paradigm from the earliest times […] The other dialects show a gradual southward movement of the þ-paradigm, the native h-type remaining longest in the conservative south […] By the beginning of the sixteenth century the modern paradigm is fully established.

It has been shown in several previous studies that the dissemination of the th-forms of the subject form THEY outside the northern area was much more rapid than that of the possessive and object forms (see e.g. Stenroos 2005; Werner 1991; Williamson 2000). *H*-forms of THEY are totally absent from the Cheshire material; however, the forms of THEIR and THEM, which are presented here, show considerable variation.

The vocalic element in LAND represents Germanic short /a/ followed by a nasal, which underwent homorganic lengthening, at least in some varieties, making the spelling patterns sometimes difficult to interpret (cf. p. 116). Perhaps not surprisingly, LAND is a highly frequent item in the documentary material, and shows variation between <a> and <o> spellings of the vocalic element. The present study also includes the items HAND and STAND, which show similar variation in a similar environment.

The variable (wh) is here defined as the written element functionally equivalent to present-day <wh> or OE <hw>, and is found only in initial position (see p. 147). The Old English consonant cluster *hw* is the only one of a group of similar clusters (*hl, hn, hr, hw*) that does not show universal h-dropping in Late Old and Early Middle English. Jordan (1968: 175) states that the /h/ in *hl, hn* and *hr* was generally lost by 1000 AD, while the sound was largely retained in *hw*, except in the South (excluding Kent) and the Southeast Midlands, where the /h/ also seems to have been lost relatively early. A similar pattern is found by Minkova (2004), who, using evidence from alliterative poetry, demonstrates that, already in texts from the Late Old English period, OE <hw> sometimes seems to reflect /w/ rather than /hw/, particularly in the Southwest. By the end of the fifteenth century, a merger of /hw/ and /w/ had spread over most of the southern half of England (Minkova 2004: 24). However, the merger does not seem to have been complete or exceptionless, and variation continued in several speech communities well beyond the Late Middle English period, even until the present day (Milroy 2004: 50–51).

While the South of England saw a merger of /hw/ and /w/, at least parts of the North and Scotland witnessed a merger of /hw/ and /kw/, resulting in a distinction between /kw/ in words that were spelt <hw> and <cw> in Old English, and /w/ in words that were spelt <w> in Old English (see e.g. Minkova 2004: 21; Lass and Laing 2016: *passim*). The merger between /hw/ and /kw/ is suggested by the spellings <qu>, <qw>, <quh>, <qvh>, and <qwh>, which in Middle English are mainly attested in the North, but also appear in the North and East Midlands, as well as by alliterative evidence (see also p. 151 and Lass & Laing 2016, 2019, and references there cited).

For the variable (wh), the searches for the present study included all words spelt with initial <wh> or <w>, or with a consonant cluster with initial 'q', that correspond to words with Present-Day English <wh> or Old English <hw>. All the attested words are of native origin and show reflexes of OE <hw>.

Words with 'q' spellings that are equivalent to PDE <qu>, which generally correspond to French <qu> or OE <cw>, do not belong to the variable (wh) as defined above and have not been included. Two texts, D0186 and D0223, both from Knutsford, contain <wh> spellings in words that belong to this category, which may be termed the variable (qu): *wherneby* (OE *cweorn-*) 'quern-' (two attestations) and *whyte* (OF *quiter*) 'quit'. The two texts in question show exclusively <wh> spellings also for the variable (wh).

Finally, *-x* as a plural suffix is commonly found in Anglo-Norman texts, and, judging from the present material, it sporadically appears in Middle English texts as well. There are at present no overall studies on plural *-x* in Middle English; however, a study including the entire MELD corpus is currently ongoing. This feature is of particular interest for the present study as it seems to be a local characteristic of texts produced around the Nantwich area.

7.4 Presentation of the findings

In the following, each text community is first considered as part of its geographical context: that is to say, the Knutsford material is compared to the rest of North Cheshire, and the Nantwich material to that of South Cheshire; finally, the findings for the two communities are compared. All the figures are relative and are given as percentages, using the principles outlined in Chapter 5 (see p. 108).

The Knutsford material displays much variation, both synchronically and diachronically. For some of the items, this variation seems to follow the same pattern as the rest of the northeast corner of Cheshire, in that they display a majority of traditionally northern forms. This is especially the case for THEIR, generally spelled *hor* or *thayr*, and THEM, spelled *hom* and *thaym*. Figures 7.2 and 7.3 present the geographical distribution of forms of THEIR over time (here, the *th-* forms also include <y> and <þ> spellings). The maps clearly show that the northern forms dominate before 1475, and that *ei* and *ey* spellings do not appear in this area until the last quarter of the fifteenth century. The same pattern emerges for THEM (see Figures 7.4 and 7.5). Similarly, the Knutsford material largely agrees with its surroundings when it comes to the spellings of the initial dental fricative (combined results for all items except THE, THAT, THEY, THEIR, THEM; here the spelling <y> varies with <th> throughout most of the Northeast (Figure 7.6; see also Thengs 2013: 205–209).

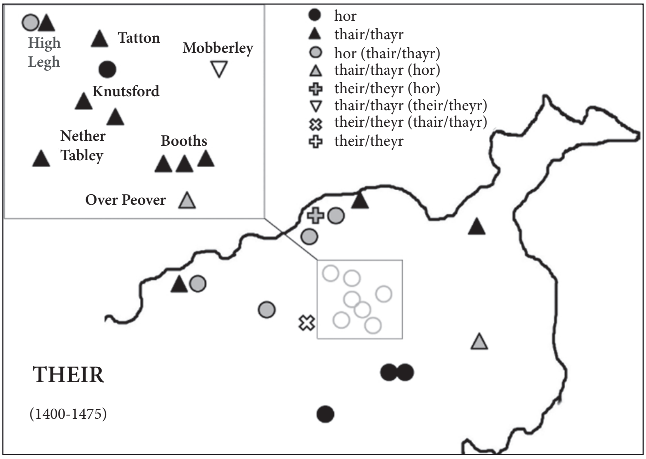

Figure 7.2 Knutsford and North Cheshire: THEIR (all spellings) 1400–1475

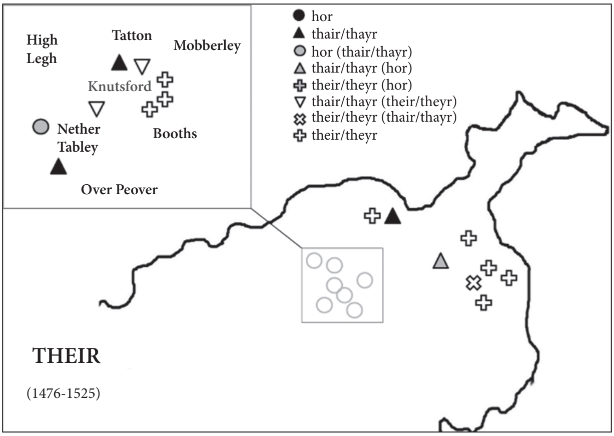

Figure 7.3 Knutsford and North Cheshire: THEIR (all spellings) 1476–1525

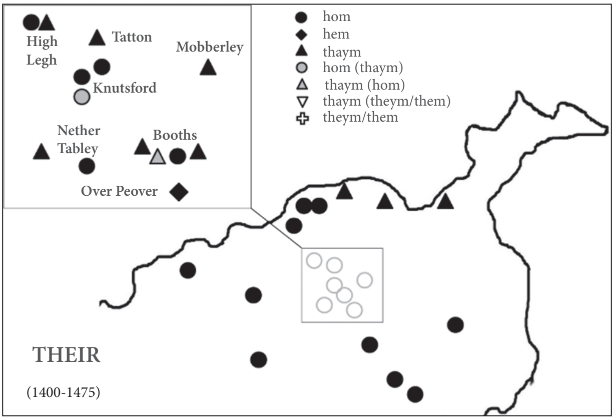

Figure 7.4 Knutsford and North Cheshire: THEM (all spellings) 1400–1475

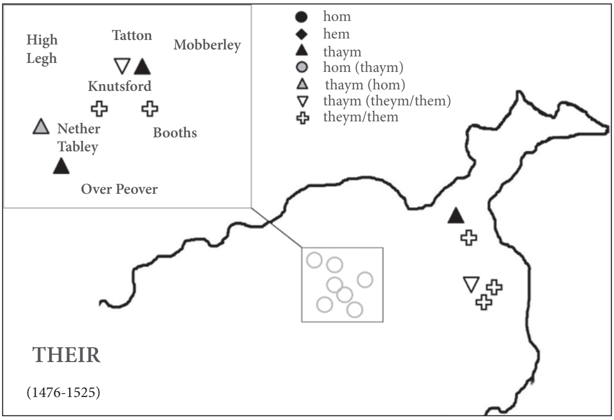

Figure 7.5 Knutsford and North Cheshire: THEM (all spellings) 1476–1525

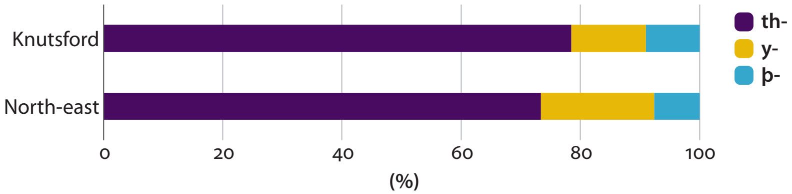

Figure 7.6 Knutsford vs. Northeast Cheshire: Distribution of <th>, <y> and <þ> for initial (th) in all items except THE, THAT, THEY, THEIR, THEM (percentages)

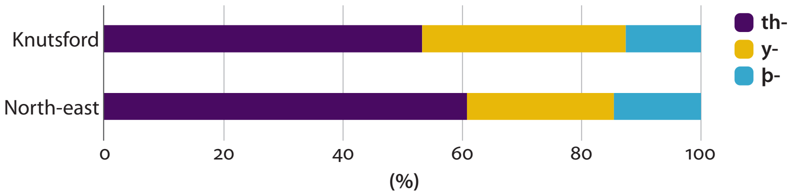

Figure 7.7 Knutsford vs. Northeast Cheshire: Distribution of <th>, <y> and <þ> for initial (th) in THAT (percentages)

For other items, however, Knutsford appears as the odd one out in an otherwise northern configuration. If the item THAT is considered in isolation, the patterns of <th>, <y> and <þ> exhibit slightly different distributions (Figure 7.7). While <th> is the dominant form overall, <y> spellings constitute 34% of the Knutsford attestations compared to only 24% in the rest of the area. Apart from Knutsford, <y> forms are otherwise mainly found near the northeastern borders of the county. As there seems to be no particular change over time when it comes to the frequency of this item in the Knutsford material, it seems that the retention of <y> in THAT might be considered a feature of the Knutsford text community.

Another example of a difference between Knutsford and the rest of North Cheshire concerns the variation between <a> and <o> in the items LAND, STAND and HAND. Here, <o> spellings are found in the vast majority of the texts in the North Cheshire area, with the exception of several texts in the Knutsford area, which contain only <a> spellings. For LAND (Figure 7.8), the same pattern can be seen in both Chester and Nantwich, which may indicate that this is an urban development.[2] Most of the <a> spellings in all three areas date from the reign of Edward IV onwards, that is, after 1461.

2. Linguistic forms sometimes tend to cluster around urban centres, and changes can spread from one such centre to another without affecting the areas in between, a phenomenon sometimes known in modern dialectology as "urban hopping" or "city-hopping" (see e.g. Chambers and Trudgill 1980: 182–204; Britain 2002: 612–16; Bergs 2006: 8; see also Thengs 2013: 334–337). The northwest Midlands area as a whole shows a similar tendency as for Cheshire; while *lond* is the most common form overall, *land* is mainly attested in urban areas, including Burton

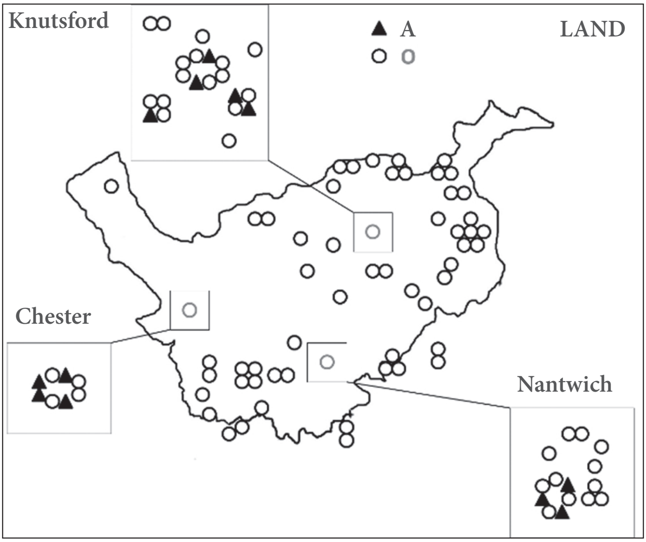

Figure 7.8 Cheshire: Geographical distribution of <a> and <o> spellings of LAND (sole or majority spellings)

The most striking difference between Knutsford and the rest of the northeastern part of Cheshire is, however, in the realization of initial (wh) (Figures 7.9 and 7.10). In the Knutsford material, 18 of the 25 texts contain <wh> spellings only, while another three contain a mixture of <wh> and <qu>; in relative figures, this means that <wh> accounts for 81%. This is in stark contrast with the prevailing picture in Northeast Cheshire, which exhibits a more or less equal distribution between <wh> and <qu>.

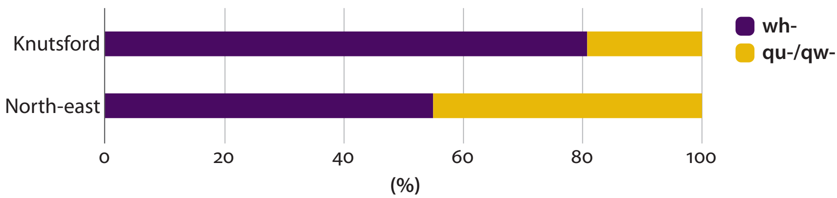

Figure 7.9 Knutsford vs. North Cheshire: Distribution of <wh> and <qu>/<qw> spellings (percentages)

upon Trent and Wolverhampton in Staffordshire, and Ludlow and Oswestry in Shropshire (Thengs 2013: 334).

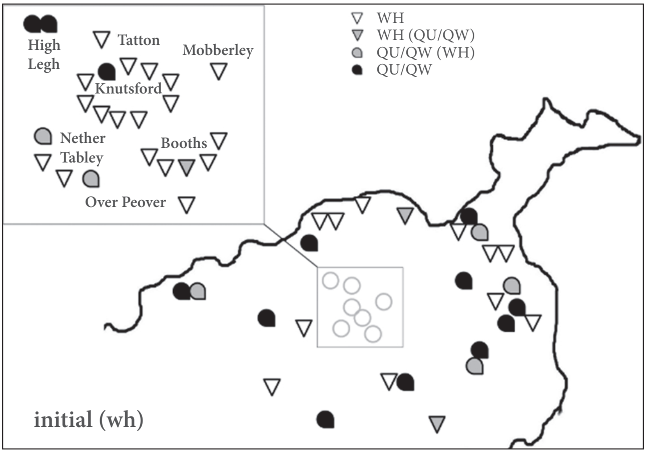

Figure 7.10 Knutsford and North Cheshire: <wh> and <qu>/qw> spellings for initial (wh) (all words)

As Figures 7.2–7.10 show, the Knutsford area exhibits much variation, conforming to a general northern configuration for some items, and seemingly following a more local usage for others. On the whole, the Knutsford usage seems to reflect its standing as a market town on the fringes of the North, and the scribal community is marked by a relative lack of uniformity.

For Nantwich, the picture is very different. In the fifteenth century, Nantwich was the second largest town in Cheshire, and an important trade centre. It would also have been a natural stop on the way from London or the central Midlands to Chester and the Irish sea, as may be deduced from the fact that it is one of the few places in Cheshire marked on the Gough map, a mid-fourteenth century map of the main roads and towns in Britain.[3]

Several items display a remarkable degree of focussing, if not absolute uniformity, in the Nantwich material. One example is the combined results for initial (th), in all words except THE, THAT, THEY, THEIR, and THEM. Of all 17 texts, 13 show <th> alone and another three have it as the main form; only one text has <th> as the minority form. A similar pattern is also found for initial (th) in the rest of southern Cheshire, where <th> is the dominant form overall. However, compared to the Knutsford material, this consistency is quite marked (see Figure 7.11). 93% of the Nantwich texts contain <th> compared to only 78% for Knutsford. The spelling <y> (implying a lack of distinction between <y> and <þ>) is almost absent from the Nantwich material, while it is found in 13% of the Knutsford texts. <þ> occurs in respectively 6% and 9% of the texts.

3. For the Gough map, see URL: http://www.goughmap.org/

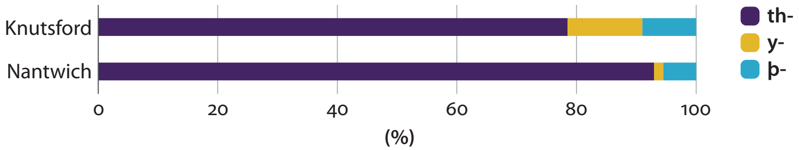

Figure 7.11 Knutsford vs. Nantwich: Percent-wise distribution of <th>, <y> and <þ> for initial (th) in all items except THE, THAT, THEY, THEIR, and THEM

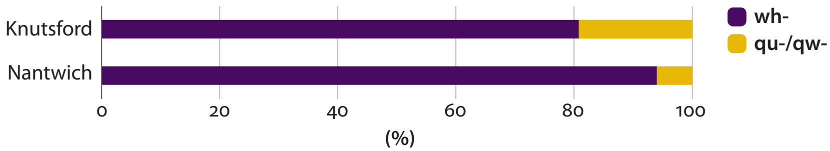

Figure 7.12 Knutsford vs. Nantwich: Distribution of <wh> vs. <qu>/<qw> spellings (percentages)

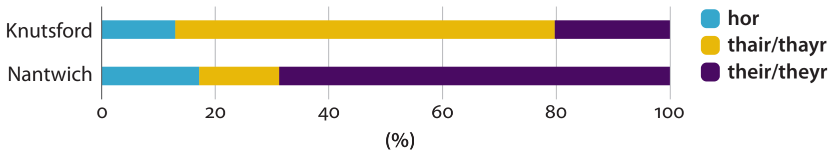

Figure 7.13 Knutsford vs. Nantwich: Distribution of all spellings of THEIR (percentages; the th- forms also include <y> and <þ> spellings)

Another item that shows a similar pattern is initial (wh) (Figure 7.12). Even though Knutsford was shown to be less variable than the rest of the North when it comes to this item, Nantwich is still more uniform. The Nantwich material agrees with the (wh) data for its surrounding areas in that <qu>/<qw> spellings are very rare; however, the rest of the South Cheshire material generally shows more variation within the texts (Thengs 2013: 235).

The Nantwich material also differs noticeably in the spelling of THEIR and THEM, both compared to South Cheshire and Knutsford. While the Nantwich material is here no less variable than the Knutsford material, it shows a much higher proportion (69% compared to 22% in Knutsford) of the innovative forms with <ei/ey> that are spreading into the area, and that eventually end up as the standardized forms (see Figure 7.13). While the difference between Knutsford and Nantwich may be expected bearing in mind the more southerly location of the latter, it may be noted that Nantwich also stands out in comparison with the rest of South Cheshire in its high proportion of <ei>/<ey> forms (see Figure 7.14). The <ei>/<ey> forms are found as sole or majority spellings in 10 out of 16 Nantwich texts, and only in 5 out of 18 texts from the rest of the South Cheshire area.

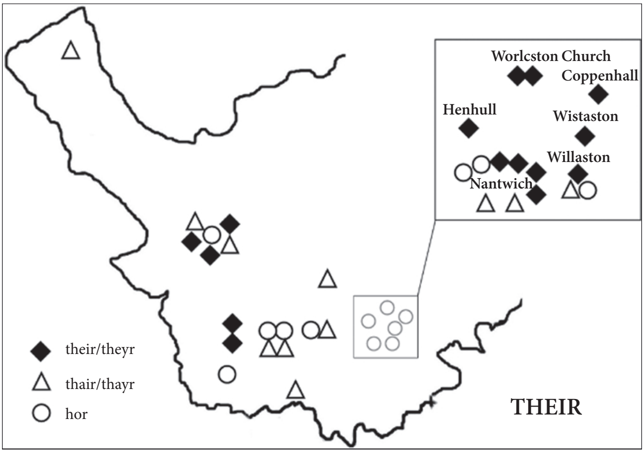

Figure 7.14 Nantwich vs. South Cheshire: Distribution of spellings for THEIR (sole or majority spellings)

All the examples so far have shown Nantwich usage both as less variable and less locally marked, in comparison both with the surrounding South Cheshire area and with Knutsford. A further characteristic of Nantwich usage is the use of *-x* as a plural marker (Figure 7.15). This spelling, for the single item SEALS, is found sporadically in three texts along the Lancashire border, but is otherwise concentrated in the South of the county, and in particular in Nantwich, where seven of the twelve texts that contain this item use *-x* as a plural marker. For the Northwest Midland material as a whole, only three items are spelled with plural *-x*: SEALS, ESPOUSELS and CATTLE. Most of the occurrences of plural *-x* are found in Cheshire, and especially in Nantwich. Four of the Nantwich texts containing this feature are by one scribe, including the occurrences of plural *-x* in ESPOUSELS and CATTLE.

Even so, there are altogether four scribes in one limited area that use this feature. They all worked during the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII, and their use of plural *-x* may reflect a close collaboration in the scribal community, or that they were all trained in one place, possibly in Nantwich itself. The feature only occurs after <l>, and all the items have a French origin. As the Anglo-Norman plural spelling of these was also with *-x*, this is a clear remnant of French usage. It is interesting that such a remnant appears only after 1485, when French had declined considerably in use.

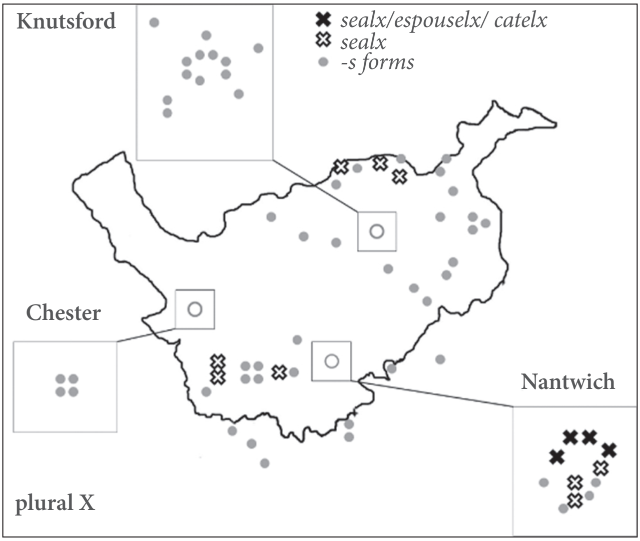

Figure 7.15 Cheshire: Geographical distribution of plural <x>

7.5 Conclusions

The lack of uniformity in Knutsford may be related to its geographical location, as well as to its relatively modest position in Cheshire trade and commerce. With no natural boundaries around the area, access would have been easy from all directions. The town would have been just large enough to draw in people from different areas, both close by and from further afield, the influences of which are reflected in the heterogeneous display of forms found in the Knutsford texts. Smith (1996: 63–77) suggests that communication as well as social acceptance are crucial in the development of standardized or "focussed" language. As the Knutsford material largely consists of texts relating to families of country gentry, many of which are connected in one way or another, the communicative aspect would perhaps not be an issue, and variable written forms would most likely be socially accepted. Thus, the lack of consistency in the written language may also be explained by the absence of a need for focussing. Finally, the remoteness of the area from larger administrative centres may account for the occurrence of local forms in the Knutsford material well into the sixteenth century.

The scribal language produced in Nantwich seems to show stronger evidence of both focussing and supralocalization. It is not difficult to link this to the fact that, by medieval standards, it was a large town and an important trade centre; influences from outside would have had more impact in a place where it was essential to keep up with the development. The communicative purpose of a document would necessarily have been more important in a larger community where people from different layers of society were involved; the Nantwich material does not show the same social interconnectedness as the Knutsford texts, and there also seems to be a more powerful driving force towards both focussed and supralocal language in the Nantwich area. However, as shown in this chapter, not all homogeneous features have to do directly with supralocalization, and the Nantwich uniformity may reflect the use of a collaborating, focussed text community, influenced from outside, but with distinctive features of their own.

The two scribal communities here described are no more than 32 km apart, separated only by the Cheshire plain, with no major natural obstacles in the way. Their relative distance to the major centres at county and national level is more or less the same. Yet their usages are very different. This may be explained by their relative importance as centres of communication: Knutsford as a rural, largely self-sustained community, and Nantwich as an urban trade centre, with a more active communicative role in relation to the outside world, and consequently a stronger motivation for the adoption of supralocal forms.

Appendix.

Table 7.1 The Knutsford texts, ordered chronologically

Date	Code	Function	Place	Families
1427	D0223	Award	Knutsford area	Venables et al. Leicester
1440	D0056	Marriage	Nether Tabley	Leicester Danyell
1441	D0061	Award	Booths	Mainwaring Legh of Booths
1444	L1339	Use	Over Peover	Mainwaring (sr.) Mainwaring (jr.)
1445	L0777	Marriage	Knutsford	Holyns Legh
1446	D0069	Award	Booths	Fyton et al. Legh of Booths et al.
1447	D0220	Marriage	Knutsford area	Danyell Huyde
1449	L1331a	Power of Attorney	High Legh	Legh Holme and Legh
1449	L1331b	Marriage	High Legh	Legh Bruyn
1450	L1324	Award	Nether Tabley	Legh of Booths et al. Danyell
1458	D0186	Agreement	Knutsford	Legh of Booths Lathum
1465	D0048	Obligation	Booths	Bothe Leicester
1465	D0049	Attestation	Booths	Legh of Booths Sutton Leicester
1465	D0187	Condition	Booths	Grosvenor Legh of Booths

Table 7.1 (*continued*)

Date	Code	Function	Place	Families
1467	D0064	Lease	Mobberley	Legh of Booths Bostok
1477	D0065	Award	Tatton	Mascy Hatton
1496	D0041	Ordinance	Nether Tabley	The lords of Over and Nether Tabley
1500	D0184	Attestation	Knutsford	Brone Legh of Booths
1511	D0177	Use	Knutsford	Knottisford Bent et al.
1512	D0221	Use	Nether Tabley	Leicester (Thomas) Irland et al. Leicester (William)
1512	D0178	Use	Knutsford	Lathum Bent et al.
1512	D0179	Exchange	Knutsford	Legh of Booths Knottesford
1512	D0180	Exchange	Knutsford	Legh of Booths Knottesford
1512	D0181	Use	Knutsford	Knottesford Moscrope
1521	D0189	Agreement	Knutsford	Moscroppe *sr*. Moscroppe *jr*.

Table 7.2 The Nantwich texts, ordered chronologically

Date	Code	Function	Place	Families
1428	L0082	Bond	Nantwich	Dauenport et al. Kyngesley
1428	L1323a	Enfeoffment	Willaston	Chanu Roop et al.
1442	L1323b	Power of Attorney	Willaston	Eggerton et al. Chanu
1445	L0089	Attestation	Nantwich	Roope et al.
1471	D0134	Memorandum	Nantwich	Wryghte Meyuerell
1473	D0141	Condition	Nantwich	Warde Dawesone
1492	D0143	Marriage	Worleston	Munshull Chanu
1496	D0130	Lease	Church Coppenhall	Chetwode Taliour
1497	D0019	Marriage	Nantwich	Wilbram Chetwode
1498	D0137	Lease	Worleston	Chetwode Graston
16a1	D0191	Rental	Nantwich	Leche
1506	D0136	Enfeoffment	Nantwich	Walker Boltonn et al.
1508	D0126	Attestation	Wistaston	Kayfes Dawson
1508	D0139	Memorandum	Nantwich	Chyttwod Pygyn
1509	D0127	Enfeoffment	Henhull	Golbourn Leche
1518	D0132	Condition	Nantwich	Leche Broke et al.
1522	D0212	Sale	Willaston	Chanu Wryght and Hill

CHAPTER 8

Land documents as a source of word geography

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8.1 Introduction

Studies of linguistic variation across geography have traditionally had much focus on lexis. Surveys such as the *Survey of English Dialects* (SED) collected large amounts of material on lexical variation (Orton & Dieth, 1962–1971; Orton & Wright 1974), and dialect dictionaries have been produced for centuries both by scholars and amateurs, culminating in Wright's monumental *English Dialect Dictionary* (= *EDD*, 1898–). Word maps still form the basis for important work on linguistic variation and change (see for example Kretzschmar 2009: *passim*). Perhaps surprisingly, however, lexical variation has turned out to be rather difficult to study in early English materials.

The variability of written Middle English might suggest good possibilities for the study of lexical variation in late medieval materials. However, relating such variation to geography presents considerable problems. First of all, as with any historical period, the vocabulary to which we have access is restricted by the genres of the surviving texts. The kinds of text that provide the most varied vocabulary generally belong to what are here called "literary texts" (see p. 101–102), and in particular the kind of texts that we might refer to as "imaginative writing". In Middle English, this includes a large body of religious and secular verse and prose, including the canonical works of Chaucer, Gower and the Gawain poet as well as *Piers Plowman*. Texts such as these show a broad range of vocabulary; however, their use as material for word geography is problematic as, for the most part, we have no information about the geographical provenance of the manuscripts, nor, with a few notable exceptions, of the authors of the literary texts.

In addition, the effects of scribal transmission on vocabulary appear to be unpredictable (Benskin & Laing 1981: 96–97; Black Stenroos 2002: *passim*). Studies of word geography have mostly focussed on texts that survive in several scribal copies clearly representing different dialects; such studies include Kaiser (1937) and

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Carrillo-Linares (2005–06) on the *Cursor Mundi*, Carrillo-Linares and Garrido-Anes (2007, 2008) on the *Lay Folk's Catechism*, Carrillo-Linares and Garrido-Anes (2009, 2012; Carrillo-Linares 2010, 2016) as well as Horobin (2004) on the *Prick of Conscience*, Scahill (2005) on *Ancrene Wisse* and the present writer (Black 2000, Black Stenroos 2002) on *Piers Plowman*. Together, studies such as these may throw much light on the dialectal patterning of Middle English vocabulary; however, as specific localizations are for the most part unavailable for this kind of texts, the geographical interpretation of the findings is necessarily tentative.[1]

One might, then, enquire what a study of local documents might add to our understanding of the word geography of late and post-medieval England. From the point of view of lexical study, they clearly represent an entirely different kind of material. As they are connected to actual localities, and normally have no complex scribal histories, they can be expected to provide direct evidence of diatopic variation. Compared to long literary works, their range of vocabulary is necessarily limited; on the other hand, they may be expected to provide large quantities of data within certain semantic fields. By far most administrative documents deal with legal transactions and with land holdings, while specific kinds of document provide lexical data in other fields: accounts may contain much vocabulary to do with food and drink, farming or building, and both wills and inventories list household goods (cf. Example (3.4), p. 49). This chapter presents a preliminary study of lexical variation in the MELD materials within a field that might be expected to be of specific interest for diatopic study: that of the local geography itself, as described in documents dealing with landholdings and their boundaries.

8.2 Land documents and descriptions of land

While many semantic fields are well represented in the MELD corpus, not all of them are equally promising for the study of lexical variation. For example, many terms for legal concepts occur in great numbers but do not show much variation. They are generally borrowed or modelled on Latin and/or French terms, the use of which had been standardized over centuries of legal practice: terms such as *allegeaunce, amerciment, arbitrement, arerage* or *defaisaunce* appear in a variety of spellings but few of them show a range of synonyms.

Clearly, semantic fields that relate to less centralized, local traditions and practices are more likely to provide good material. One semantic field that stands out

1. See McIntosh (1973, 1978) for a suggested approach based on the LALME localizations. For overviews of the state of Middle English word geography, see Peters (1988), Hoad (1994) and Fisiak (2004); some of the challenges are discussed in detail in Black (2000).

as both plentifully represented and variable is that of land and landscape: the vocabulary of places, land marks, land holdings and boundaries. One might, indeed, expect descriptions of land to provide material that is more closely associated with locality than any other: both because it describes the very geography in which it is localized, and because the texts that contain detailed descriptions of land are for the most part produced for local use.

A very large proportion of medieval administrative documents deal with land, and most types of documents contain references to land holdings. The word *land* itself shows 2,865 occurrences in MELD 2016.1, making it one of the most common lexical words, with a frequency of 47 per 10,000 words (total word count: 602,434). By comparison, the non-documentary texts in the *Middle English Grammar Corpus* (MEG-C version 2011.1) show only 654 occurrences, with a frequency of 11 per 10,000 words (total word count: 616,225).

However, while a very large proportion of all administrative documents deal with land in one way or another, not all include detailed descriptions of geography. The great majority of conveyances contain references to land holdings; however, most commonly these consist simply of phrases such as "a [land unit] in X", sometimes with the addition of a phrase specifying a landholder:

(8.1) a. ther pryncipalle tennte in Bydenham (Beds D4142)
'their principal tenement in Bidenham'

b. my Burgage in Nether knottisford now in the holdyng of pernell lathum wydow (Ches D0178)
'my burgage in Nether Knutsford, now held by Pernell Lathum, widow'

Such simple references appear in most types of conveyances as well as in a wide range of other documents. From time to time, however, more geographical detail is given, as in this sale from 1509, given at Windsor:

(8.2) This indenture […] witnesseth that the seid Dean & Chanons hath solde vnto the seid George a certeyn parcell of wodde liyng w^t^in their lordeshipp of Euere in the Countie of Buk in the Commen ther called Euere Hethe adioynyng vppon a certeyn broke called howbroke conteynyng […] xj acrez (Berks D5086)
'This indenture […] witnesses that the said Dean and Canons have sold to the said George a certain parcell of wood within their lordship of Every in Buckinghamshire in the common called Every Heath, adjoining on a certain brook called Howbrook, containing […] 11 acres.'

Of all categories of conveyance, geographical detail is most commonly provided in sales and exchanges. Of sales, as many as 32% contain a geographical description in MELD 2017.1; for exchanges, the percentage is even higher, at 62%, but given the small number of texts (8 out of 13) the distribution may be skewed. In comparison, only 10% of leases and agreements contain geographical detail, while the figure for wills is lower still (4%).

The most plentiful materials for the study of land vocabulary derive from those documents in which the definition and description of land holdings is the main purpose: the type of documents here referred to as land documents (see p. 52), all representing the superordinate category of surveys. The quintessential land document is the perambulation, which describes boundaries in full with much landscape detail:

(8.3) Furst in ther going they went from the High Crosse vnto the Grassecrosse and so dyrectly to Sevarn Brugge and when they were ou*er* the brygge they turnyd on the lifte hand into wynnall strete down vnto Sevarn bank vnto the dych beyond the Furr butt directly lying agenst the vtter part of the key and so ou*er* a lesew directly to a style and into the kecheners lesew to a short croppyd grete Oke leuying the Oke on the lifte hand and from thens to a corner of a hegge & dyche which strechith to the Corner of the howses that byn sett nye the highwey (Worcs D2511#3)
'First in their walk they went from the High Cross to the Grass Cross, and then directly to Severn Bridge, and when they had crossed the bridge they turned to the left into Winnall Street down to Severn Bank until the ditch beyond the Furr butt that lies directly against the outer part of the key, and then across a pasture meadow directly to a stile and into the Kitchener's Meadow, to a great short-cropped oak, leaving the oak on the left hand side and [going] from there to the corner of a hedge and ditch, which stretch to the corner of the houses that lie next to the highway'

Both terriers and land surveys typically consist of a list of holdings defined by their locations; as defined here, terriers provide boundaries, usually in two but sometimes in one or four directions, with varying amounts of detail:

(8.4) Jt*e*m a brode-land bowndyng of ye kyrke hedeland at ye west end & at ye see syde at the est end longyng to s*ir* E R frehald (YER L1130#4)
'Item, a broadland bounding with the church headland to the west and with the seaside to the east, belonging to sir E(dward) R(outh's) freehold'

Geographical definitions may also occur in statements and memoranda, depending on the subject matter. Rentals and accounts often simply list names and sums of rent that are owed or paid; however, they also occasionally include geographical information. Awards and testimonies connected to boundary disputes will necessarily contain definitions of the boundaries. These may contain a considerable amount of landscape detail:

(8.5) y[e] quech old men weren sworne apon a boke before y[e] enquest & enfo*ur*met y[e] enquest y[t] y[e] meire betwene Assheton and Mamchest*er* began at oselache folowyng vp Oselach to Osell birche y[t] stode abofe y[e] hede of y[e] same lache and so fro Osell birche to a blak stake yat stode in y[e] mosse and fro y[t] stake to a lache y[t] rennes out of y[e] mosse into a Cloght y[t] was yen cald hareden hirne y[e] queche Clogh dep*ar*tes Drylesden in y[e] tovne of Mamchest*er* and Assheton (Lancs L0586#1)
'which old men were sworn on a book before the inquest, and they informed the inquest that the boundary between Ashton and Manchester began at Oselach, following Oselach to Osell Birch which stood above the head of the same lake, and then from Osell Birch to a black stake that stood in the moss, and from that stake to a stream that runs out of the moss into a clough which was at that time called Hareden Hirne, which clough divides Drylesden between the towns of Manchester and Ashton'

This text, concerned with a dispute about Drylesden Moss in Lancashire, illustrates well the local character of land documents: it refers to locally known (former) landmarks such as the Osell Birch and the "black stake" in the moss, as well as to earlier local place names, and it contains dialectal vocabulary referring to landscape features (*lache, clogh, hirne*, cf. *OED* LETCH, CLOUGH, HIRN). Documents such as these are generally produced for local use, and they are based on local knowledge: here the testimony of a group of old men. The same document also provides a glimpse of the people who would produce the documents:

(8.6) And so be y[t] cause was y[e] liu*er*e pitte ou*er* and neu*er* sithen liu*er*e made y[t] eu*er* was knawen to y[e] said John of Barlowe and y[t] old Chorley Clerke to y[e] shirref was y*er* to haue taken y[e] recorde if any liu*er*e hade ben made (Lancs L0586#1)
'And so, because of that, the livery was abandoned, and no livery has since been made, as far as known to the said John of Barlow, and that old Chorley, the Sheriff's clerk, was present and would have recorded the livery if one had been made'

As a sheriff's jurisdiction spanned the entire county, his clerk would not necessarily be native to the particular locality concerned in the document. However, a familiarity with the local terminology, and the linguistic competence to deal with it, would have been crucial in the production of documents describing local land rights.

An example of the importance of such a competence is found in the document containing the bounding of Barmston in the East Riding of Yorkshire, edited by Sandvold (2010; cf. also Stenroos 2013: 164–66). The bounding was produced by four scribes, three of whom (A, B and D) wrote in a markedly northern variety, each producing a sizeable part of the text, which runs to a total of 5,404 words, contained on six large folios. However, one scribe (the "C scribe") only produced a fairly short passage, amounting to the last fifteen lines of fol. 4r. This passage differs considerably from that of the others, both in script (a secretary rather than anglicana hand) and in language, showing no northern forms and containing what seems to be a misunderstanding of a northern phrase (*gaires lyes*, for *gyrs leys* 'grass leas'). After these fifteen lines, not only did another scribe (the "D scribe") take over from the top of the verso side of the leaf, but actually rewrote the entire passage using northern forms. The implication seems to be that the C scribe, who was clearly of a different training and background, had not been able to produce an acceptable text.

As the documents describing local landholdings are literally connected to the landscape, and rely on local tradition, they should provide a good basis for the study of word geography assuming that they also yield sufficient amounts of comparable data. The remainder of this chapter presents a study of this material in the MELD corpus.

8.3 The study

8.3.1 The data collection

This study is based on a subcorpus of MELD 2016.1, consisting of 141 documents (altogether 101,537 words) identified as containing geographical descriptions and definitions. The subcorpus, referred to as *A corpus of land documents* or LanDo, includes, first of all, all the land documents in the strict sense: that is, the texts that have been classified as perambulations, land surveys and terriers. In addition, other texts were identified through a search for keywords (all identified spellings of *acre, highway, bounds* and all other units of land measures and verbs denoting "adjoining" or "bounding" so far identified in the material). Geographical descriptions that were not identified through the search have been added during the process of checking the corpus files for publication. The subcorpus may not include every single example of geographical description in this version of MELD, but it may be taken to include all the substantial ones and most of the minor ones.

Of the 141 texts, more than half (72) are conveyances; however, these only account for 15% of the data (see Table 8.1). By far the largest proportion of the data, as much as 78%, derives from the 39 survey texts, which include all the land documents in the strict sense. Geographical descriptions are found in all the superordinate functional categories except for correspondence and ordinances (see p. 46–48); however, none of these other categories account for more than around one per cent of the data each.

Figure 8.1 shows the geographical distribution of the texts. The corpus provides a relatively good coverage of the entire country; while the northern parts do not appear as well covered as other parts of the country, many of the texts from this area are relatively long and provide much data.

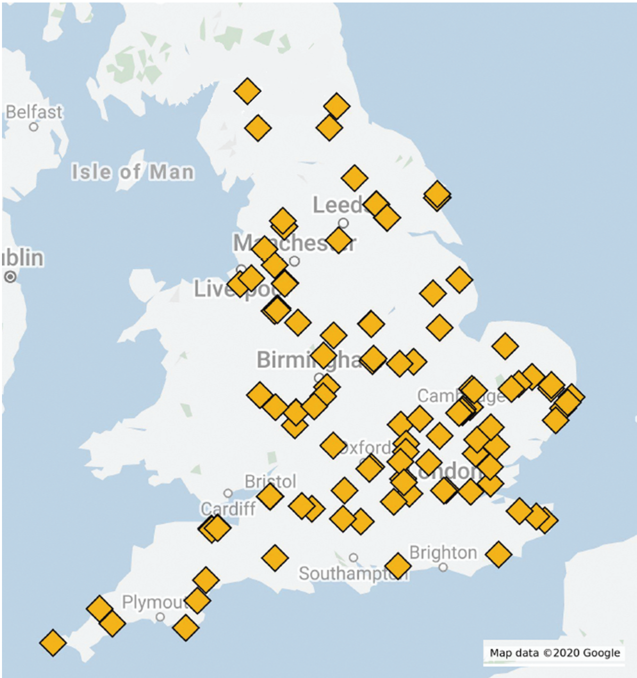

Figure 8.1 The LanDo corpus: All data points

Most of the texts are precisely dated. Of the 141 texts, 21 cannot be assigned to a specific date, but may be confidently assigned to the period included in MELD, that is, 1399–1525. The chronological distribution of those texts that are either explicitly dated or that may be placed within a quarter century is shown in Figure 8.2. As with the MELD material in general, there are few texts from the earliest part of the period; the earliest dated text is from 1411 but the bulk of the material is dated after 1450.

Altogether 938 geographical definitions were collected from the corpus. What constitutes a geographical definition is not always self-evident, and absolute consistency has not been possible. As a rule, localizations that merely give the name of a town or county, such as "land in Norfolk" have not been included unless further detail is provided, nor are definitions that only provide the name of the occupant with no geographical reference. All definitions that refer to or imply geographical location at a finer resolution have been included.

Table 8.1 The distribution of geographical descriptions among functional categories in MELD

Superordinate category	Subcategory	Texts	Descriptive units
Accounts	**Total**	2	20
	Financial account	1	7
	Inventory	1	13
Conveyances	**Total**	72	663
	Leases	24	175
	Sales	22	159
	Agreements	12	112
	Exchanges	8	165
	Gifts	3	31
	Wills	2	11
	Power of attorney	1	10
Memoranda	**Total**	5	35
	Notes	4	25
	Notary record	1	10
Settlements	**Total**	12	152
	Awards	11	124
	Partition	1	28
Statements	**Total**	5	58
	Testimonies	4	38
	Deposition	1	20
Sureties	**Total**	6	37
	Conditions of obligation	5	31
	Defeasance	1	6
Surveys	**Total**	39	3,352
	Land surveys	13	878
	Rentals	10	432
	Terriers	13	1,606
	Perambulations	3	436
Grand total		**141**	**4,317**

Most definitions consist of three main parts, or **descriptive units**: (1) the unit of land that is being defined or described; (2) the landmarks or locations in relation

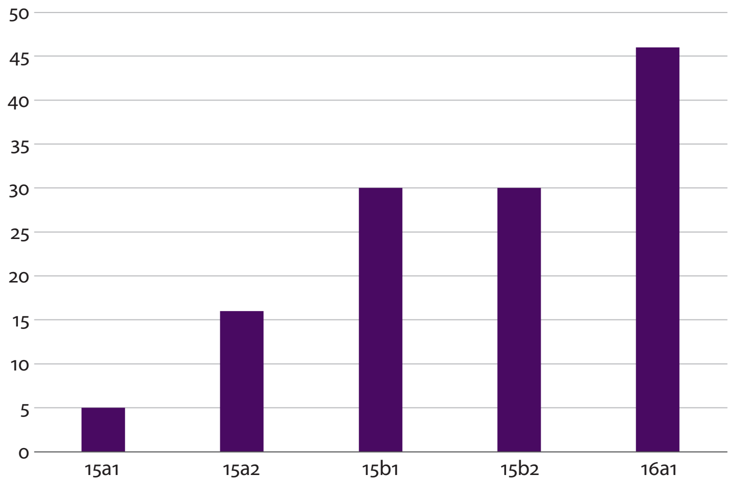

Figure 8.2 The chronological distribution of the texts in LanDo, by quarter century (absolute figures)

to which they are defined; and (3) the verb(s) and/or preposition(s) connecting the former to the latter. They range from the very brief to the highly complex:

(8.7) a. lands in Weston felde (Herts D4169)
'lands in Weston field'

b. a garden called howtyng*es* conteyning I rod di*m* rod xiiij *per*chis And hit lieth to walton Easte to Thomas Snothes garden South to the Strete west and to the garden of olde John Frende North (Kent D2968)
'a garden called Howtynges, containing 1 ½ rods 14 perches, and it lies next to Walton on the east side, to Thomas Snothe's garden on the south side, to the street on the west side and to the garden of old John Frende on the north side'

The definitions virtually always contain a noun phrase denoting the actual property or holding that is being defined (*lands, a garden called howtynges*); this category is here termed the **land unit**. The LanDo material contains 1,165 such noun phrases. These may consist of units of measure *(ij acre of lond, a brode-land, iij bottys)* or of a range of terms for different kinds of landholding or property (*croft, parcell, medow, brewhouse)*, and very occasionally names (*Morewell, the litell Sole*).

The actual geographical localization or definition of the land unit consists either of a preposition or a **connecting verb**, the latter with or without a following preposition (*lieth to, lying in, buttes apon*), and one or more noun phrases providing the localization (*Weston felde, y*[e] *nether end off y*[e] *Scrooge meadow*), here termed the **landmarks**. Both the verbs and the landmark phrases were collected and yielded 871 and 2,281 elements respectively; simple prepositions connecting the land unit and landmark (usually *in, at*) were not collected.

The definition may simply state the area in which the unit is located, or describe its boundaries. In the first kind of definition, the connecting element is usually either *be in* or *lie in*, occasionally just the preposition *in* (as in Example (8.7) a):

(8.8) londe lying' in Grauncestr' feld somtym' Thomas wylyngh*a*m
(Cambs D6088#1)
'land lying in Granchester field sometime of Thomas Wylyngham'

The second kind of definition usually includes a verb followed by a preposition, expressing the meaning "stretches to/from" or "bounds with":

(8.9) iij acr*es* y[t] butt*es* apon pudeldyke w[t] y[e] nether end off y[e] Scroge medow
(Cumb L1196)
'Three acres that bound with Puddledyke with the nether end of the Scrooge meadow'

Such definitions often include phrases specifying directions, such as "on the north side", "to the east". These modifying phrases are lexically fairly invariable and have not been included in the study. Perambulations may contain long lists of landmarks simply connected by prepositions such as "from" and "to".

The landmarks themselves are expressed by one or more noun phrases, which may be connected by prepositions or conjunctions (*fro Osell birche to a blak stake*), embedded in other noun phrases (*y[e] nether end (off y[e] Scroge medow))* and followed by adverbial or prepositional phrases or relative clauses denoting ownership (*sometym' Thomas wylyngham*). The landmark is the element that provides the actual description of the landscape, and also the most varied and plentiful material; at the same time, this material also turns out to be the most difficult to compare systematically.

The following sections give an overview of the findings for each category in turn: land units, connecting verbs and landmarks. No attempt is made here to classify and present the entire range of lexical and onomastic data found within these categories: these amount to a very substantial amount of material and will, it is hoped, be discussed more fully elsewhere. Rather, the sections outline the general patterns of geographical description and then focus on the question to what extent the data show variation that may be related to geography. In the discussion, the individual lexical items are referred to in the spelling of the *OED* headword to which they have been related.

8.3.2 The land units

The first element in each geographical definition is the noun phrase denoting the unit to be defined, here referred to as the land unit. The LanDo material includes a great variety of terms within this category: as calculated here, the headwords of the 1,160 noun phrases collected as land units represent 114 lexical items. It should, however, be noted that the identification of forms with lexical items is not always straightforward.

First of all, the variability of Middle English spelling means that the written forms of different lexical items may overlap. For example, the forms *rode* and *rood* have here been categorized as the "same" item (*OED* ROOD n[1]) while *rod* has been categorized as a different one (*OED* ROD n.). However, there is no reason to assume that these two nouns, which had a long and short vowel respectively, were always distinguished in spelling, and, according to the *OED*, their meanings also seem to have overlapped.

Secondly, it must be taken into account that not only the words vary between different geographical areas but the concepts do as well. As landscapes and traditions are different, so are the ways of describing and measuring the land, and it is often impossible to tell to what extent the same term used in different areas may relate to the same meaning and function. The following maps, therefore, simply show which terms for areal units were in use in which area; variation in meaning is commented upon when suggested by the data, but no attempt is made to study such variation systematically.

The two most frequently occurring terms for land units, by a very large margin, are *acre* (245 tokens) and *land* (170 tokens); the third most frequent term, *tenement*, has 51 tokens. The term *acre* represents the most common type of land unit in all: measures or divisions of land, usually occurring with an indication of quantity: *a brode-land, half on acre, xxx perchis*. It is not always clear whether a term is used strictly as a measure or has a more descriptive sense, and sometimes one use may have developed from another: *butts* and *rigs*, for example, are both used as general terms for divisions of land between ploughed furrows and as actual measures (*OED*, see BUTT n.[6], RIG n.[1] III).

Measures and divisions of land are the most common category in the material, with 535 tokens. The other terms for land units may be classified as follows: general terms for land (355), terms for different kinds of land (166), buildings (68), miscellaneous units (23) and names (9). Between most of these categories, boundaries are fluid, and the categorisation is only intended as a working division. Perhaps the most difficult term of all is *land*, which appears both as a count noun, functioning either as a unit of land division, equivalent to a rig or salion according to the *OED* (*vj londes; oon lond and a pyke*), or as a general term for "landholding" *(the wheche lond lyyt of the sowyt party of the kyngys hy way)* and, most commonly, as a mass noun (*two acres of land*). For the present purpose, occurrences of *land* preceded by a numeral have been classified as units of measure/division; however, the two meanings of the count noun would in practice have overlapped in use.

Measures and divisions

The discussion of units of measure and division that follows is based on Zupko (1977, 1985), with additional reference to the *OED Online* and to the resources on modern and historical measure systems on wikipedia.com. Most traditional English areal units are based on the amount of land which a given number of oxen can plough in a given period of time. A *carucate, ploughland* or *hide* would represent the land that a team of eight oxen could plough in a season, and was at least nominally equated to 120 *acres*; it could also be divided into four *virgates* or *yardlands* or, in the North, into eight *oxgangs*. The acre itself represents the amount of land that one man with one ox could plough in one day. It could in turn be divided into four *roods* or 160 *perches*. A perch would be equal to one square *rod;* four rods made a *chain*, and ten chains made a *furlong*, representing the distance a team of oxen could plough without resting. Both *rood* and *rod* appeared both as measures of distance and of area.

All these measures would vary greatly in size and application. Areas differed both in terms of terrain and wealth: in a flat and easy terrain, the oxen might manage considerably larger areas than they would in other places, and in impoverished areas it would be natural to use land units based on fewer oxen. In addition, a whole range of measures were used locally and for particular purposes. Several terms that were used descriptively, for particular kinds of division of land, such as *butt, flat* and *rig*, also came to be used as measures in some areas. As it is generally impossible to tell whether the various occurrences of a term imply an actual areal measurement, or whether they simply refer to particular types of division, no distinction is attempted here.

The following 29 terms for units of measure or land division are found in the material:[2]

> *acre, butt, broadbutt, broadland, carucate, flat, furlong, hadland, hak, halland, hedland, husbandland, land, long fydur, longhadland, narrowland, oxgang, perch, pightel, pike, rig, rod, rodbred, rood, roodland, stitch, swath, yard, yardland*

2. The list provides the terms in spellings that are based on the *OED* headwords. While most spelling variants are straightforward to deal with, it might be noted that *butt* includes the spellings *botte* and *butt,* and that *swath* includes *swayt.* For *rod* and *rood,* see p. 185.

It was already noted that *acre* is the most common term in the entire material; it is used in all areas and might be considered a standard measure in name (even though the actual measurements would differ): of the 51 texts that contain measures, only five texts of any length (of which four are scribal stints of a single document) do not refer to acres of all. These are all northern texts: Durham L0321 mainly refers to *bottes* and *hadlands*, while all four scribes of YER L1130 refer to *broadlands* and *narrowlands*.

Some of the terms occur in one or two texts only, and while there is overlap in the material, with many texts using two or three different units, remarkably many individual texts use completely different systems from all the other ones. As many as seventeen of the terms (*broadbutt, carucate, flat, furlong, hadland, hack, halland, husbandland, long fydur, longhadland, pightle, pike, potland, rodbred, stitch, yard, yardland)*[3] appear in one text only. This does not mean that all these terms were necessarily restricted in use: several of them (such as *carucate* and *furlong*) are well known from other sources and periods, and *furlong* appears in several more texts in the "landmark" category (see 8.3.4).

Apart from the *acre*, which is common throughout the country, and the *rod* and *rood* which turn up in many parts, virtually all those units that occur in more than one text seem to cluster geographically. As Figure 8.3 shows, *oxgangs* and *rigs* cluster in the North, while *butts* cluster in the West Midlands and *perches* in the Southeast. Smilarly, *flats* appear both in the North and West, while *pightles*, again, seem to be a southeastern unit (Figure 8.4).

The items *hadland, halland* and *headland* are of some interest (see Figure 8.5). Six texts in all, in northern and central areas, show the forms *hedland* or *hedeland*, while *hadland* or *halland* appear in two western texts (Staffs D0036, Lancs L0321). While the *OED* lists the *hadland* type under HEADLAND, the material seems to show a difference in meaning. A *headland* is defined in *OED* as the area at the end of the ploughed furrows beyond the turning place of the oxen, which is then usually ploughed last. This means that headlands are always going to be few in comparison with other units, and this accords well with the use of the term in most of the texts. However, in the Lancashire text, *halland* or *hadland* is very clearly the standard unit of land, which means that it cannot mean "headland". The generalization of meaning is probably reflected in the reduced form *halland* in which the meaning "head" is no longer transparent.

3. The terms *broadbutt, halland, husbandland, long fydur, longhadland, potland* and *rodbred* do not seem to be recorded in the *OED Online*.

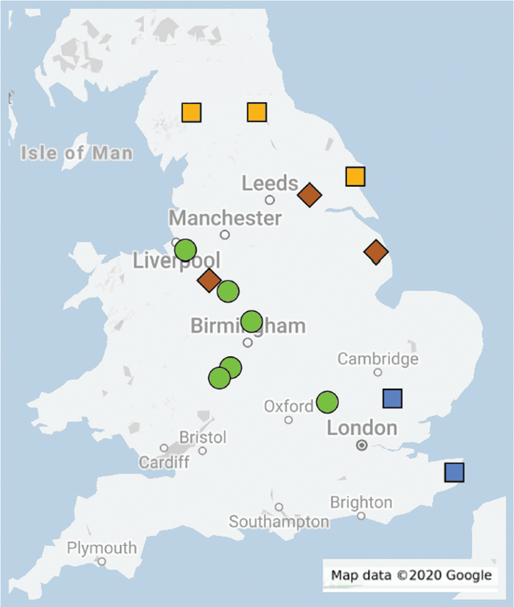

Figure 8.3 The distributions of *oxgang, rig, butt* and *perch* (yellow squares, brown diamonds, green circles and blue squares respectively)

Figure 8.4 The distributions of *flat* and *pightle* (yellow diamonds and green circles respectively)

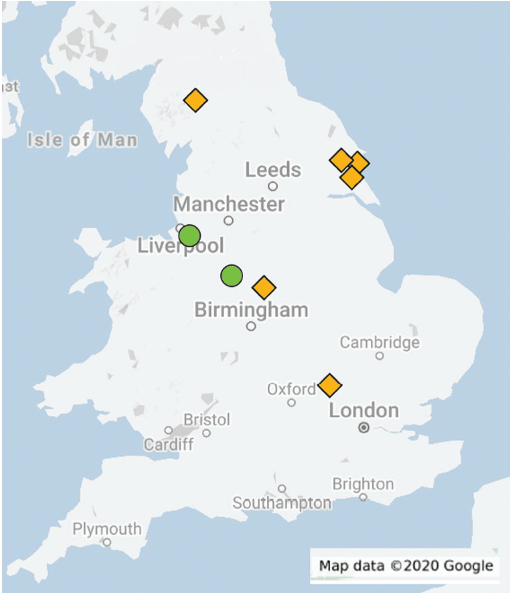

Figure 8.5 The distributions of *headland* and *hadland/halland* (yellow diamonds and green circles respectively)

Figure 8.6 The distribution of *piece (of land)*

Types of landholding and property

The units of land measure shade into and overlap with more general terms for landholdings, as well as with terms that define the land by its characteristics rather than its size. The following terms seem to represent fairly general terms for a land holding:

ground, land, parcel, piece, place, plot

Of these, *ground* and *land* are used both as countable units and as mass nouns: so *oon londe, iiij londes, a vacon ground* but *j pece of lond, two acres of land, j parcel of gronde*. The others, which are all used as countable units only, seem to be mainly used in a non-descriptive sense simply meaning a "piece of land". However, *place* often appears in the sense "dwelling place", with the name of its holder (*Thomas herison plays*). All these terms seem to have a wide geographical distribution, except for *piece*, which is almost exclusively used in the Eastern area (see Figure 8.6).

Seven items refer to holdings from a legal point of view:

tenement, common, demaynes, lordshippe, liberties, fraunchessis, purprestur

Of these, *tenement* is by far the most common, appearing in 51 texts in all geographical areas, while the others appear in one or two texts each. The term *manor* (appearing in five texts) might also be included in this group, although it generally seems to appear in the sense of the main building or holding of the manor, also referred to as *capital mese* (Rutland D4699).

Other terms refer to specific types of landholding and describe either their characteristics or their use. The term for arable land is invariably *field*, which appears in 40 texts and all geographical areas. On the other hand, terms for grassland/pasture vary widely, including *le, lese, lesewe, ley, ley end, mead, meadow, meadowplot* and *pasture*. Of these, *meadow* seems to be the term with the widest distribution, appearing in 16 texts in different areas, while *mead* and *pasture* are somewhat less common and the others appear in one or two texts only: of these, *lesewe* appears as the designation for three places in Worcestershire.

Words for marshland holdings include *fen, marsh, moor* and *moss*, while units of woodland include *copse, grange, grovette, hay, park* and *wood*. Cultivated gardens are referred to as *yort, kaleyort, garth, garden* and *orchard*. Several terms relate to water and fishing: *course of water, mere, fishing, fishyortstead* and *weir*. None of these terms appear commonly enough to give any firm indications of geographical patterning.

Finally, there is a large group of terms relating to man-made buildings and structures. The terms *close* and *croft* specify an enclosure, while *mese, messuage, toft* and *toftstead* seem to assume a building; enclosing structures include *hedge, wall* and *bulwork*. Other terms relate to buildings and places where people live and work: *barn, bothe, burgage, chamber, cottage, hall, hostel, house, kitchen, manor* (in the sense of the building), *stable* and *shop*. Buildings for specific production purposes include *beer house, brewhouse, fulling mill* and *wich-house* (for salt production). To the extent that these terms occur in large quantities, they form no particular geographical patterns and seem to be fairly general all over the country, except for *wich-house*, which is restricted to the salt-mining areas in Cheshire (see also p. 159).

8.3.3 Verbs describing geographical relations

Compared to the landscape terms themselves, the verbs describing their geographical relations are much simpler to deal with, as they involve a very limited set of meanings. The land documents basically describe three kinds of relation:

a. X is situated in Y
b. X stretches from Y to Z
c. X borders on Y

Only the third of these categories involves verbs that show geographical variation.

There are 419 examples of category a). This is completely dominated by the verb *lie (in)*, which appears in 379 of the examples, occasionally coupled with *be:*

(8.10) a. Seint Austeyns hostel and oþ*er* ten*a*nce*es* **lieng in** millestrete (Cambs D6137#1)
'Saint Austin's hostel and other tenancies lying in Mill Street'
b. A medowplott to the*m* belongyng **beying and lying** in the mede of Grauncete (Cambs D6057)
'A meadowplot belonging to them, being and lying in the meadow of Granchester'

Other verbs used for the same purpose are much less common: *set (in)* appears in 21 texts, while *be (in, on)* and *stand (on)* appear in eight texts each; one text from Cornwall, D4550, deals with woodland and consequently uses *grow in*. A few texts combine *set, lie* and *be*, always in that order:

(8.11) whych tenemet' brwhowse wt celers solers & othyr' y*er* app*ur*ten*a*nc*es* whyche one wyllm' Marshall Citezin' & bruar of londo*n* late hyld & occupyde **sett lying' & being** in thamysstrete In ye *par*yshe of seynte larense pwntney of london' (Middx D4160#11)
'which tenement brewhouse with cellars, lofts and other appurtenances, which one William Marshall, citizen and brewer of London held and occupied of late, set, lying and being in Thames street in the parish of St Lawrence Pountney of London'

Category (b) is relatively rare in the material, with 99 attestations appearing in only 27 texts: the verbs include *stretch, go* and *extend*, appearing in 12, 6 and 5 texts respectively, *come* in three texts, and *alead, lead, run* and *reach* in one text each. The verbs combine with the prepositions *from*, and *(un)to*, occasionally *against*.

Category (c), however, shows a range of different verbs which turn out to show marked geographical patterns. The following verbs are attested, with a total of 347 attestations in altogether 43 texts:

abound, abut, adjoin, bound, butt, cleave, join, put, shoot, spurn, stint

Of these, *butt* appears over much of the country (see Figure 8.7); appearing in thirteen texts, it is also one of the most commonly attested of the forms, exceeded only by *abut* (17 texts). All the other forms that occur in any quantity cluster in clearly distinct areas (see Figure 8.8): *spurn* and *stint* appear in the northwestern and northeastern areas respectively, while *shoot* appears in the western and central areas and *abut* in eastern and central ones.

It may be noted that *shoot* and *abut* both appear in Oxford and that *butt* overlaps with all the other areas of distribution. Even with these overlaps, the verbs meaning "adjoin to" show the most marked geographical distinctions in the present material: unlike that of the land units, their meaning is well-defined and there seems to be no universal form in common use, even though *butt* is widely distributed. At the same time, the number of regional variants is small enough to allow for overall patterns to be discerned. The opposite is the case when it comes to the final group of terms to be considered: the landmarks in relation to which the land units are localized.

8.3.4 Landmarks

The geographical descriptions used to localize the land units, here termed landmarks, form by far the most complex category in the present material. It was already noted that they range from very brief notes, such as "in Bidenham" (Example (8.1)) to the long stretches of boundary description found in perambulations (Example (8.3)). In addition to their varying length and complexity, they also display a very wide range of vocabulary, reflecting their various purposes and the kinds of land or terrain involved. The headwords of the 2,281 landmark units collected have been classified into 253 lexical items; only a brief overview of this material is possible here.

The greatest differences in description are those between urban and rural properties. Urban properties are less common in the material than rural ones; for the most part, they are referred to in conveyances rather than in surveys. They are most commonly located by means of a street name:

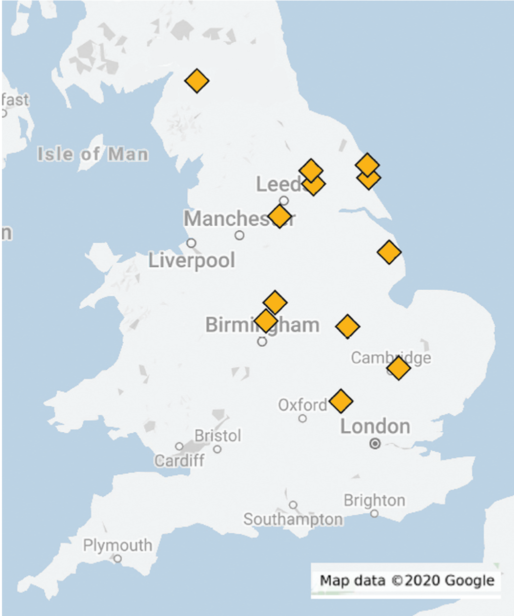

Figure 8.7 The distribution of *butt* 'adjoin to'

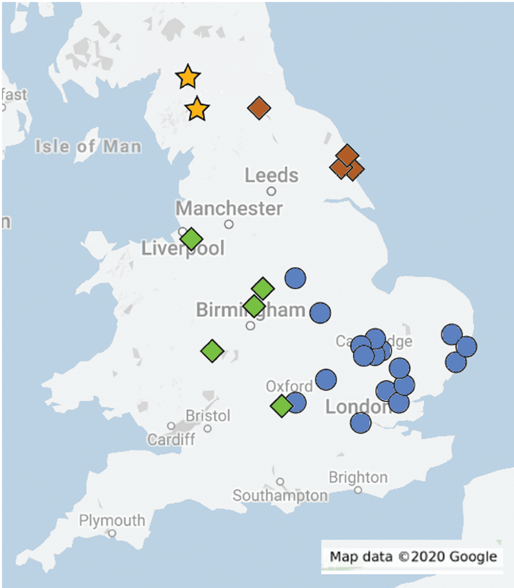

Figure 8.8 The distributions of *spurn, stint, shoot* and *abut* 'adjoin to' (yellow stars, brown diamonds, green diamonds and blue circles respectively)

(8.12) a. A place lyinge **in Baldewyn Strete** the weche was the place of wat*er* wynt*er* (Gloucs D0765, Bristol)
'a place lying in Baldwin Street which used to be Wa(l)ter Wynter's place'
b. Y*er* tenement brwhowse callyd y^{e} olde swanne **In Thamysstrete** (Middx D4160#11, London)
'their tenement brewhouse called the Old Swan in Thames Street'

Many of the street names appear throughout the country, the "high street" already showing signs of being used as a generic term, always appearing with the definite article (*the highstrete in Baldok)*. The "King's highway" appears in both urban and rural settings, with a total of 24 references in 17 texts; in towns, it often includes a local street name as an alternative:

(8.13) a. The king*es* high-wey in modertong called Bredlestrete (Essex D2692a, Aveley)
'The king's highway, called Bridle Street in the mother tongue'
b. the kyng*es* high weye callid the Chepe (Cambs D6010, Cambridge)
'The king's highway called the Chepe'

Smaller lanes may be named – often with colourful names and bynames – or simply described:

(8.13) a. the corner end of Shitgere lane othirwyse named Bysshopys lane (Devon D0494, Kingsbridge)
'the corner end of Shitgear lane, also known as the Bishop's lane'
b. A watry lane callid Cutthrote lane otherwyse callid Froge lane (Worcs D2511#3, Worcester)
'a watery lane called Cutthroat lane, also known as Frog lane'
c. The lytle lane that gothe towardys the myddes of the fylde (Staffs D0032, Lichfield)
'The little lane that goes towards the middle of the field'

Urban holdings may also be defined in relation to buildings or other landmarks within the town, typically churches, market crosses or guild halls; reference is also made to structures such as *þe Grey Freryn*' *wall* 'the wall of the Grey Friars' in Bristol (Gloucs D4530) and *Seant Mary steyer* 'the stairs of St Mary' in Worcester (Worcs 2464#3, D2511#3).

Rural land holdings, which are much more common in the material, are most commonly defined in terms of the adjoining holdings or areas. Many of the terms found here are the same as or similar to those discussed in the land unit section: localizations are defined in relation to holdings of various kinds (closes, fields, headlands, meadows, pieces of land and so on) as well as in relation to buildings and structures (chapels, gates, mills and parsonages). Units of measure are, however, far less common here, and almost always refer to named holdings:[4]

(8.14) And the other hede abutteth vppon an Aker called sumtyme Calys-is Aker and nowe John Porter-is Aker toward the North (Essex D2704)
'and the other end adjoins to an acre formerly called Calys's Acre and now called John Porter's Acre, towards the north'

On the other hand, the landmarks include a vast variety of rural and natural landscape features that seldom or never appear as land units themselves. These vary from the very local and transitory – features such as paths, stiles and birch trees – to major features such as rivers and hills. Boundaries are not uncommonly defined with reference to trees, not only the long-lasting oaks but also the much more short-lived birches, elms, pear-trees, poplars and hawthorn: it may be noted that the Lancashire testimonies by old men (L0586#1 and L0586#2; see Example (8.5)) already refer to some birches in the past tense (*Osell briche þ^{t} stode abofe þ^{e} hede of þ^{e} same lache; þ^{e} Croket birche þ^{t} stode toward þ^{e} Ewe wall*), while "the oak in the Halyweldale" (D4373#3) in Nottinghamshire might still stand today.

The wide variety of terminology means that few terms appear in a large number of texts: in the entire landmark material, only seven headwords, none of which are of interest in terms of geographical distribution, appear in more than fifteen texts: *land* (38), *field* (37), *street* (34), *highway* (28), *tenement* (22), *way* (22) and *town* (21). It might be noted that this pattern – a large and varied vocabulary with a thin coverage – is the opposite of that generally associated with documentary texts (cf. p. 9).

In addition, the nature of the material makes precise semantic definitions problematic. The meaning of landscape terms often varies from area to area, and may change over time. Working out the precise meaning of a word in a given text may be impossible: the descriptions are generally meant to define the landmarks to local people, not to explain the terms to outsiders. For example, the reference to a *slade* in a perambulation from Hilton, Durham gives no clue as to whether the term here refers to a valley, a glade or a strip of boggy land (cf. *OED* SLADE, n.1; also *EDD Online* SLADE sb.):

(8.15) x. Acreȝ bi Est Farthing **slade** boundand vppon*n* Boldon*n* felde (Durham D0257)
'10 acres by East Farthing slade, adjoining to Boldon field'

4. It should be noted, however, that the *furlong* is, for some reason, more common here than in the land unit category, with seven texts containing localizations in relation to holdings defined as furlongs (e.g. *in a furlong called harehegge* 'in a furlong called Hare Hedge (Oxfords D2373), *In the forlong clepyd vndir the Botme* 'in the furlong called Under the Bottom' (Norfolk D0656))

In other cases, the context does provide clues: a half-acre lying *on' the* ***hurst*** *buttyng in-to thedeway* 'on the hurst, adjoining to the headway' (Beds D4223) suggests that the meaning of *hurst* here might be "eminence, hillock, knoll or bank" rather than "sandbank in the sea or a river", and probably rather than "a grove of trees, a copse, a wood" (*OED* HURST n., senses I.1.a, b and 2). Similarly, the form *kar, carre* in two northern texts (YER L1130#2 and Cumb L1196), referring to adjoining lands, is likely to represent *OED* CARR n^2 ("bog or fen, wet boggy ground") with an ON etymology, rather than *OED* CARR n^1 ("rock", cf. *EDD Online* CARR sb.), of Celtic origin. Of course, present-day resources, even ones based on historical materials, such as the *OED* and the *MED*, are unlikely to list even all major meanings that may have pertained to such words, which largely belong to an oral tradition.

Bearing these problems of definition in mind, the following list gives a broad classification of the terms relating to some major landscape features:

Boggy or watery land: *carr, fen, holme, ing, letch, marsh, mire, moss, slade, slake*
Cliff: *clift, clough, scarth*
Grassland or pasture: *lease, leasow, lea, mead, meadow*
Hill: *hill, hurst, knap, knoll*
Ridge or bank: *balk, bank, dike, hurst, linch, rain, rig*
Valley: *clough, combe, dale, hollow, slade, valley*
Watercourse: *beck, brook, burn, canal, dike, ditch, grip, letch, river, sike, sitch, stream*
Woodland: *copse, grove, holt, hurst, park, wood*

While some of the listed words are firmly established in present-day Standard English, a large number are defined as "dialectal" or "now dialectal" in the *OED*, or otherwise identified as having a geographically restricted distribution: so *beck, carr, dale, grip, holme, holt, hurst, ing, knap, lease, leasow, letch, linch, mead, mire, rig, sike, sitch, slade, slake* and *scarth*. It might be noted that the term "dialectal" tends to be used in the dictionaries in the sense of "non-standard" rather than "regional": for example, *rain* 'ridge' is identified in *EDD Online* as being in "general dialectal use".

The low numbers of occurrences and the difficulty of establishing functional equivalence mean that the geographical distributions of the landmark terms are much more difficult to reconstruct than those of the land units and verbs. In some cases, several forms may be grouped together on the basis of formal or historical similarities. One such group consists of the forms *dike, ditch, sike* and *sich*, two pairs of etymological doublets with more or less expected dialect distributions: historically, *dike* and *sike* are assumed to be the northern equivalents of *ditch* and *sitch*. As noted in *OED Online* (DIKE n.), however, what seems to be a later semantic split of *dike* and *ditch* has changed this pattern in modern English:

> The analogy of other words […] leads us to expect *dike* as the northern, *ditch* as the southern representation of Old English *díc*. The Middle English evidence favours this; but in modern use, both forms occur in nearly all parts of the country, with various differentiation of meaning. Generally, *ditch* is a hollow channel or deep furrow, wet or dry, but in some parts […] it is an embankment or raised fence; usually *dike* or *dyke* is a bank or wall, but in many parts it is a wide and deep channel for running water. The existence of *dick* or *deek* in this sense in Kent, Sussex, and other southern counties, is remarkable.

Figure 8.9 shows the distributions of *dike/sike* and *ditch/sitch* respectively in the LanDo material. As far as the northern and central parts of the country are concerned, the distribution follows a pattern similar to the usually assumed boundary between areas with and without historical Scandinavian settlement (for the concept of the "Great Scandinavian Belt", see Samuels 1985; see also Figure 5.2 and the LALME Maps for, for example, *thir* THESE, *slik* SUCH, *gud guid* GOOD and *er* ARE); in the southern area, however, these items appear only in a single text, which seemingly goes against this pattern. The single diamond symbol in Sussex represents the use of *dike* in a Udimore terrier (D0542), referring to two dikes, *Echyngton long dyke* and *Grekys dyke*, used as boundaries of marshland holdings; presumably the sense here is "ditch" or "channel", just as in the Kentish and Sussex usage reported in the *OED*. Most of the uses of *dike* in the LanDo material refer to such marshland boundaries, and there are no indications of the sense "bank" or "wall".

Another set of well-known dialectal forms is *bek, burn* and *brook*, which appear in LanDo in the areas where they might be expected: the presumed ON loanword *bek* in Nottinghamshire, *burn* in (the non-Scandinavian) Durham and *brook* all over the southern half of the country, as far north as Nottinghamshire (cf. also Fisiak 2000). Most terms, however, appear in two or three texts only, and clearly need to be supplemented by more data; it will also make sense to study the data in conjunction with such comparative evidence that is available elsewhere, including place-name evidence and later dialect surveys.

For the present purpose, a brief comparison was carried out of the terms referring to "boggy or watery land" with the modern dialect information in the *EDD Online* as well as the historical notes in the *OED*. Of the ten terms listed above, six appear in the *EDD* in this sense: *ing, letch, mire, moss, slade* and *slake*. As far as the remaining four are concerned, *fen* and *marsh* may be considered general vocabulary in present-day English, while the uses of *carr* and *holme* in the present sense are not recorded in the *EDD Online*. Of those attested in the *EDD, mire* is defined as being in "general dialectal use" with no geographical limitations, and *slade* is reported (in various meanings) for a large number of counties covering most parts of the country.

Of the remaining four terms, *slake* has the most northerly distribution in the *EDD*, being attested in Northumberland, Durham and Cumbria only; it is defined as "soft muddy ground left bare by the tide; an accumulation of mud; a bog". The *OED* defines *slake* as "chiefly northern" and cites examples only from the nineteenth century. The etymology is given as uncertain in *OED*, while the *EED* suggests ON *slakki* as a possible etymon. In LanDo, *slake* is found in one East Yorkshire text (L1130#1) and one Westmorland text (D0378), agreeing with the northern distribution and showing the existence of the term in the fifteenth century.

The other three words are all attested from the Middle English period in the *OED*. The term *ing* goes back to ON *eng* 'meadow' and is defined in the *OED* as "[a] common name in the north of England, and in some other parts, for a meadow; esp. one by the side of a river and more or less swampy or subject to inundation"; the EED simply defines *ing* as "meadow, pasture, esp. low-lying land by the side of a stream or river". In the *EDD, ing* is recorded from a wide area including all the northern counties as well as Lincolnshire, all of East Anglia as well as the south-eastern counties of Kent, Surrey and Sussex (see Map 8.9). In other words, *ing* is a northern and eastern form, stretching as far south as Kent and Sussex but not appearing in the central and western areas. In LanDo, *ing* appears in Lincolnshire, as well as, presumably, in the form *yengs*, in Westmorland (D0378).

Finally, both *letch* and *moss* are northern and western forms in the *EDD Online: moss* is said to be "in general dialectal use" in the northern counties to Lancashire, Cheshire and Derbyshire, also being used in Shropshire, while *letch* (*EDD Online* LACHE sb.) is attested in the same counties, minus Shropshire. In LanDo, both words appear in Lancashire, in two texts each, while *leche* also appears in a Worcestershire land survey (D2459#1). Both in *EDD* and *OED, letch* is defined as having two related meanings: in *OED*, these are "[a] stream flowing through boggy land; a muddy ditch or hole" and "a bog", while the *EED* online distinguishes between a "pond, pool" and "swamp, quagmire". At least some of the LanDo examples of *letch* seem to refer to streams rather than bogs: most notably, in the testimony about Drylesden Moss (see Example (8.5)), a lache *rennes out of y^e mosse* (Lancs L0586#1).

For these individual terms, the LanDo coverage is clearly insufficient on its own to do more than confirm that the medieval distributions of the forms more or less agree with the more plentiful modern dialect data. However, even these very limited findings raise some questions for further enquiry, perhaps the most intriguing one concerning the geographical distribution of forms such as *dike* and *ing*. The form *dyke* in a Sussex text might seem an idiosyncracy if it were not for the *OED* note on the use of *dike* "ditch, channel" in modern Kent and Sussex and the complete absence of otherwise northern forms in this reasonably substantial, and fully southern, text, produced by or for a local landowner (Finch of Ickleham).

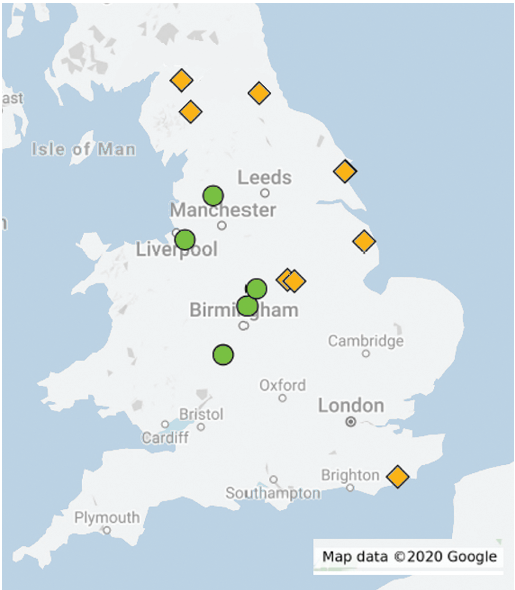

Figure 8.9 The distributions of *dike, sike* (yellow diamonds) and *ditch, sitch* (green circles)

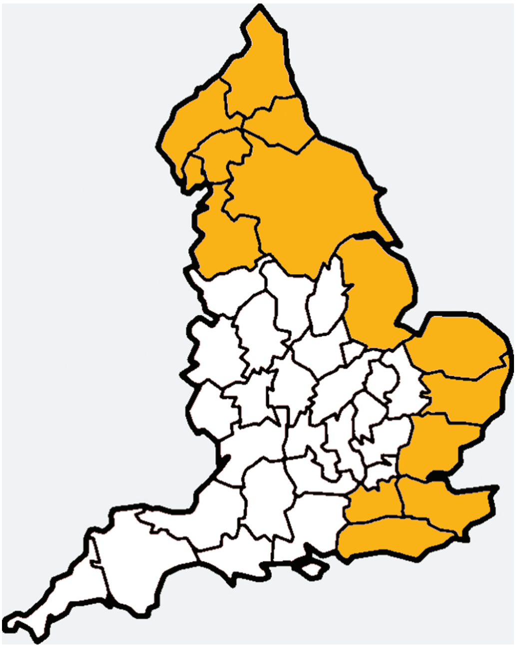

Figure 8.10 The *EDD* distribution of *ing* (by county)

One might wonder whether the distribution of *dike* might in fact have looked more like the east–west division suggested by the *EDD* distribution of *ing* (Figure 8.10) rather than the traditional north–south division. More material is clearly needed to address this question, which might suggest geographical patterns rather different from those traditionally expected.

8.4 The local character of land documents

In the present material, no chronological change may be detected. The terminology of the sixteenth century does not appear more uniform than that of the mid-fifteenth, nor is there any reason to assume that vocabulary would become "standardized" in local land documents, as it is the local significance of the terms that makes them functional. It would be of considerable interest to extend the study to land documents from later periods, bridging the gap between the late medieval materials and modern dialect surveys. The significance of such studies would go far beyond the purely lexical interest, as the distribution of landscape terms may be assumed to reflect past patterns of language contact as well as patterns of contact in general: the social spaces of settlement and land use.

Finally, one might ask to what extent the local character of the land documents might be reflected at other levels of language. The example of the Barmston survey (see p. 176 above) suggests that a competence in the local dialect was crucial for the production of documents that described local landholdings in detail; it might be asked whether such a local focus might also be reflected in the general character of their language.

A detailed study of the orthography and morphology of the LanDo texts falls outside the scope of this chapter. However, a brief comparison with the MELD corpus as a whole suggests that the land documents might show particularly strongly regional usage. Of the 26 western texts included in LanDo (defined as those localized in Lancashire, Cheshire, Staffordshire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire), three out of six texts show <o> spellings as the sole or main forms in the items LANE and MAN. In addition, the items BRIDGE and FIRST both show numerous <u> spellings, suggesting the typically southern/western retention of rounding in words with OE /y/; these appear as sole or main forms in three out of four and four out of seven texts respectively. These items might suggest a higher degree of retention of traditional regional forms than that found in MELD texts as a whole (see Chapter 5 and Thengs 2013: 160–61, 164–65); however, as the proportions are based on few texts and relatively few tokens, they can only be seen as suggestive.

Somewhat more notably, in the 23 northern texts (defined as those localized in the "six northern counties", see p. 15), the present participle *-and* is entirely dominant, being the only form in all except one of the nine texts that show the feature; the only text with *-ing* forms is from the southern part of the area (Lancashire). Similarly, <q> spellings of WHICH (*quech, queche, qwych, qwylke)* dominate in six of the eight texts where the feature appears. Again, for what they are worth, these figures suggest considerably higher proportions of regionally marked forms than studies of the whole northern MELD material have indicated (around 25% for both *-and* and <q> forms of WHICH in Stenroos 2019a: 51). While the number of texts is too small for firm conclusions to be drawn, this might indicate that land documents, being quintessentially of local interest, tend to show a relatively strongly local or regional language, not only when it comes to vocabulary but also with regard to other levels of language.

8.5 Conclusions

Land documents provide good material for word geography, with some important caveats. Their great advantage is the precise localization of the material. Unlike most kinds of documents, land documents reflect physical geography in a very real way; they may also be considered to reflect spoken language in the sense that the local land nomenclature would be based on oral tradition. The documents would not always have been written down by locals, but might be drawn up by a county official such as Old Chorley, the sheriff's clerk (see Example (8.6)). However, it would have been crucial in all cases to preserve the local terminology, and the example of the Barmston survey (p. 176) suggests that scribes without competence in the local usage were not necessarily accepted.

The most important challenges are the semantic fluidity of the land vocabulary and, in many cases, especially regarding many of the landmark terms, the thinness of the data. As the same terms are frequently used in different functions and their meaning is not always clear from the context, reconstructing the semantic structures – and knowing what to compare with what – is often problematic. For the landmark terms, an additional challenge is the sheer range of vocabulary and the corresponding scarcity of data for each specific item.

Accordingly, even though many frequent items, such as units of land measure and verbs meaning "adjoining to", appear in large enough numbers to suggest clear patterns, a larger corpus would open many more possibilities. This should, preferably, include later materials as well: this would make it possible to study changes over time, and would add to the density of the geographical coverage, making it possible to trace patterns of dispersion and relate them to historical patterns of settlement and language contact.

Finally, it has been suggested that land documents might show considerable conservatism in retaining local/regional forms, certainly in their vocabulary but perhaps also in their orthography and morphology. While the latter suggestion must remain highly tentative, it would seem safe to say that labelling documentary texts as a whole as "innovative" requires caveats – local documents differ greatly with regard to their social context and function, and the functions and contexts of land documents generally did not encourage innovation.

PART III

Social and pragmatic variation

CHAPTER 9

The pragmatics of punctuation in Middle English documentary texts

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9.1 On punctuation and pragmatics

One of the many strengths of the Middle English programme at Stavanger has been its focus on the production of diplomatic texts, foregrounding features of "expressive form" (Bell 2002: 632), such as punctuation. In this chapter, the punctuation practices of a small group of MELD texts are analysed qualitatively to demonstrate the kind of research questions that can be pursued now that these texts have been made available.

As Parkes flags in his seminal *Pause and Effect: A History of Punctuation in the West* (1992), the primary purpose of punctuation is "to resolve structural uncertainties in a text, and to signal nuances of semantic significance which might otherwise not be conveyed at all, or would at best be much more difficult for a reader to figure out" (Parkes 1992: 1). Yet the precise role of punctuation in western European societies has shifted in complex ways over time, and these shifts relate closely to changes in textual function. Present-Day English punctuation, as deployed in formal prose, is essentially grammatical, i.e. a visual expression of grammar: the sentence is marked by a full-stop (i.e. the "period" in US parlance); main clauses may be linked by a semi-colon; and commas are used to link subordinate to main clauses, to mark off parenthetical statements, and to link subordinate to main clauses. Such rules have been codified since the eighteenth century in (e.g.) printers' manuals or school textbooks. Deviation is to be expected in (e.g.) imaginative writing, but in general usage is fixed.

However, there is a parallel rhetorical use of punctuation which still exists and which relates written text to spoken performance or interpretation. Medieval grammarians considered the *sententia* to be primarily a semantic rather than a grammatical notion while the primary unit for analysis was the *periodus* or period, i.e. "an utterance or complete rhetorical structure which expresses a single idea or *sententia*" (Parkes 1992: 306). The sentence was thus a "thought or opinion;

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especially the substance or significance expressed by the words of […] a rhetorical 'period'" (Parkes 1992: 307). Medieval rhetoricians also distinguished divisions within the period: the *colon* (plural *cola*) and, within the colon, the *comma* (plural *commata*). These divisions were traditionally flagged in speech through the use of rhythmical features where it was necessary to pause to a greater or lesser extent. Periodus, colon and comma were therefore essentially rhetorical units, correlating with patterns of speech and employed as guidance to assist reading aloud; written texts were seen as secondary aids to the primary method of communication, viz. speech.

Sherman (2013) has pointed out how, in the early modern period, there was "a fundamentally different understanding of the nature and function of sentences and the use of colons within them, one poised between written and spoken speech and capable of a length and complexity that we are no longer trained to tolerate", and this situation pertained also in previous centuries, as part of the inheritance from antiquity. The tension between grammatical and rhetorical punctuation has never been resolved; as an anonymous author of a best-selling letter-writing manual put it in 1756:

> So Writing being the very Image of Speech, there are several Places and Marks made use of in it, not only to mark the Distance of Time in pronouncing, but also to prevent any Confusion of Obscurity in the Sense of the Writer, whereby it may the more readily be distinguished and comprehended by the Reader.
>
> (*The Compleat Letter Writer*, 1756: 14)

Medieval punctuation was thus deployed on a different basis from that used in "educated" present-day written English. In the medieval period, the comma was often marked by the *virgula suspensiva* or virgule </>, or sometimes by the *punctus* or point <.>, while the colon was marked typically by the *punctus elevatus* <⁏>. The period was sometimes marked by the punctus but sometimes by the deployment of *litterae notabiliores* ("more notable letters", i.e. capitals – the term "capital" is avoided by paleographers such as Parkes, to avoid confusion with the Latin *capitalis* script). Such notions underpin the very various punctuation-practices of medieval English scribes.

As I have flagged elsewhere (e.g. Smith 2013, and see Smith 2020), shifts in punctuation practices correlate with changing patterns of literacy, such as the shift from scroll to codex, or from script to print, or (more subtly) from intensive to extensive reading, i.e. from reading a few books a great deal to reading a wider range of books less frequently, or indeed wider educational trends such as the rise of silent reading (for which see further Jajdelska 2007). Socio-cultural developments such as those just cited, I have argued, correlate quite closely with changes in the formal appearance of texts, including punctuation. Such changes relate therefore to complex, historically-situated communicative relationships that exist between readers, copyists, and authors. As Parkes (1998: 337) stated:

> Punctuation is not a matter of "accidentals" but a form of hermeneutics […] part of the pragmatics of written language, in that it exacts from readers a contribution from their own ranges of experience to assess the broader significances of various kinds of literary, linguistic and semantic structures embodied in the text.

Parkes's reference to pragmatics is an interesting precursor of what is one of the fastest-growing areas of scholarly enquiry into text: historical pragmatics. Hitherto, most – very valuable – work in historical pragmatics has focused on corpus-analysis, especially of grammatical or lexical features; a "typical" piece of research from this orientation deploys quantitative analysis to map (e.g.) the linguistic expression of "polite" discourse (see e.g. the essays in Bax & Kádár 2011). More recently, however, as has been flagged by *inter alia* Jucker and Taavitsainen (2013), the domain has become more capacious and qualitative in orientation, including in addition as objects of enquiry features that have traditionally been seen as non-linguistic. Such features include what have been called "textual traces" or "graphic cues", including not only punctuation but also (e.g.) word-division, capitalisation and script-/font-choice, and broader codicological/bibliographical matters such as page/folio organisation, annotation and paratextual features generally.

Scholars are increasingly aware, therefore, that punctuation was meaningful in complex ways, and fruitful research – in addition to that by Parkes – has been pursued from distinct disciplinary orientations, e.g. Moore (2011), Peikola et al. (2017), and Sherman (2013). However, much work remains to be done in this area, and this chapter is designed to demonstrate what can be discovered from the close interrogation of some of the MELD texts. I will be focusing on two sets of documents from late medieval Wales, because of their intrinsic historical interest, but it is hoped that the general points made will have a wider significance.

9.2 Some fifteenth-century Welsh documents

One of the many interesting clusters of documents in MELD (and in Thengs 2013) is a small group of English materials relating to Wales. The Welsh language remained widely current in writings until well into the sixteenth century; indeed, that Elizabeth I supported the translation of the prayer book and Bible into Welsh – despite her father Henry VIII's ban on the use of Welsh in law and administration – is a significant marker of sustained, albeit sporadic support for the language that seems contrary to the centralizing tendencies of the Tudor state. It is possible that such initiatives, which included William Salesbury's translations of the New Testament and the Book of Common Prayer (published 1567) and William Morgan's complete black-letter Bible of 1588, reflected not only the enthusiasms of Welsh humanist protestants but also some residual cultural loyalty relating to the royal family's Welsh origins. However, English law had increasingly dominated Welsh polity ever since the conquests of the Plantagenet monarchs, expressed most comprehensively by the statute of Rhuddlan of 1284, and it is no coincidence therefore that there is a surviving corpus of Anglophone documents from Wales, albeit primarily associated with the English marcher lordships focused on fortified castles such as Hawarden, Ruthin and Holt (see further Walker 1990, especially Chapter 7).

While primarily focussed on England, MELD includes a range of such material, which can be loosely divided into legal documents and letters. The letters will be discussed further in Section 3 below. The four documents to be discussed in the current section are all from Ruthin, the chief town of the ancient county of Denbighshire in North Wales. For most of the Middle Ages, Ruthin was the Welsh base for the de Grey family, barons who also held at various times extensive lands in England and Ireland. It was a prosperous place, with significant agriculture and an important cloth industry, the latter much encouraged by the activities of the most famous member of the family, the long-lived third baron Reynold [Reginald] de Grey (c. 1362–1440). Reynold was the first of his line to be styled "lord of Wexford, Hastings and Ruthin", even though the family had lost control of the Irish lordship of Wexford to the Talbot family; he bore the royal spurs at the coronation of Henry IV in 1399, and provided the napery for the subsequent banquet.

The four documents from Ruthin display very different approaches to punctuation, as is indicated in the following examples. The first to be discussed is text L1289, a short note dating from the last quarter of the fifteenth century:

(9.1) M^{d} that scho Margett v*er*ȝ Edward was possessyd in hir place qwhen scho made this endent*er* by my lyue sufferance for J & ȝe wer enfeffyd þ*er*yn afor as [þe] dede makyth me*n*cion for J suffryd hur to take hir lyuyng þ*er*of qwyle scho lyued John Mule hath a dosen places of the gyft of myn vnkyll*es* hochon sergeant*es* by syde thes þ^{t} J clayme and he is a Bastard getyn and J a lawfull hayr (Wales, L1289)
'Memorandum that she Margett v*er*ȝ Edward was in possession of her place when she made this indenture with my permission, because I and she were earlier enfeoffed of it as the deed notes, because I allowed her to take her living from it while she lived [...] John Mule has a dozen places by the gift of my uncle Hochon the sergeant beside these which I claim, and he is bastard begotten, and I (am) the lawful heir'

The choice of *scho* in the first instance, crossed out and replaced by *Margett*, indicates that the writer was thinking of a situation in which *scho* could only mean one person. No punctuation as modern readers would understand it appears in this memorandum. Litterae notabiliores are deployed sparingly for names and for the word *Bastard* – clearly a significant word, deviating from the legalistic formulae in which the memorandum is otherwise couched, e.g. *was possessyd, enfeffyd þeryn*, etc.

L1289 is written on the verso of another document, L1288; in form, the two documents are presented as an indenture (see p. 64). L1288 is a pledge: a "document specifying that something is deposited as a surety for carrying out a contract" (MELD Introduction). The text is dated to 1471. In this case, punctuation is much more sophisticated, deploying a mixture of litterae notabiliores, virgules and a double-virgule. The double-virgule is used to mark the shift from the opening formulae and description of the "tangible land" to the section referring to the donee and the specification of the donee's payment. Virgules are used, sometimes alongside *And*; and, with the exception of sporadic *From, And*, litterae notabiliores are deployed largely in names.

(9.2) This endenter' made at Ruthyn' betwen' Marget v*er*ȝ Edward Exmewe vpon' þ^{t} on' party and Edward ap Gr' & Malle his wyffe vpon' þ^{t} oder' party wytnesseth þ^{t} þ^{e} forsayde Marget hath gravnted & to wed set on plasse of heres / w^{t} a gardyn' lyeng ther' to in þ^{e} Melle strete in þ^{e} tovn' of Ruthyn' […] and þ^{e} sayd Marget wyll & gravnteth by this p*re*sant indent' þ^{e} forsayd [plas] w^{t} þ^{e} garden' // to þ^{e} forsayde Edward and Malle his wyffe From' Myghellmas nexte to com' tyll Myghellmas / agayn' For' viij s' iiij d þ^{e} qwech þ^{e} sayde Edward hath payed to to þ^{e} forsayd Marget / (Wales, L1288)

'This endenture made at Ruthin between Marget v*er*ȝ Edward Exmewe on the one part and Edward ap Gr' and his wife Malle on the other witnesses that the aforesaid Marget has granted and pledged a place of hers with a garden lying joined to it in the Mill street in the town of Ruthin […] and the said Marget will and grants by this present indenture the aforesaid place with the graden to the aforesaid Edward and his wife Malle from the next coming Michaelmas to the following one, for 8 shillings 4 pence, which the said Edward has paid to the aforesaid Marget'

L1288 seems from internal evidence (the reference to Marget's decease) to precede L1289 in date. In this context the capitalization of *Bastard* becomes explicable. In contrast to the ancient Welsh practice (see Walker 1990: 143), where illegitimate sons were entitled but widows were excluded from the inheritance of land, under English law the reverse was true. Emphasis on the word *Bastard* is thus to be expected, while the reference to *J* in L1288 suggests that the text was written by

Edward ap Gr' himself. The identity of *J* can only be worked out from the situation of the text. And since the memorandum was either written or caused to be written by the enfeoffee it could not represent supporting evidence in legal terms, but it could have served as an aide memoire, to assist him in his arguing for the force of the instrument on the recto of the indenture.

The two remaining documents demonstrate other behaviours with regard to punctuation. D0125 (cf. Thengs 2013: 877), the earliest of the remaining documents under analysis here, is a petition dating from 1445, addressed to the current lord, Sir Edmund. It is a deed poll, i.e. a document with a straight top edge, used when there was no need for a duplicate to be kept by other parties (see p. 64). A petition is much more formal than a memorandum; the MELD Introduction describes it as a "letter addressed to an authority of superior status/position, requesting a specific decision or course of action, usually a favour of some kind". As with the memorandum, however, punctuation – except for a concluding cluster of punctus and punctus elevates – is very sparingly deployed, except that litterae notabiliores are quite frequent. Some of these letters are used for names or certain key words, e.g. *Richard Exmewe, Ruthyn, Auncetours, Reuerens, Charite*, while others are used to flag stages in the request, including certain conjunctions, e.g. *Shewes, Plese*, and the conjunction *And*. The deployment of these litterae notabiliores seems to be the primary way in which the reader was guided through the text. The eye of the reader would be drawn to the key stages of the document, and also to points that the scribe wishes especially to emphasise. In addition, the special marking on *Auncetours, Reuerens* and *Charite* could, it might be argued, relate to the underpinning justification for the petition, which emphasizes the duty of the recipient to follow the traditions of his family and act in accordance with the social demands placed on him by his religion.

(9.3) To his gracious And noble lord s*er*^{e} Edmu*n*d Grey lord of hastyng*es* weyfford & of Ruthyn Shewes your' pour' s*er*u*a*nt And ten*a*nt Richard Exmewe howe that his fader' held A ten' of your' worshipfull Auncet*ou*rs w^{t}in the Ruthyn for v s' iiij d by yer' And nowe hit is drevyn' to the olde rent that is x s' viijd [by yer'] Plese hit to your'gracious lordship to g*ra*unt the sayd ten' w^{t} the appurten*a*ns to your' sayd suppli*a*unt like as his fader' held hit afore tyme of your' Auncet*ou*rs And that as the Reu*er*ens of god & for your' sole And your' worship full Auncet*ou*rs soles & in ways of Charite [...] (Wales, D0125)
'To his gracious and noble lord sir Edmund Grey, lord of Hastings, Wexford and Ruthin, shows your poor servant and tenant Richard Exmewe how his father held a tenement of your worshipful ancestors within Ruthin for 5 shillings 4 pence a year, and now it is driven to the old rent that is ten shillings and eight pence by year. May it please your gracious lordship to grant the said tenement with the appurtances to your said supplicant on the

same terms as his father held it earlier from your ancestors, and to do this in reverence of God and for your soul and your worshipful ancestors' souls and in ways of charity […]'

Finally, a different approach is taken by D0124, a lease dating from 1497 (cf. Thengs 2013: 876–877; for the definition of lease, see p. 50). The document is an indenture. The only mark of punctuation is a punctus placed before the identification of the key issue, viz. the rent to be paid: *yeldyng the chief rent yerfor* 'yielding the chief rent for it'*;* the eye of the reader of the document would therefore be directed to the element of the lease involving finance. Litterae notabiliores are mostly assigned to the personal names of those involved (e.g. *George, Robyn*), and certain place-names (e.g. *llufny, Doggeveilyn*), although the month of *Octobre*, the noun *Reign*, and the conjunction *And* are also distinguished in this way. The last of these is used to introduce the final formula, after the conclusion of the financial element introduced by the *punctus*, while *Octobre* and *Reign* are also used as part of a formulaic dating-practice. (The seemingly missing littera notabilior in the monarch's name *henry* simply reflects scribal and editorial practice: the letter "h" seldom shows clearly distinguished marked forms.)

Comparison of all these documents demonstrates rather well some of the behaviours commonly found in documents from the period; although the texts are all products produced for a comparatively circumscribed discourse community – the property-owning classes of a small Welsh town in the fifteenth century – it is clear that there is no general fixed model for scribes to follow. However, it is also very clear in each case that there is a distinguishable system underpinning the choice of punctuation. And it is also notable that – despite the common view that punctuation in documents of the period is of no special significance – the variety of usages can be plausibly correlated with the pragmatic setting for each text.

9.3 The punctuation of letters

Such pragmatic issues are especially marked with regard to letters, and several of those in Thengs's edition can be interpreted in similar ways. Here for instance is D0167, a letter from Dauid lloyt ap *ser*^{e} Gruffuth to will*a*m Oteley, bailiff of Shrewsbury (Thengs 2013: 915). The letter, dating from 1462, was written at *the Pole*, i.e. 'Pool' (the place-name was changed to Welshpool in the nineteenth century to distinguish it from Poole in Dorset; see Davies *et al.* 2008: 944).

(9.4) Right worshipfull *ser*^{e} and myn' Allye J recomaunde me vnto yow &c' .
Preyng' yow hertly that ye shewe fauo*ur* to a s*er*u*a*nt of myn' on' Mor*es*
Corvis*er* of the Pole the whiche is wrongfully attachyd w^{t}yn' yo*ur* Offic' yn

> Shrowesbury . And ȝif so be that ye wolde lowse hym' owte for my sake J were moche beholden' to yow […] . And J p*ra*y yow that ye shewe hym' all the esement and fauo*ur* that may be had at the request of thys my writing' . And J shalbe as redy to any frende or s*er*u*a*nt of yo*ur*s w^t^yn' my p*ar*ties ȝif the case so require with godd*es* grace whom' p*re*s*er*ue yow . At Pole the last day of decemb*er* yo*ur* good frende Dauid lloyt ap *ser^e^* Gruffuth
>
> (Wales, D0167)
>
> 'Right worshipful sir and my ally, I recommend me to you etc. praying you heartily that you show favour to a servant of mine, one Morris Corviser of the Pool, who is wrongfully arrested within your jurisdiction in Shrewsbury. And if you would like to release him for my sake I would be greatly obliged to you […] And I pray you that you show him all the help and favour that may be had at the request of this my writing. And so I shall be as ready to any friend or servant of yours within my area if the case so require, with God's grace who may preserve you. At Pool, the last day of December, your good friend David Lloyd ap sir Gruffuth'

It is again fairly easy to distinguish in this letter an organised system with regard to punctus and litterae notabiliores. The latter are used generally either for names and offices, e.g. *Mor<u>es</u> Corvis<u>er</u>, Pole, Shrowesbury, Dauid, Offic'*, although they are also used to mark stages in the argument, e.g. *Preyng, And, At*. The form *Allye* 'ally', also with a capital, is an interesting addition to the opening formula, and may be used to mark its exceptional presence. The punctus is deployed generally followed by the conjunction *And*, evidently to mark a stage in the discussion.

Such uses of punctuation are even more salient when seen in linked texts. The Welsh material includes a well-known correspondence, contained in D0066, D0067 and L1363, all dated to circa1411–12. These three letters all date from the revolt of Owain Glyn Dwr (Owen Glendower), the aristocratic Welsh-speaker who attempted to set up an independent Welsh state in the first decade of the fifteenth century. They touch upon the final stages of the revolt, one (D0067) being a report to the Prince of Wales, soon to be Henry V, from the local marcher lord, Reginald Grey of Ruthin, concerning *Riote* in his domain, and the other two being a letter from an outlawed man, Gruffuth ap Dauid ap Gruffuth (L1363) accompanied by a copy of Grey's reply (D0066). The latter two documents were sent with the first to the king to illustrate – from Grey's perspective – the character of Gruffuth, whom Grey describes as the *strengest thiefe of wales*. Grey seeks urgent counsel from the king about the Welsh situation, since otherwise, *trewly hit woll be an vnruely Cuntree wiþ-in a short tyme* 'truly it will be an unruly country within a short time'.

The MELD Catalogue gives full descriptions of the contents of each letter (see also Thengs 2013, II: 686, 461, 462–3 respectively). The letters have also been subjected to detailed pragmatic analysis by Stenroos & Mäkinen (2011) and Stenroos

(2014), although the latter scholars did not deal with the punctuation of the texts. Since the letters were moreover much studied by nineteenth-century antiquarians as part of the romantic and Victorian recuperation and reassessment of the Glyn Dwr revolt (e.g. Ellis 1827, Hingeston 1860; see also Davies 1995), extra contextualisation is available. The narrative seems to be petty, to do with an alleged deception of a promise of office that was broken, followed by alleged horse-stealing and culminating with threats and counter-threats of house-burning and killing of retainers; but the small events described reflect a much larger picture of dissatisfaction. Grey had been Glen Dwr's prisoner in 1402, released only after the payment of a substantial ransom, and the revolt continued to trouble the English monarch until 1415.

In chronology, the first of the letters under analysis is L1363, from Gruffuth to Grey, which survives in London, British Library, MS Cotton Cleopatra F.iii (fol. 104). The first half of the letter reads as follows. It begins with a complaint by Gruffuth about a certain John Wele, described by him as *fals*. Wele, according to Gruffuth, deceived him into believing that he would receive an office of *Maester Forster* 'master forester' from the king, and other rewards – rewards that in the end did not transpire.

(9.5) Worschipfull lord J recomande me to ȝou and to ȝour' lordschip / An J wold p*ra*y ȝou hertli þ^{t} ȝe wold her' how þ^{e} fals John Wele serued me / As al men knoyn wel J was vndur þ^{e} protexion of Mered ap Owein he sende to me be trety of my Cosynes Maest*er* Edward and Edward ap dauid / And askyt ȝyf J wold cu*m* in And he wold gete me þ^{e} kyng' -is Chart*er* and J schuld be Maest*er* Forst*er* and Keyshat in Ch(…)he-is lond And oþ*ur* þinges he behiȝt me þ^{e} qwich he fulfyllt not / […] And on þe morw þ*er*aft*er* J . sende Piers Cambr' þ^{e} Reseuo*ur* of Chirke is lond þryes to him to for tel him þ^{t} J was redy […] And at þ^{e} last he saed þ^{t} he hade no wages for me / . And þ^{t} he hade al his retenev but bade me go to s*ir* Ric' kakin to loke qweþ*ur* he hade nede of me ./ w^{t} þ^{e} qwych J hade neuer ado ˀ nor no Couenande made / for J nold a gon for no wages w^{t} hym ouer see . but for to haue my Chart*er* of þe kyng' and su*m* leuyng' þ^{t} J myȝt duel . in pes and in Rest / (Wales, L1363)
'I earnestly pray you to hear how the false John Wele treated me, as all men know well I was under the protection of Mered ap Owein he contacted me through my cousins Master Edward and Edward ap Dauid, and asked me to come in, and he would get me the king's charter, and I would be Master Forester and *keyshat* in Chirkesland, and he promised me other thingswhich he did not fulfil […] And on the morning I sent Piers Cambre, the Receiver of Chirkesland, three times to him to say that I was ready […] and finally he said that he had no wages for me, and that he had all this retinue, but he told me to go to sir Richard Kakin to see whether he had need of me with whom

> I had never had any doings nor had made any agreement because I was not going overseas with him for the sake of wages, but in order to have the king's charter and some means of living so that I could live in peace and quiet'

Gruffuth goes on to describe how he was tricked by John Wele into being arrested, but managed to flee, and then bought two horses that had been taken from Grey's park. He has heard that Grey now threatens to *bran and sle* in any area of Wales that shelters him (i.e. Gruffuth); he announces that he will retaliate in kind, and mockingly declares: *doutes not J wolle haue . boþ^{e} bredde And ale of þ^{e} best þ^{t} is in ȝour lordschip* 'have no doubt that I will have both bread and ale of the best that is within your lordship'. Gruffuth addresses Grey throughout with the "polite" pronoun *ȝou*, and ends his letter with the conventional courtesies: *gode kepe ȝour' worschipfful astate in prosperite* 'God keep your worshipful estate in prosperity'; "[t]he form of address is the appropriate one addressing a nobleman in the Late Middle English period" (see Stenroos & Mäkinen 2011: 93, and references there cited). As Stenroos and Mäkinen point out, in Gruffuth's expression there is nothing "rude and rugged", as it was characterized by the nineteenth-century editors of the texts (Hingeston 1860: xxii).

The passage has been selected to show the range of punctuation deployed. The author, whether Gruffuth himself or an amanuensis, uses a fairly sophisticated range of marks of punctuation, most notably the virgule and litterae notabiliores. The punctus is used much more sparingly, although sometimes it appears as a reinforcement for the virgule, i.e. . /, / ., to indicate a major new step in the argument; and the punctus elevatus < ˀ > is sporadic only. Analysis of the deployment of these forms swiftly shows that that virgules are used to indicate a stage in the argument, and thus mark sententiae; adding a punctus to a virgule seems to indicate a major pause in the argument. Litterae notabiliores are typically used for personal names and for conjunctions, notably *And*, while the punctus and punctus elevatus are deployed sporadically to indicate an intermediate pause, as in *w^{t} þ^{e} qwych J hade neuer ado ˀ nor no Couenande made / for J nold a gon for no wages w^{t} hym ouer see . but for to haue my Charter of þe kyng*', within which the punctus elevatus simply distinguishes a dependent negative clause.

Grey's reply (D0067), surviving in a copy sent to the Prince of Wales, is much more sparing in its deployment of punctuation. It is an "overtly aggressive" (Stenroos & Mäkinen 2011: 101) response, addressing Gruffuth with the "impolite" *þu, þe, þy* 'thou, thee, thy' throughout, and ending with a short rhyme expressing the wish that Gruffuth will end with *a Roope a ladder and a Ryng . heigh in gallows for to henge* 'a rope, a ladder and a ring, to hang high on the gallows'.

As Stenroos and Mäkinen point out, "Grey's letter to Gruffuth shows neither careful polishing nor the employment of politeness strategies. This is to be expected in a letter to a social inferior …; however, in addition, his letter contains insults" (2011: 101). Grey does not reciprocate with any formal concluding salutation. Here is the opening and a small section later in the letter:

(9.6) Gruff' ap D ap Gruff' we send þe Gretyng welle but no þyng wiþ goode hert And we haue well vnderstande þy l*ett*re to vs sent by Deykus Vaghan our ten*a*nt which maken mencio*n*n and seist þat þe Fals John Weele haþ disseyved þe […] and at þe last he seide he hadde no wages for þe as þu seiste and he hadde fully his Retenue And bade þe goo to s*ir* Richarde Laken to loke wheþer he hadde nede of þe oþer noo wiþ þe which þu as þu seiste haddest neu*er*e Ado ne neu*ere* madest couen*a*nt wiþ . For þu woldest as þu seiste haue goon for no wages wiþ him ouer See but for to haue þy Chart*er*e of þe kyng […] (Wales, D0067)
'Gruffuth ap D ap Gruffuth, we send you a greeting but not with a good heart. And we have understood your letter to us, sent by Deykus Vaughan our tenant, in which you mention and say that the false John Weele has deceived you […] and finally he said he had no wages for you as you say and he had all his retinue, and asked you to go to sir Richard Laken to see whether he had need of you or not, which whom you, as you say, had never had dealings with or made an agreement with, because you did not wish, as you say, to go overseas with him because of wages but to have your charter from the king'

Grey goes on to justify his own actions, and to warn Gruffuth of the severe consequences of what he has done. Grey fully intends to punish Gruffuth and his men; any deception by John Wele does not in Grey's view justify Gruffuth's actions.

The final text is the covering letter Grey provided for the whole package. D0066 is written in the same hand as D0067. The two letters may be by an amanuensis, although Grey's voice comes through very clearly in both. Towards the end of the letter, Grey "beseeches" the monarch to *giffe Ferþ and Credence to a pou<u>ere</u> Squyer of myn Richard Dou<u>n</u>n of þat he shall enfo<u>u</u>rme you of by mowþe touching tydynges of þis Cuntree* 'give credence to a poor squire of mine, Richard Doun, regarding what he will inform you by mouth concerning the news from this country'. Richard Dounn is clearly the messenger that Grey has sent to deliver and expound the letter. Again, here is the opening, in which Grey, after the conventional courtesies due to a monarch, seeks advice:

(9.7) Right heigh and myghty prynce my goode and gracious lorde J recomaund me to you as lowly as J kan or may wiþ all my pou*er*e hert Desiryng to hier goode and gracious tydyng*es* of your worshipfull Astate and welfare which J prey to All myghty god as goode mot þei be as ye in your gracious hert kan best deuyse vn to þe pleasaunce of god and of you . And gracious

> lorde pleseþ hit vn-to your heigh Astate to witte þat J haue Resceyued our liege lord es pryue seal wiþ your ou*n*n worshipfull l*ett*res to me sent Co*m*maundyng me vn to see and to Apees the Misgoun*er*ance and þe Riote wich ye heiren þat is beginnen heer in the Marches of Norþ wales […] (Wales, D0066)
>
> 'Right high and mighty prince, my good and gracious lord, I recommend myself to you as lowly as I can or may with all my poor heart desiryng to hear good and gracious tidings of your worshipful estate and welfare which I pray to almighty God may be as good as you can best devise in your gracious heart to the pleasure of God and yourself. And, gracious lord, may it please you to know that I have received our liege lord's privy seal with your own worshipful letters sent to me commanding me to appease the misgovernance and riot that you hear has begun here in the marches of North Wales.'

Grey goes on to express the worry that many of those who should owe allegiance to the king and his representatives *ben kynne vn to þis Meignee þat be Rissen* ('are related to this company that has risen, i.e. revolted'), and are thus untrustworthy. He includes Gruffuth's letter, and the copy of his reply, as an example of the issues he is confronting, and he seeks advice and a *Remedie*, since he is greatly concerned about the local situation.

Texts D0066 and D0067 clearly contrast with L1363 in their deployment of punctuation. In Grey's letters, the repertoire of punctuation is much lighter, being restricted to the use of an occasional punctus, and of litterae notabiliores. Often the latter are used to flag certain keywords, such as names, e.g. in D0066 *Gruff', Fals John Weele* (where *Fals* seems to be an echo of Gruffuth's usage, perhaps adopted as an ironic "heroic epithet"), *Deykus Vaghan*, etc, and in both letters certain keywords, e.g. *Gretyng, Trete, Retenue, See, Chartere, Astate, Riote* etc. In both letters litterae notabiliores also flag the beginning of rhetorical units, e.g. *Desiryng to hier goode and gracious tydynges of your worshipfull Astate* and *Commaundyng me vn-to see* (D0067), *For þu woldest as þu seiste* (D0066); in the letter to Gruffuth the conjunction *And* is commonly marked in this way. In D0067, a single punctus is deployed to indicate the end of the opening formula of address, and then to mark the next stage in the argument: *vn-to þe pleasaunce of god and of you . And gracious lorde pleseþ hit vn-to your heigh Astate to witte […]* But it is notable that in the short poem appended to D0066 Grey (or his amanuensis) deploys the punctus to mark each verse-line, possibly because the verse is laid out as part of the prose text.

The contrasting usages in these letters illustrate rather well the range of usages available, but they also illustrate that the use of punctuation did not necessarily align with greater or lesser sophistication of expression. Gruffuth's letter (L1363) is clearly ironic in its use of formal greetings and salutations combined with an aggressive refusal to take the requirements of social status at their face value; the joke about *boþ^{e} bredde And ale of þ^{e} best þ^{t} is in ȝour lordschip* is especially cheeky. The letter is floridly punctuated, by a scribe who likes to emphasise units by means of combined markings, e.g. <./>.

Grey's two letters contrast with Gruffuth's in punctuation; they are also different from each other, showing "that he is not oblivious to politeness strategies, nor to letter-writing conventions, and that he knows how to modify his writing according to the recipient" (Stenroos & Mäkinen 2011: 97–98). D0067, clearly designed to be delivered by a trusted servant, is a high-status text in which ceremonious language is used to indicate the social relationship between vassal and lord. It is noticeable that subordinated units, flagged by the use of non-finite verbs such as *Desyring*, are used alongside coordinated ones marked by *And*. Yet it is the text where punctuation in the modern sense is most sparing; clearly the letter is designed to be read, probably aloud as was often the case with letters to royalty, by a skilled reader who could make do with the straightforward prompts for understanding offered by litterae notabiliores. Delivery was no doubt assisted by the formulaic language with which the text begins. The letter is clearly a work of some sophistication, but it is interesting that sophistication and insistent punctuation do not necessarily align.

D0066 is clearly less formulaic, since Grey goes out of his way to insult Gruffuth by announcing from the outset that he is not going to observe the niceties of social interaction: *Gruff' ap D ap Gruff' we send þe Gretyng welle but no þyng wiþ goode hert*. Stages in the argument are marked by the simple deployment of the coordinating conjunction *And;* it is evident that for Grey coordinated, syndetic paratactic structures are perfectly acceptable for discourse with the likes of Gruffuth. By contrast Grey often varies coordinated with more complex subordinated structures in D0067, following the practices recommended by contemporary and earlier rhetoricians such as *salutatio* and *captatio* (Stenroos & Mäkinen 2011: 97 and references there cited); when Chaucer's Host spoke of the *Heigh style, as whan that men to kynges write* (*Canterbury Tales*, Clerk's Prologue 18), he knew of what he spoke. Otherwise in D0066 only the verse section receives special attention through the use of the punctus, in order to flag its distinctive textual character in comparison with the rest of the text. Nevertheless, in general terms D0066 is very similar in its punctuation-practice to D0067: a limited range of usages are found, but so skilfully deployed that there is no difficulty in understanding the letter's meaning. The contrast between Grey's letters and Gruffuth's demonstrates rather well that greater or lesser deployment of punctuation does not necessarily correlate with sophistication of style.

9.4 Conclusions

Several points of interest arise from the study of these materials. The range of punctuation practices adopted – even within genres and within a fairly limited geographical area – show that a "standard" mode of punctuation did not yet exist, with scribes using various systems that seemed to them appropriate. As in their encounters with medieval English spelling, readers must have been used to encountering a variety of usage. But just as with spelling, it is also fairly clear that punctuation practices were not random, but were conceived of as in some sense systematic.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the punctuation practices analysed above is that they reveal the texts – although of course written – to be more "speech-like" than their modern equivalents. The notion of "speech-like" texts, famously formulated by Culpeper and Kytö (2010), reminds us that the dividing-line between the written and spoken modes is a fuzzy one, and this insight aligns with Stock's (1983) argument that the simple oral/literate distinction is too clumsy to deal with cultures where engagement with written texts is frequently mediated, and not dependent on the ability to read. It seems clear that, for medieval readers of these letters, the marks of punctuation have been deployed as an aid to oral delivery; although the letters presented above can look somewhat baffling to the eye, as soon as they are read aloud, with due attention paid to the punctuation-practices deployed, the meaning is unmistakable. In sum, the pragmatics of these texts, i.e. how these texts worked for readers within their particular socio-cultural contexts, can be related closely to the forms in which they were presented. Further research, drawing on the MELD materials, will undoubtedly reveal much more of interest about how such documents functioned within their discourse communities.

CHAPTER 10

Ventriloquism or individual voice

Formulaic language in heresy abjurations

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10.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a study of the confessional content in thirty heresy abjurations associated with the Christian heterodox Lollard movement from the perspective of formulaicness. Abjurations, which are usually found copied in bishops' registers, contain, at least in principle, records of personal oral statements given by individuals found guilty of heresy in a heresy trial setting. However, they have been characterised as being "prompted and shaped" by inquisitors (Arnold 1998: 381), also to the extent of representing a form of "extreme ventriloquism" (Gertz 2012: 33). The present study re-examines such claims through an analysis of the abjurations based on Wray's (2008) theoretical framework for formulae.

Abjurations form a relatively coherent and stable category in terms of function and content. In such a text, an abjurer, or defendant, first confesses to having committed one or more heresies, and then proceeds to recant or abjure former actions or statements and/or the beliefs and sentiments on which these actions or statements were based. In the late medieval period, abjurations were among the few court documents written in English (Gertz 2012: 33) and they form, in most cases, our only evidence of a particular heresy trial, as other documentation, including the lists of charges to which the abjurations would ultimately refer, is mostly lost (cf. Hudson 1988: 33–34).

Abjurations have rarely been closely studied as the principal focus of historical or linguistic research. Rather, they have been studied as evidence of various aspects of the historical context: they have been searched for information pertaining to the extent and demographic composition of the Lollard movement (e.g. McSheffrey 1995), and used to reconstruct the oppressive reality faced by persecuted heretics in the heresy trial situation (e.g. Gertz 2012). The present study, however, focusses on the abjuration texts themselves.

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The study is based on the confessional content of thirty abjurations from the period 1457–1509, recorded in the registers of the bishops of Ely, Hereford, Lincoln, Salisbury and Winchester, and transcribed from images collected for MELD. Confessional content in the context of this study denotes any part of an abjuration text where abjurers confess to specific charges of heresy. The confessions are typically found in the middle part of the text, sandwiched between opening and closing formulae, and form the part where it is most probable to encounter individual non-formulaic elements. The purpose of the study is to investigate the nature and distribution of formulaic and non-formulaic content in the confessions, in particular the extent to which abjurers were able to assert their own voices in the face of a heresy trial procedure.

10.2 Historical context

10.2.1 The Lollards

The Lollard, or Wycliffite, movement arose at the University of Oxford around the theologian John Wyclif (c.1330–1384) in the early 1380s and remained active at least until the coming of Lutheran teaching to England in the 1520s (Hudson 1988: 1, 508). The movement was characterised by strong anticlericalism, leading to an emphasis on a direct personal relationship with God, without the mediation of a church considered to consist of mere fallible human beings. The Lollards contested many of the sacraments of the church, including the Eucharist (commonly referred to as "the sacrament of the altar") and oral confession to priests, as well as the worshipping of images and the act of pilgrimage. For the church to label such contestations as actual heresy, it was not sufficient that they were "contrary to Holy Scripture"; in addition, they also had to be "openly declared, and obstinately defended", as stated by Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln (1235–1253) (cf. Hayward 2005: 19).

The vast majority of the men and women appearing in the abjurations included in the present study were not of particularly high standing, and might well be described as "ordinary" people, usually supporting themselves through some kind of physical work, some doing menial labour and others more specialised and skilled work: millers, shoemakers, tanners and tailors. As a result of their heterodox beliefs, the Lollards were not free to practise their religion in large gatherings, which quickly would have attracted the attention of the ecclesiastical authorities. Instead, abjurations contain many references to meetings held in private houses, often with a limited number of people present. McSheffrey (1995: 47) has suggested that the Lollards carried out much of their religious activity hidden in plain sight, practising their faith both "in almost ritualized gatherings and in casual conversations between neighbors in the street."

After Archbishop Thomas Arundel's vigorous and sustained efforts to uncover and prosecute heretics in the early fifteenth century, as described by the early modern historian and martyrologist John Foxe (c.1516–1587) (see Foxe 1895: 326), the next hundred years saw, for the most part, only sporadic efforts instigated by individual bishops on a local basis. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, two historical realities coincided to produce a drastic change in the situation of the Lollards: at the same time as growing reformatory pressures permeated Europe in anticipation of the coming Lutheran Reformation, William Warham, described by Foxe as the "most vigorous prosecutor of Lollards in almost a century" (see D'Alton 2005: 105) was made Archbishop in 1503. The combination of Warham's determination to root out heresy and the looming threat of religious upheavals resulted in several other bishops joining Warham in his efforts. Among these bishops were Edmund Audley (Salisbury), Richard Fitzjames (London), William Smith (Lincoln), Geoffrey Blythe (Coventry and Lichfield), Richard Mayew (Hereford), Richard Foxe (Winchester) and Richard Nykke (Norwich) (D'Alton 2005: 105). The large number of heresy trials carried out in the decade leading up to the onset of the Lutheran Reformation in 1517 indicates that the English ecclesiastical authorities, headed by Warham, saw heresy as an especially potent threat (D'Alton 2005: 103). It is to this historical context that most of the present material belongs.

10.2.2 The heresy trial

There was considerable variation with regard to the practices surrounding heresy trials in pre-Reformation England. The norm, clearly shown in the material here studied, was that the bishops themselves oversaw the trial proceedings, occasionally having to delegate that responsibility to officially appointed deputies or commissaries. Typical venues for heresy trials included "the consistory court of a cathedral, a chapel in one of the bishop's palaces, the hall of a bishop's manor house, a parish church, and sometimes even the house of a scribe" (Gertz 2012: 23). Gertz (2012: 22) also notes that "heresy investigation was not always initiated or conducted by church officials" but lay persons could be directly involved both in the detection and judgement of heresy.

A heresy trial was usually conducted in English, as it was crucial that the accused heretics (who only in rare cases would be able to speak Latin or French) could fully understand the proceedings and what they were actually confessing to. After the initial formalities, the examined would be subjected to a point by point interrogation. Because of the large degree of similarity between abjurations, in particular the order in which the accused seem to have been asked about different kinds of heresy, Hudson (1988: 37) argues that the examiners might have been relying on previously formulated lists during the interrogational phase of many heresy trials.

Such lists would contain the articles, or the formal heresy charges, that "formed the substance of a trial since they established what the defendant was accused of believing" (Gertz 2012: 28). The specific articles, or charges, would be drawn up after an initial interrogation of the individual suspected of heresy, and were often copied over from set lists, such as the list put together by Archbishop Chichele in 1428 (Gertz 2012: 28). In most cases, the articles drawn up for the purpose of a heresy trial have been lost as they were written on common paper and not, like the abjurations, copied into registers (cf. Hudson 1988: 33–34), but Foxe, who still had access to many such lists, quotes several examples of articles, one of which reads:

(10.1) First, that he had red, taught, preached, published, and obstinately defended, agaynst the lawes of almightie God: that tythes, or paying of tythes was neuer ordeined to be due, sauing only by the couetousnes of Priestes.
'First, that he had read, taught, preached, published, and obstinately defended, against the laws of almighty God: that tithes, or paying of tithes would never have been ordained to be due, if it had not been for the covetousness of priests.' (cited in Gertz 2012: 30)

The language of the articles was highly formulaic, and one of its characteristics was the listing of verbs referring to the manner of carrying out a particular heresy: *affirmed, believed, concealed, declared, defended, held, learned, maintained, preached, published, read, said, spoken, sustained, taught, thought*. Some of the surviving articles refer to the defendant using the third-person singular, as in Example (10.1), while others directly address the defendant using the second-person singular, e.g. *Also… thou… hast publeshed holdenn and beleved …*[1] 'Also… you… have published, held and believed …' (D3050#33).

After the men and women accused of heresy had made their confession, they were presented with the opportunity to recant at the behest of the presiding bishop. Many chose to recant, "at which point the notary wrote an official abjuration that both summarized the articles for which the accused confessed guilt and promised future conformity" (Gertz 2012: 25). After reading out loud the abjuration, or having it read back to them if necessary, they would add their signature to the abjuration document by making a cross sign where the notary had left a space

1. This particular wording is taken from the articles used to charge Philip Braban as he stood trial in Winchester, 1514. The documentation associated with the heresy trial of Philip Braban constitutes one of the rare examples where both the charge articles and the subsequent abjuration have been recorded in a bishop's register (see Schipor 2018: 175–176 for a brief description and discussion of the documentation connected with the said trial).

for this purpose; alternatively, in the case that somebody could write, they might sign their name instead.

After having performed the required formal recantation, the abjurer was subjected to some form of penance, usually in the form of a public humiliation. If a person was found guilty a second time, in violation of the oath of recantation made after the first trial, or refused to abjure at all, this might eventually result in "relaxation to the secular arm" (Gertz 2012: 25), a euphemism for being handed over to the sheriff to be burned alive in public. The English Church could investigate and convict heretics, but they did not possess the jurisdiction to subject a convicted heretic to the death penalty; this had to be carried out under secular law (see Deane 2011: 73–76).

10.3 Approaches and definitions

10.3.1 The present corpus

The present corpus consists of thirty abjurations found in the bishops' registers of the dioceses of Ely (1 text), Hereford (2 texts), Lincoln (5 texts), Salisbury (18 texts) and Winchester (4 texts).[2] All the texts date from the period 1457–1509, the majority being from the two decades surrounding 1500.

The corpus was collected with the aim to achieve reasonable representativeness with regard to abjurations in the later Lollard period. On the whole, only abjurations by people who might be characterized as "ordinary" – not belonging to the aristocracy or clergy, or holding office – have been included; the only exception is Sir Richard John, priest (D4114#17). A notable characteristic of abjuration texts is that they stand out from most other English medieval documents concerning the participation of women. While the lives of women are rarely directly represented in English medieval documents (Goldberg 1994: 59), over a quarter of those confessing and abjuring on record in England were women (cf. McSheffrey 1995: 165). The present corpus shows approximately the same proportion.

The distribution of texts, dictated by the above considerations as well as the physical availability of texts, is not ideal from a geographical and chronological perspective: the corpus is biased towards texts from Salisbury and the abjurations from Ely and Lincoln (6 texts in total) are separated from the greater part of the texts by over two decades. This non-ideal distribution may, however, be remedied to some extent by seeing the abjurations in the present corpus alongside the

2. For a list of the texts, see Appendix. Two of the Lincoln texts (D4440#22 and #23) are confessions without a following formal abjuration.

general characteristics of abjurations across England provided by previous studies (particularly Gertz 2012, Hudson 1988 and McSheffrey 1995). A comparison of these previous studies with the more detailed study of the present corpus in Solberg-Harestad (2018) suggests that abjurations in this period share a highly similar overall structure, with close similarities in vocabulary and phraseology (cf. Solberg-Harestad 2018: 110–113, 116–122).

10.3.2 The characteristics of abjuration texts

Abjurations from this period share two fundamental genre characteristics: (i) the use of the vernacular, and (ii) the presentation of an abjurer's confession and recantation as an uninterrupted flow of utterances given in the first person. Abjurations were among the few legal documents that were routinely recorded in the vernacular, and the use of English throughout the trial proceedings served the pragmatic purpose of presenting the charges against the defendants in a language they could understand, as the defendant could only be held accountable to the content of an oath that he or she actually understood (Britnell 2013: 87; cf. also Schipor 2018: 176 and Chapter 3 in the present volume, p. 58). Defendants were only required to abjure after the trial proceedings in the event that they were found guilty of having committed the heresies with which they were charged. It would also have been possible for a defendant to be found not guilty of heresy, but such outcomes are not recorded in a typical bishop's register or in other extant sources.

The basic structure of an abjuration text might be seen as consisting of three parts: (i) an opening formula, (ii) a confessional part and (iii) a closing formula. The opening formula typically starts with an invocation of God and proceeds to introduce and name the defendant and, in most cases, the bishop presiding, usually with an accompanying recognition of the status of the latter. This takes place in a highly formulaic framework that is repeated, with some minor variations, across abjurations, as in John Polle's abjuration, given in Salisbury, 1507:

(10.2) <u>Jn the name of god Amen .</u> J John polle of Sar*um* in the counte of wiltes' wevir befor' yo^u reue*r*end father in god Edmond bi godd*es* gr*a*ce bishope of Sar*um* my Juge and ordinary knowlege openly and co*n*fesse w^t my free will*e* her' in Jugemet' … (Wilts D4114#8)
'In the name of God, Amen. I, John Polle of Salisbury, in the county of Wiltshire, weaver, before you, reverend father in God, Edmund, Bishop of Salisbury by the grace of God, my judge and ordinary, openly acknowledge and confess of my free will here in judgement…'

Immediately following the opening formula, the abjurer's confession is presented, usually in a listing fashion through the use of listing adverbs, or discourse markers, such as *first, furthermore, also, item*, a format that may be the direct result of a point by point interrogation carried out by the examiners working from the list of articles making up the charges (cf. Hudson 1988: 37–38). The confessional part from the abjuration of Richard Sawyer, given in Winchester, 1487–1492, provides a typical example of how the charges are listed in a confession:

(10.3) **Furste**[3] that y haue Dampnably and ewronyesly erred holden*n* and saide a-yenste the blessid Sacrament of the Auter sayng' opynly and affirmyng that a ma*n*n may not make hym that made hym . … **Jtm'** y haue saide and maynteyned ayenst the holy sacrament of co*n*fession*n* sayin*n*g that it were as good to be co*n*fessid to a lay ma*n*n as to a Pryst . … **Also** y haue r*re*preved and Dampned Pilgrymeage gooyng*es* & offeryng*es* vnto Corssaynct*es* sayng and affirmyn*n*g that it were better to yeve a peny to my*n*n evy*n*n crysty*n*n than to offre it to any sayntte . … **Jtm'** that no ma*n*n is bowund to fast but if he be a Pryst . (Hamps D3049#1, my highlighting)

'First, that I have damnably and erroneously erred, held and said against the blessed sacrament of the altar, saying openly and affirming that a man cannot make him who created him. … Item, I have said and maintained against the holy sacrament of confession, saying that it would be as good to be confessed to a lay man as to a priest. … Also, I have reproved and damned pilgrimages and offerings to the bodily remains of saints, saying and affirming that it would be better to give a penny to my fellow Christians than to offer it to any saint … Item, that no man is bound to fast unless he is a priest.'

This confessional middle part is where we are most likely to encounter individual non-formulaic elements. Richard Sawyer's statement concerning the inability of priests to produce the real body of Christ as part of the Eucharist, *a mann may not make hym that made hym*, is an example of a non-formulaic element that does not seem to have been required by trial procedure. It is, accordingly, the openings and closings of abjurations that tend to contain the highest proportion of formulaic elements, while the middle part may accommodate for non-formulaic elements; this characteristic is common to many documentary text types (cf. Example (3.6), p. 59 and Example (11.6), p. 268).

The confessional part is typically followed by a closing formula wherein abjurers formally recant the heresies listed and confessed earlier in the text. The following formal recantation from the abjuration of Thomas Boughton, given in

3. All underlined words in the transcriptions are highlighted in the actual manuscripts and normally represented by boldface in the MELD readable version. For the present purpose, boldface is used to highlight parts of the text that are relevant to the discussion and does not represent the manuscript reality of the text.

Salisbury, 1498–1499, contains all the core elements used in formal recantations from the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth century:

(10.4) J confesse that J holdyng' and bylevyng' the said Articles was an heretyke And A mysbelevyng' ma*n*n out of the right feyth*e* of Cryste . **J […] forsake and abiure alle the said articles** and eu*er*y of they*m*m vpo*n*n theis holy gospels. And not oo*n*nly the*m*m but alle other errours da*m*nable opinions and heresies Ayenst the determinacou*n* of the holy church . […] Submyttyng' myself vnto the payn' and sharpnes of the lawe that A ma*n*n falle*n*n Abiurate and fallen' ageyn' to heresy oweth to suffre in such*e* caas : if euyr J doo or hold contrary to this myn' abiuracyou*n* or to any part of the same . Jn witnes wherof J subscribe it with / myn' owen' hand makyng' A crosse ╋ […]

(Wilts D4113#7, my highlighting)

'I confess that I holding and believing the said articles was a heretic and a misbelieving man out of the right faith of Christ. I […] forsake and abjure all the said articles, and every one of them, upon these holy gospels, and not only them, but all other errors, damnable opinions and heresies against the determination of the holy church. […] Submitting myself to the pain and strictness of the law that a man having abjured and fallen again to heresy ought to suffer in that case, if I ever do or hold contrary to this my abjuration or to any part of the same. In witness whereof, I sign it with my own hand, making a cross ╋ […].'

The closing formula may also contain other features, including a promise to desist from heretical acts in the future, often together with a promise to report any heretical activity to the church authorities. Many texts from Salisbury also include a formulaic request from the abjurer to those present to bear witness of his or her abjuration if the oath taken is violated at a later time.

Although abjurations, in the majority of cases, make up the only extant record of a particular heresy trial, they were not intended to document the full trial proceedings. Since defendants seem to have been subjected to an interrogation that proceeded through an already set sequence of articles formulating the heresy charges (cf. Gertz 2012: 21–27), interaction would have taken place between the defendants and the examiners. The abjuration itself, based on both the articles and the actual interrogation, presents an uninterrupted first-person delivery structured according to the genre conventions of abjuration documents. This served the practical purpose of producing a text of limited length that could be read by, or be read to the abjurer, in the event that they were not able to read, and that, furthermore, could be signed by the abjurer to authorise the abjuration account as his or her own words.

The surrounding framework of an abjurer's confession, as it is presented to us in an abjuration text, might thus be considered a form of "ritualistically" structured record. As will become clear in the following sub-sections, this does not entail that all confessional content entered into this structure became itself "ritualised", or formulaic, in nature.

10.3.3 Identifying confessional utterances

A defendant's confession often includes more than one heresy charge, or topic, and confessional statements related to a particular charge are in turn often composed of more than one confessional utterance. These utterances have here been categorised on the basis of their pragmatic intent; in other words, according to what Taavitsainen and Fitzmaurice (2007: 13) have called the "kinds of communicative functions utterances perform". This means that the confessional content has been divided into individual utterances, where each utterance communicates something that is both different and independent from other confessional utterances.

The abjuration of John Crofte, given in Hereford, 1505, provides a straightforward example of how a string of continuous confessional text may be divided into three separate confessional utterances (marked with bracketed letters):

(10.5) Redyng declaryng and techyng [*a*] agaynst the blessed sac*ra*ment of the Awt*er* othir-wise then me oghte to haue do*n*n also [*b*] agaynst the sac*ra*ment of confessiou*n* to p*ri*st*es* and [*c*] pen*a*nce for satisfacciou*n* of syn . (Herefs D0746#1)
'Reading, declaring and teaching against the blessed sacrament of the altar, contrary to what I ought to have done; also against the sacrament of confession to priests and penance for the satisfaction of sin.'

The content in Example (10.5) is straightforward in the sense that the three confessional utterances unequivocally communicate three different things. This is not always the case, as might be demonstrated by the confession of Thomas Boughton in Example (10.6). Since the entire passage deals exclusively with heresy related to the sacrament of the altar (the Eucharist), it would have been possible to classify the passage as one single confessional utterance. However, using communicative purpose as a basis for categorising confessional utterances also permits us to break the passage into three separate utterances that deal with the same subject in three different ways (marked with bracketed letters):

(10.6) [*a*] <u>First J haue</u> holde*n*n and byleved by the space of theis xxv yeris passed or therupo*n*n that in the sacrament of the Aulter is not the veray body of cryste our' savyo*or* . but that it is oo*n*nly material bredd . [*b*] For J haue thought

> it not possible that the preest which*e* is but A ma*n*n and the handwerk of god : shuld haue power to make god his maker . [*c*] And moreover J haue said and holde*n*n that the said bredd was better wha*n*n it ca*m*m fro*m*m the bakers handys ; than wha*n*n it co*m*me fro*m*m the preestys handys after the consecracou*n* . forsomoch*e* as the preest mysvsed it otherwyse tha*n*n to the pleasur' of god . and soo dyd not the baker . (Wilts D4113#7)
> 'First, I have held and believed through 25 years or thereabouts that the true body of Christ, our saviour, is not present during the sacrament of the altar, but that it is only material bread. For I have thought that it is not possible that the priest, who is but a man and the creation of God, should have the power to produce God, his maker. And moreover, I have said and held that the said bread was better when it came from the baker's hands, than when it came from the priest's hands after the consecration, seeing that the priest misused it in ways other than to the pleasure of God, and so did not the baker.'

The first confessional utterance (*a*) communicates the general point that Thomas Boughton has "held and believed" that the consecrated bread is not the actual body of Christ. The second (*b*) communicates the separate point that priests, as mere creations of God, do not possess the power to produce their maker. Although such sentiments were common among the Lollards (see also D3049#1, D0746#7 and D4112#10), this statement is not a formulaic, or required, addition to a confession concerned with the Eucharist. Finally, the third confessional utterance (*c*) communicates the separate notion that when priests consecrate the bread and claim that it is the real and physical body of Christ, they are, unlike the baker, misusing it "other than to the pleasure of God".

Dividing Thomas Boughton's confession concerning the Eucharist into three separate confessional utterances will not only offer a clearer view of the nuances present in the confessional content, but will also facilitate a more precise assessment of the confessional content from the perspective of formulaicness. In the case of Boughton's confession, the first utterance (*a*) is highly formulaic, while the other two utterances (*b* and *c*) may be described as almost entirely non-formulaic (see Section 10.3.4), a reality that would not have been captured if the passage had been assessed as a single unit.

10.3.4 Formulaic and non-formulaic language

In order to assess confessional utterances with regard to the presence or absence of formulaic content, the present study relies on a modified version of Wray's morpheme equivalent unit (MEU) definition of formulaicness. Wray's definition states that for any language element to be formulaic it needs to be "a word or word string, whether incomplete or including gaps for inserted variable items, that is processed like a morpheme, that is, without recourse to any form-meaning matching of any sub-parts it may have" (Wray 2008: 12). This definition was formulated with spoken language in mind and is meant to apply to formulaic expressions used in daily speech, such as *kick the bucket*, where it is impossible to break the expression into its constituent parts without losing the entire meaning.

Before applying Wray's definition of formulaic language to scribal texts, such as abjurations, it is necessary to account for a major difference between those texts and expressions such as *kick the bucket*: while it is not possible to change the wording of *kick the bucket* without losing the entire meaning, it would have been possible for scribes to phrase the content of abjurations in several different ways, still keeping the same essential meaning – although they very often opted not to do so. Accordingly, Wray's definition has been modified for the purpose of the present study by exchanging the notion of strict "morpheme equivalence" with that of voluntary and consistent repetition of textual features. The modified working definition used throughout the present study is stated in the following way:

> A linguistic element is formulaic if it consists of a word or word string performing a specific communicative function, whether incomplete or including gaps for inserted variable items, that is used repeatedly and consistently, by volition and not by necessity.

Although much of the language produced in everyday communication is formulaic in that it consists of many fixed and recurring units (cf. Wray & Perkins 2000: 1–2), the present study will only be concerned with the "official" formulae that reoccur especially in abjurations and make up their genre conventions. Accordingly, categorising any string of text as non-formulaic does not here entail that the entirety of the string is strictly non-formulaic in a general sense, but rather that it primarily consists of content not found repeated in a consistent manner in other abjurations. Such text strings may still contain formulaic textual devices or wordings typical of documentary texts in general (e.g. the use of discourse markers, see Example (10.3)) or of common Lollard discourse (see below).

Owing to the highly consistent expression of genre and text type in abjurations, including the repetition of formulae (cf. Solberg-Harestad 2018: 108–122), it is on the whole not difficult to distinguish between formulaic and non-formulaic textual features in abjurations according to the working definition and working principles established above. Even so, a handful of fixed wordings that may be encountered in abjurations, and which are repeated by more than one abjurer, defy a clear-cut assessment according to the approach outlined above:

- *stockys and stonys* 'stocks and stones' (D4113#2, with similar occurrences in D4112#10, D4112#11, D4113#4, D4113#5, D4114#6 and D4114#15); conveying the notion that images of saints are made out of wood and stone (being a sign that they are manmade).
- *grauenn w^{t} mannys hand* 'graven with the hands of men' (D4112#8, with similar occurrences in D4112#10, D4112#11 and D4113#7); conveying the notion that the images are manmade objects.
- *spende and wast money* 'spend and waste money' (D4114#20, repeated by more than one individual appearing in a group abjuration); conveying the notion that it is a waste to offer money to images of saints here on earth.
- *the Rumoor of the pepull* 'the rumour (gossip) of the people' (D4114#20, repeated by more than one individual appearing in a group abjuration); used in connection with observing orthodox Christian doctrine superficially (with no real conviction) in order to avoid unwanted attention and the spread of rumours.
- *J have dyuers tymes absteyned me from the churche* 'I have at different times abstained from going to church' (D4114#20, repeated by more than one individual appearing in a group abjuration); used in connection with the claim that one may serve God equally well at any location.

While it is clear that the wordings given above are all formulaic in the widest sense (being fixed expressions), they might (a) have been part of the formal heresy charges or genre-specific conventions as set phrases modelled after common Lollard sentiments or justifications, or (b) they might reflect sentiments that were routinely worded in that particular way by Lollards, but still genuinely supplied by the abjurers themselves. In some cases, whether we classify these wordings as formulaic or non-formulaic (i.e. as products of genre conventions or not), will not have an impact on how a confessional utterance as a whole is categorised. There are, however, cases where such wordings constitute the entirety of a potentially non-formulaic addition to otherwise formulaic confessional content, as may be seen in the confession of Agnes Scochyn, given in Salisbury, c.1498 (the wording in question is highlighted):

(10.7) Also J haue holdenn and byleued . that the Jmages of the crucifixe . of our' blessyd lady . / / and of other saynctes shuld not be wurshipped . **for they bee but stockys and stonys** . (Wilts D4113#4, my highlighting)
'Also, I have held and believed that the images of the crucifix of our blessed lady, or of other saints, should not be worshipped; for they are but stocks and stones.'

In this case, how we classify the subordinate clause *for they bee but stockys and stonys* is the only deciding factor as to whether we are to regard the entire confessional utterance in Example (10.7) as either fully formulaic or as a confessional utterance with a major non-formulaic addition within the framework of the present study. The Lollards seem to have practiced "a learning [tradition] that depended greatly upon memorizing by rote" (Hudson 1981: 19), and there is reason to believe that they might have practiced a form of sect-internal vocabulary to some extent (*ibid.*: 23–25; Peikola 2000: 294–296). Coupled with the observations that such (derogatory) wordings are not reflective of expected episcopal discourse and that the recurrent wordings are at times only shared by spouses (cf. D4114#20), there is no particular reason to suspect that these wordings derive from the authorities rather than the defendants themselves. However, since both interpretations are realistic possibilities, all confessional utterances where the categorisation will depend on how we assess such recurrent vocabulary have been grouped into a separate category for confessional utterances with potential for either formula or non-formula.

By applying the working definition and working principles stated above to the abjurations in the present corpus, all confessional utterances have been assessed and classified into four categories on the basis of their formulaicness:

- Confessional utterances with fully formulaic content
- Confessional utterances with *minor* non-formulaic additions
- Confessional utterances with *major* non-formulaic additions
- Confessional utterances that are ambiguous in that they may be considered formulaic in a general sense, but do not necessarily form part of the official formulae of abjurations

Confessional utterances with fully formulaic content consist entirely of textual features that are also found in many other texts, often with identical wording, and were highly derivative of the wording contained in the articles which provided the basis of the formal charge brought against the defendants. Perhaps the most salient formulaic textual feature found in abjurations is a set of recurring past-tense verbs that are often listed one after the other, as may be seen in the following fully formulaic confessional utterance found in the abjuration of John Swayne, given in Salisbury, 1508:

(10.8) <u>First</u> that J John Swayne other-wyse callid John Barnard have **hold affermed sayde belevid** and **tawght** : that in the Sacrament of the Aulter is not . the veray body of Criste (Wilts D4114#20, my highlighting)
'First, that I, John Swayne, otherwise called John Barnard, have held, affirmed, said, believed and taught that the true body of Christ is not present in the sacrament of the altar.'

Verb forms such as those found in Example (10.8) are as a rule used to describe the manner in which an accused heretic has committed heresy, and seem to have been carried straight over from the charge articles (see p. 222).

Confessional utterances with minor non-formulaic additions predominantly contain textual features also found in the confessional content of other abjurations, but modified by small additions, typically time adverbials, without adding anything fundamentally new to the text. This is the case in John Barly's confession concerning possession of unlawful books, given in Salisbury, 1504:

(10.9) J synfull*e* wrech*e* haue kepte **by the space of xij yer*es*** a boke co*n*teynyng dyvers great heresys and false opinions re*pro*ved and da'pned by all*e* holy church*e* a-genst the doct*ri*ne of *cri*ste and hys appostels a-yenst the lawes and det*er*minacou*n*s of the seyd church*e* And haue red ther-yn not delyveryng hyt to my ordynary acordyng as the law byndyth*e* me wher'-for' J haue ro*n*nen*n* yn a great kynd of heresy and so reputed and adjuged by the law (Wilts D4114#2, my highlighting)

'I, sinful wretch, have through a period of twelve years kept a book containing diverse great heresies and false opinions reproved and damned by all holy church, against the doctrine of Christ and his apostles, against the laws and determinations of the said church; and [I] have read therein, not handing it over to my ordinary as the law binds me, wherefore I have committed a great kind of heresy and [am] so reputed and judged by the law.'

Confessional utterances with major non-formulaic additions are utterances where fundamentally new content, not found as a recurring component in other confessions, is added to the confession. Major non-formulaic additions typically provide concrete information concerning the beliefs, sentiments or practices of an individual abjurer, as seen in the abjuration of William Carpenter, given in Salisbury, 1485–1493:

(10.10) Also J many seasons haue seid a-yenst the power' & doctrine of pristis seing' this-wise **that p*ri*latis of the Churche and pristis be but scribes and phariseis disseyving' Cristen people in their' doctrine and nothing' *pro*fiting' theim Ferthermor' seyng' in despite of theim that when thei be reveste to masse thei be as Angelis and when*n* thei be vnreveste thei be as blak brondis of hell*e* and ther' be none odir of theim but all in like so meanyng'.** (Wilts D4112#8, my highlighting)

'Also, I have for many seasons spoken against the power and doctrine of priests, saying in this manner that prelates of the church and priests are but scribes and Pharisees deceiving Christian people in their doctrine, doing nothing to profit them; furthermore, saying against them that when they are dressed for mass they are like angels, and when they are not dressed for mass they are like black-brands of hell, and there are no other of them that are not the same.'

The major non-formulaic addition that comprises the lion's share of the confessional utterance in Example (10.10) is among the longer additions one might expect to find in abjurations from this period. It is also possible to find much shorter additions that likewise supply fundamentally new content to a confessional utterance, as may be exemplified by John Polley's confession concerning the sacrament of baptism, given in Lincoln, 1462:

(10.11) Also that the sacrament of Baptime doo*n*n with*e* the ob*ser*uaunces of the Churche and in the fonte is not necessary . **but to criste*n*n a childe rather in a Ryver or a ponde** . (Lincs D4440#17, my highlighting)
'Also, that the sacrament of baptism performed with the observances of the church and in the font is not necessary, as the child could rather be christened in a river or a pond.'

The difference in length between the non-formulaic additions in Examples (10.10) and (10.11) also serves to demonstrate that the distinction between minor and major non-formulaic additions is unrelated to the length of the utterances, and is solely determined by the content communicated.

The absence of a category for fully non-formulaic confessional utterances is a natural outcome of the conventions used to structure and organise documentary texts: since confessional content is introduced with formulaic and standardized wordings, no confessional utterance may be categorised as fully non-formulaic.

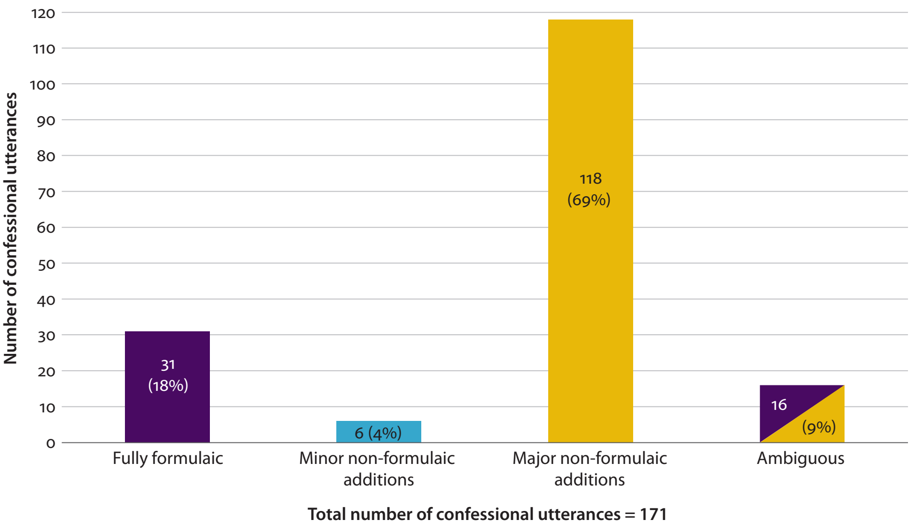

Figure 10.1 The overall distribution of formulaic and non-formulaic confessional content

10.4 Presentation of findings

By applying the approach outlined above to the confessional content of the thirty abjuration texts included in this study, 171 confessional utterances have been identified and categorised according to their formulaicness. The distribution between formulaic and non-formulaic confessional content within the present corpus is presented in Figure 10.1. As the Figure shows, the great majority of confessional utterances contain major non-formulaic additions: that is, they contain individual details not found repeated in the same manner by other abjurers in the present corpus.[4]

Formulaic and non-formulaic content is not evenly distributed across heresy charges. While some charges seem to be particularly receptive of non-formulaic additions, others, in contrast, seem to be more receptive of fully formulaic content. The distribution of formulaic and non-formulaic content across heresy charges appearing in three or more texts is given in Table 10.1. The charges follow the sequence in which they typically would have appeared, should we (unrealistically) envision that they all appeared in one and the same text (cf. Solberg-Harestad 2018: 56–58). Since both fully formulaic confessions and confessions with minor non-formulaic additions primarily consist of formulaic content, these have been grouped together in a joint category in Table 10.1 to better illustrate the distribution between formulaic and non-formulaic content.

The figures inside brackets are based on the interpretation of the ambiguous utterances described on p. 230 as fully formulaic, while the figures outside brackets reflect the calculation of them as major non-formulaic additions.

The distribution presented in Table 10.1 shows that, while both formulaic and non-formulaic confessional content may frequently be encountered in abjurations, it is considerably more likely than not that a confessional utterance will contain individual details. The confession of Joan Martyn, given in Salisbury, 1498–1499, might serve as a typical example of the distribution of formulaic and non-formulaic elements generally encountered in English abjurations from this period. The confession begins with (*a*) a fully formulaic confession concerning the sacrament of the altar and continues with a series of confessions that have all been expanded with non-formulaic content, where the charges concern (*b*) the worshipping of images, (*c*) the act of pilgrimage, (*d*) oral confession (to priests) and (*e*) pardons or indulgences being granted by the Pope or other servants of the church (the non-formulaic additions have been highlighted):

4. As no significant correlation between the number of confessional utterances in a single text and the distribution of formulaic and non-formulaic content may be established in the data (Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient: $R_s = \sim -0.1$ at $p = 0.50$), this has not been taken into account in the presentation of the results in Figure 10.1.

Table 10.1 The distribution of formulaicness across heresy charges represented in three or more texts

Heresy charge/topic	**Fully formulaic and minor non-formulaic additions**	**Major non-formulaic additions**	**% of major non-formulaic additions**
Associating with heretics	5	0	0%
Sacrament of the altar	12	14	54%
Baptism	1	3	75%
Oral confession (to priests)	3	6	67%
The act of pilgrimage	2 (7)	15 (10)	88% (59%)
The worshipping of images	2 (9)	28 (21)	93% (70%)
Unlawful books	1	3	75%
Prayer (in church)	1 (3)	4 (2)	80% (40%)
Praise/support of Wyclif, Lollardy or named heretics	0	4	100%
The Pope and the papacy	1	5	83%
The conduct and merits of priests/the church	1 (3)	26 (24)	96% (89%)
Fasting	1	3	75%
Total	30 (46)	111 (95)	79% (67%)

(10.12) [*a*] <u>First</u> that in the sacrament of the Aulter is not the veray body of our' savyour' Cryst but oo*n*nly material bred [*b*] <u>Also</u> J haue holde*n*n byleved and sayd that Jmages of the crucifixe . of o*ur* blessed lady and of other saynct*es* shuld not be wurshipped . ner any offrynges shuld not be maad vnto they*m*m . **And that they which*e* wurshipped they*m*m or offred vnto they*m*m dyd Jdolatrye** . [*c*] Also J haue holde*n*n and byleued that me*n*n shuld not travail the*m*mself ner spend their' money in doyng' of pilgrymages to holy sainctes or to their' reliques . **Sayyng that the money spent in such vse was but lost and lefte with such*e* as had no nede ther-of** . [*d*] Also J haue thought and byleued that eu*er*y ma*n*n myght be shryve*n*n v*n*n-to other of their' synnes as wele as to a preest . **thynkyng' that the preest hath no more power ner auctorite in such caas . tha*n*n A lay ma*n*n** . [*e*] <u>Also</u> J haue bileuyd and sayd that pardons graunted by the poop and other prelat*es* of the church*e* be of no strengthe ner doo no profight vnto mannys sowle . **And that such*e* pardons be graunted oo*n*nly for gadryng' of money and for non other cause**. (Wilts D4113#14, my highlighting)

> 'First, that the body of our saviour Christ is not present in the sacrament of the altar, but only material bread. Also, I have held and believed and said that images of the crucifix of our blessed lady or of other saints should not be worshipped, nor should any offerings be made to them, and that all who worship them or make offerings to them are committing idolatry. Also, I have held and believed that men should not travel or spend their money in pilgrimages to holy saints or their relics, saying that the money used for such purposes are but lost and left with people that have no need for them. Also, I have thought and believed that every man might be shriven [confessed] to others of their sins, as well as to a priest, thinking that the priest has no more power or authority in such matters than a layman. Also, I have believed and said that pardons granted by the Pope and other prelates of the church have no real power and do not benefit the souls of men, and that such pardons are granted only for the gathering of money and for no other purpose.'

The confessional part of another abjuration might include the same heresy charges, only with a different distribution between formulaic and non-formulaic content, or even a similar array of charges confessed to in a highly condensed and fully formulaic manner throughout (cf. D0677); the latter would, however, be the exception rather than the rule.

The major non-formulaic additions range from major objections to church doctrine to confessions concerning incidents that may appear trivial to a modern observer. The former may be exemplified by confessions concerning the Eucharist (see Examples (10.3, 10.6 and 10.8)), and the latter by Alice Bishop's confession, given in Salisbury, 1498, concerning unlawful consumption of bacon in the middle of a fast:

(10.13) And hereupo*n*n J the said Alice confesse that vpo*n*n thre yer*es* passed vpo*n*n A saynct*es* eve that was A fast co*m*maunded by the church*e* : **J eete baco*n*n in my*n*n owe*n*n hows . hauyg' no regard vnto the sayd fast**.

(Wilts D4113#2, my highlighting)

> 'And hereupon, I, the said Alice, confess that on a saint's eve three years ago that was a fast commanded by the church, I ate bacon in my own house, having no regard for the said fast.'

In several abjurations we come across confessional utterances terminating in a short justification statement, explaining the basis of (ostensibly) formerly held heretical views concerning a particular doctrine. These justifications were often based on logical reasoning, as is the case in John Stillman's confession, given in Salisbury, 1508, concerning the act of pilgrimage:

(10.14) That is to sey J haue openly seyd : that hit is not to goo on pilgermage to o*or* lady of kawish*a*m nor to none other seynt*es* **for they can not speke here nor walke /** (Wilts D4114#13, my highlighting)
'That is to say, I have openly said that one should not go on pilgrimage to our lady of Caversham, or to any other saints; for they cannot speak, hear or walk.'

That the images or statues of saints *can not speke here nor walke* is taken by Stillman as clear evidence that they are dead, inanimate and manmade objects not worthy of worship. We may also come across confessions that are not directly related to either doctrine or religious practice as such; for example, the possession of unlawful books, as in John Baron's confession, given in Lincoln, 1464:

(10.15) J confesse that J haue iij Englissh*e* book*es* oon' of the lyff of oure lady of Adam and Eve and of other sermones the Myrro*or* of Synners and the Myrro*or* of Matrimony . the secunde boke of Tales of Caunt*er*bury . The iij boke of a play of Seint Dionise (Lincs D4440#22)
'I [John Baron] confess that I have three English books: the first, containing the life of our lady, of Adam and Eve and of other sermons, as well as the Mirror of Sinners and the Mirror of Matrimony; the second book, of the Tales of Canterbury; the third book, a play about Saint Dionise.'

As John Baron's confession demonstrates, the possession of any book written in English, including Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, might be considered an act of heresy, regardless of what such books actually contained (cf. Ng 2001: 322–323; Watson 1995: 825–830).

The results given for the charge concerning association with heretics in Table 10.1, where 100% of the utterances in the present corpus are fully formulaic, requires further comment. Confessions in which an abjurer admits to having associated with other heretics are especially prone to formulaic content, as such utterances often seem to behave, at least in principle, as part of the opening formula. The beginning of Agnes Scochyn's confession provides a typical example of a specific heresy charge becoming "entangled" with the opening formula of the text, taking on the fixed characteristics inherent to opening formulae (cf. Example (10.2)):

(10.16) <u>Jn the name of god Amen .</u> J Annes Scochyn' […] dennounced and detect for A mysbelevyng' woma*n*n ; **knowledge and confesse that dyuers tymes J haue bee drawyng' and leanyng' vnto certayn' evyl techyng' and mysbelevyng' *per*sones . Receyvyng' them wittingly in-to myn' hows** (Wilts D4113#4, my highlighting)
'In the name of God, Amen. I, Agnes Scochyn […] denounced and detected as a misbelieving woman, acknowledge and confess that I have at

> different times been drawing and leaning upon certain evil teachings and misbelieving persons, and have knowingly received them into my house.'

The same "entanglement" between a confessional utterance and the opening formula may also be encountered in charges related to the possession of unlawful books.

As the above examples show, the confessional utterances appearing in abjurations are realized in many different ways across the texts included in the present corpus, with much variation in length and content, as well as in the distribution and degree of formulaicness across different heresy charges.

10.5 Discussion

10.5.1 The question of individual contribution

Gertz' (2012: 33–40) discussion of the genre of abjurations places much weight on how the oppressive reality of the abjuration situation itself was carried over into the linguistic realm, by dictating the actual wordings presented as the defendants' own in the final record:

> Abjurations … were written in the first person, required a signature, and appeared to represent the true belief of the signatory. Despite the extreme ventriloquism of the situation, *where the words of the defendant were both composed and recorded by the authority*, that same authority presumed to recognize the speaking defendant as an individual. (Gertz 2012: 33, my italics)

In this view, while it is recognised that the authorities "presumed to recognize the speaking defendant as an individual", it is also held that abjurers are compelled to engage in a "language of confession that performs sincerity" (Gertz 2012: 34). It is important to acknowledge the institutional context and unequal power relationship of the situation facing any individual brought in front of the trial examiners, and there is no doubt that a considerable proportion of the words of abjurers were indeed composed by the authority, being based on the original charges and/or transmitted through administrators working in accordance with the genre conventions of abjurations. At the same time, the assumption that abjurations on the whole simply mechanically repeat the charges presented, with next to no personal input from the abjurer, does not seem plausible when considering the material in detail.

The high degree of variation in content, length and phraseology that is shown in confessional utterances, seen against the relatively low degree of variation in the openings and closings of abjurations, suggests that the words of defendants may not all have been subject to the same degree of administrative dictation. As a consequence, there seem to be two distinct spheres of discourse at work, pertaining to the opening/closing formulae and the confessional parts respectively. The former discourse (cf. Examples (10.2 and 10.4)) is "closed" in the sense that the abjurer's power to directly influence the content appears to have been extremely limited. In contrast, the discourse in the confessional parts appears to have been more "open", both with regard to content and phraseology, and allowing for varying levels of detail. This suggests that the individual abjurer might have been able to influence the contents of the confessional record to a large degree, by volunteering detail during the interrogation that was recorded more or less verbatim by the scribe. It might here be noted that Hornbeck (2010: xv) suggests that, in the context of heresy confession, scribes at the time exhibited a professionalism that necessarily involved a genuine concern for the accuracy of their records.

The nature of the variation displayed in confessional utterances also suggests that many abjurers supplied more detail than seems to have been required by the examiners. The fact that some abjurations are fully formulaic from start to finish (i.e. they consist only of content also found in other texts), while many others contain confessions with major non-formulaic additions, seems to indicate that the only required component of a confession might have been the core doctrinal content of the formal charge article itself, rewritten in the first person. The confession made by John Swayne concerning the "sacrament of the altar" (Example (10.8)) is a typical example of a confession that seems to include nothing more than an acknowledgement of the formal article with which he is charged. The situation is very different in Thomas Boughton's confession (Example (10.6)) concerning the same charge, where the required minimum of a confessional statement only acts as an introduction to his further confession. Boughton, a "shoemaker and woolwinder", seems to have provided more detail about his convictions and statements related to the Eucharist than would have been reasonably required by the examiners. This is a general trend throughout the confessional content of his abjuration (see Solberg-Harestad 2018: 196–199 for the full text), in which he also seems to provide an individual confessional utterance concerning an instance of heresy only known to himself:

(10.17) <u>Also</u> . J confesse and knowlege that sith the tyme of my first acqueynta*n*nce with the said heretikes ; J haue had A great mynde to here sermouns and prechynges of doctours and lerned me*n*n of the church*e* . And as long' as they spack the veray woordys of the gospels and the epistles such as J had herd afore in our' englissh*e* bookys[5] ; J herkned wele vnto the*m*m and had

5. By *our' englisshe bookys* Thomas Boughton is probably referring to Lollard writings, which were commonly written in English (e.g. Hudson: 1988: 189–190).

great delight to here them . But as sone as they bega*n*n to declare scripture after their' doctour*es* And brought in other maters and spack of tythes and offrynges J was sone wery to here them And had no savour' in their' woordys . thynkyng' that it was of their' owe*n*n makyng' for their' profight and avauntage . (Wilts D4113#7)
'Also, I confess and acknowledge that since the time of my first acquaintance with the said heretics, I have had a good mind to hear sermons and the preaching of doctors and learned men of the church. And as long as they spoke the true words of the gospels and the epistles, such as I had heard before in our English books, I listened well to them and was delighted to hear them. But as soon as they began to declare scripture after their doctors, and brought in other matters and spoke of tithes and offerings, I was soon weary of listening to them, and had no taste for their words; thinking that it was of their own making for their [own] profit and advantage.'

While the information available to us is insufficient to conclusively determine whether the confessional content in Example (10.17) constitutes an unsolicited statement by Thomas Boughton, the individuality of his confession – dealing with personal matters that should have been largely irrelevant from the church's point of view – is highly suggestive of such an interpretation.

When Alice Hignell appeared before the Bishop of Salisbury, between 1485 and 1493, charged with having spoken against the worshipping of images, she provided a particularly long and detailed confession that includes an instance of heresy that does not seem to have been either voiced or acted out in public (see Solberg-Harestad 2018: 184–185 for the full text). The confession begins by addressing statements that Hignell has voiced in public concerning the worshipping of images (see Example (10.20)), but at the end of her confession she first inserts (*a*) a fully hypothetical confessional utterance, followed by (*b*) the public voicing of hypothetical actions:

(10.18) [*a*] Over this when' deuote Criste*n*n people be offering' their' candels to themmage of seint Erasme J haue wold J had an hachet in my hand And wer' be-hynde theim to knoke theim on the heddis [*b*] And for-the-mor' despite of the seid Jmag*es* haue seid and be*n*n in full*e* mynde willing' and wysshing' all*e* tho Jmag*es* that stondith*e* in void plac*es* of the church*e* wer' in my yarde at home hauyng' an Axe in my hand to hewe theim to sethe my mete and to make my potte to boyle ; (Wilts D4112#7)
'In addition to this, when devote Christian people are offering their candles to the image of Saint Erasmus, I have wished I had a hatchet in my hand and were behind them to knock them on the heads. And furthermore, against the said images, [I] have said and been in full mind willing and wishing that all the images that stand in void places of the church were in my yard at

> home, having an axe in my hand to hew them, [in order] to seethe my meat and to make my pot boil.'

As is the case with Thomas Boughton's confession in Example (10.17), while we do not have any direct evidence demonstrating that Alice Hignell has provided the final statements of her confession on her own initiative, the personal character of her confession, again dealing with feelings and wishes, as well as its considerable detail, would seem to strongly point in this direction.

10.5.2 The abjuration as an opportunity to speak?

If we accept that many abjurers might have chosen to provide at least some confessional statements that were not solicited or dictated by the examiners, this leaves us with the question why. Perhaps the best place to start answering that question is to consider why Lollards chose to abjure and renounce on oath their ostensibly former beliefs as frequently as they did, in the face of their strong convictions: approximately only one in fifty Lollards refused to renounce their beliefs and practices if found guilty of heresy (Hudson 1988: 158). This behaviour might be explained by the Lollard stance on oaths: many Lollards did not recognise any oaths at all, while some were willing to accept oaths pledged directly by God in some cases, at the same time rejecting oaths pledged by "creatures", whether by a particular saint or on a particular book etc. (Hudson 1988: 371–372). There is reason to believe that the Lollard rejection of oaths had major implications for how much importance was attached to the promises made in an oath of renunciation:

> [Many Lollards] did not hesitate to take the oath when forced but regarded it, because any oath was illicit, as of no account and certainly as having no bearing upon their future behaviour or beliefs. … Lollards would unquestionably have considered the oaths of abjuration imposed by the bishops as based on evil and offensive to God. (Hudson 1988: 373–374)

In light of the above, it is perhaps not surprising that many Lollards, after having been discovered, arrested and found guilty, "readily recanted their errors and returned home to carry on [with their Lollard beliefs and practices]" (Ryrie 2017: 108). In other words, not only was it possible and customary for Lollards to formally renounce beliefs and practices they still fully adhered to, but they were also able to justify such perjury on the grounds of both theology and individual conscience.

In addition to the Lollard rejection of oaths, the fundamental function of the abjuration ritual might explain why there seems to have been ample opportunity for abjurers to provide lengthy and non-required confessional content in their confessions: a confession and subsequent renunciation of heresy may be seen as a ritual of coming clean, functioning much in the same way as the ritual of confession to a priest. The two situations have in common that any wrongdoing has to be openly voiced in order to be recognised and for the transgressor to be forgiven. In the context of abjuration, this "forgiveness" is realized by the defendant not being subjected to the harshest penalty of the law after their first abjuration, but being eventually accepted back into the fold of the church after having performed some form of penance. It is therefore imperative that a confessor is allowed to give a full account of their wrongdoings for the ritual of confession to perform its most fundamental function. This reality, together with the justified perjury that seems to have been practiced by many Lollards, would, in theory at least, have opened up the possibility for any assertive Lollard to exploit the abjuration situation to preach to or even lecture the presiding bishop and his examiners on Christian doctrine, under the guise of a genuine confession and subsequent abjuration.

In the case of the confessions of Thomas Boughton (Examples (10.6) and (10.17)), and Alice Hignell (Example (10.18)), where both abjurers provide confessional content that seems to have far exceeded what could have been required by the examiners, it is not possible to know their inner motivations for doing so. If we entertain the possibility that both Boughton and Hignell are deliberately setting themselves up as "confessional storytellers" in front of the examiners, perhaps in order to achieve a hidden, but real, rhetorical victory in the face of heresy trial prosecution, this might provide a viable rationale for the voluminous character of the confessional content in the two abjurations. Thomas Boughton's abjuration deals with a plethora of heresy topics, including the Eucharist, the act of pilgrimage, the worshipping of images and the merits of the Papacy. For every charge, he provides in turn a major non-formulaic addition where the church or its sacraments are chastised with a language that makes no effort to mitigate the scathing critiques and characterisations he provides:

(10.19) Also J haue byleved and sayd that the Poop is Antycryste . And that me*n*n of the church*e* bee his disciples . And that the church*e* is but Sinagog . A denne of thevys and an hows of merchaundyse . For J haue sayd that nothyng' can be hadd there without money . As Crystenyng' buryyng' . Matrimony . And such other . (Wilts D4113#7)
'Also, I have believed and said that the Pope is the Antichrist, and that the men of the church are his disciples; and that the church is but a Synagogue, a den of thieves and a house of merchandise. For I have said that nothing can be had there without [spending] money, as christening, burying, matrimony and so on.'

That Boughton consistently provides long-winded confessional utterances that seem to be worded as confrontationally as possible squares well with the possibility that he might be exploiting the abjuration situation to voice his (actual) beliefs. These utterances are harder to explain if we see the record of his abjuration as the product of a tightly monitored situation that fully warrants being characterised as a form of ventriloquism (see Gertz 2012: 33; 2013: 130), implying that the recorded statements of abjurers to a very little degree reflected their own words. Rather, Boughton's confession might be compared (*mutatis mutandis*) to the long and learned tirades of Lollard doctrine produced by an earlier heretic, William Swinderby, as written responses to heresy charges from the Bishop of Hereford (see Black 1998; cf. also Hudson 2005: 84–89).[6]

The confessional content appearing in the abjuration of Alice Hignell (Examples 10.18 and 10.20) differs from that of Boughton as it is concerned with a single heresy charge topic, the worshipping of images. The content does, however, display the same "long-windedness", together with the same unmitigated and confrontational delivery. Considering that Hignell's abjuration only concerns a single heresy topic, the sheer length of her confession is remarkable in its own right. The beginning of her confession has much in common with Boughton's confession concerning the Eucharist (Example (10.6)), both being instigated with a formulaic first-person wording of the charge before they enter into a string of major non-formulaic additions that continue for some length:

(10.20) And also openly haue seid be-fore diuers / that ymag*es* of seint*es* be not to be wurshiped and for the Jmpugnaciou*n* of wurshipping' of them haue mysseyd as moch as in me was for the most despite of them as her'-aftir folowith*e* First that whe*n*n deuote Cristen' people of their' deuociou*n* be wonte to offr' their' candels bernyng' to the Jmage of seint leonard J haue for their' deuociou*n* callid theim folis Forthe-rmor' shewing' in this wise when*n* sent leonard woll*e* ete a Candell*e* And blowe owte a-nodir than J woll*e* offir hym' a Candell*e* els J wol not (Wilts D4112#7)
'And [I] have also openly said before diverse [people] that images of saints ought not to be worshipped, and in the disputing of worshipping them have misspoken as much as I could, for the most part in contempt of them [the saints], as hereafter ensues. First, that when devote Christian people out of their devotion have been used to offer their burning candles to the image of Saint Leonard, I have for their devotion called them fools; furthermore, showing in this way that when Saint Leonard will eat a candle and blow out another, then I will offer him a candle, otherwise I will not[.]'

6. Apart from the difference of medium, the responses differ in that Swinderby (who had recanted before) is explaining why the charges are not accurate, while Boughton is admitting to them; both are, however, using the opportunity to expound on the Lollard point of view in detail.

Comparing the content of Alice Hignell's confession to other confessions concerned with the worshipping of images, it seems unlikely that her lengthy and detailed confessional utterances were particularly constrained by the heresy trial situation or any participating parties. Rather, one might get the impression that she *chooses* to continue her confessional narrative, after first having satisfied the basic requirement of the examiners by acknowledging that she has spoken out against the worshipping of images. The difference between Hignell's confession and that of John Tanner concerned with the same charge, given at the same location, before the same bishop (Thomas Langton, Bishop of Salisbury, 1485–1493), is considerable:

(10.21) J haue seid and p*re*ched … Also a-yenste : Wurshipping' of ymag*es* .
seing' that we shall wurship no stokk*es* ne stonys ne nothing' made or
g*ra*ue*n*n with*e* ma*e*nys hand of no lykenesse of thing*es* in heve*n*n ne erth*e*
(Wilts D4112#10)

'I [John Tanner] have said and preached … Also against the worshipping of images, saying that we shall worship no stocks or stones, nor anything made or graven with the hands of men, having no likeness to things in heaven or on earth[.]'

Tanner's confession is sparingly worded and makes no attempt to go into further detail than supplying the general principles underpinning his rejection of the worshipping of images.

While attempting to assess the opportunity of abjurers to assert their own voices in the heresy trial situation, as striking and individual as the confessions of Thomas Boughton and Alice Hignell are, it is important to recognise that many abjurations do not display the same level of individuality in the confessional content. If the present limited corpus is to be used as an indication of the general situation, we should expect to find a spectrum ranging from fully formulaic to mostly non-formulaic confessions, with an overall tendency towards confessional utterances containing major non-formulaic additions (cf. Figure 10.1). It is not reasonable to assume that every abjurer had either the rhetorical ability, or the inclination in the first place, to assert themselves in the face of heresy trial procedure. All defendants would have found themselves, against their will, in a highly asymmetrical power relationship, face to face with the highest ecclesiastical authority in the area. It is easy to imagine that some abjurers might have opted to answer the examiners' questions as briefly and concisely as possible to remove themselves from an unpleasant and potentially frightening situation, while an unafraid and self-confident abjurer might in different ways have taken advantage of the fact that the examiners needed to hear him or her fully out for the confession to have any real meaning.

10.6 Conclusions

The present study has shown that, rather than being formulaic throughout, by far most confessional utterances in the corpus studied include non-formulaic content. The distribution of formulaic and non-formulaic content appears to be shared to a high degree across the five dioceses from which the texts originate (cf. Solberg-Harestad 2018: 89), giving reason to believe that the findings might be relevant on a general basis. It may also be noted that women seem to have been able to assert or not assert themselves in the same way as men in the abjuration situation, displaying the same variation between submissive and confrontational behaviour as men – the latter is particularly well illustrated by Alice Hignell's spirited confession in Examples (10.18) and (10.20). It must be noted, however, that the limited number of texts in the present corpus, as well as their uneven diocesan representation, mean that further and more comprehensive study of a substantially larger corpus of abjurations would be required for more conclusive generalisations.

The confessional content of the abjurations displays much variation and ranges from fully formulaic confessional utterances to utterances expanded with major non-formulaic additions. While the varied nature and the high proportion of non-formulaic content shown in the present findings are open to interpretation, the findings seem to suggest that characterisations of abjurations as being "prompted and shaped" (Arnold 1998: 381) or "composed and recorded" (Gertz 2012: 33) by the authority are in need of further nuance and qualification. Such characterisations seem fully fitting when applied to the openings and closings of abjurations, as well as to the textual devices used by scribes to frame and structure the written content, but become problematic if they are applied to abjurations as a whole without further distinction. The variation displayed in confessions at a lexical and phraseological level, as well as the amount of personal detail included, suggests that the "shaping" of the confessional part was mainly restricted to the structuring of the texts according to the genre conventions, while the content supplied by the abjurers in their confessions remained largely unchanged. This is fully in keeping with the function of an abjuration as a record of the personally admitted guilt of an abjurer, whether or not the abjurer supplied unique and individual confessional details during the interrogation.

The fact that the confessional parts of abjurations vary enormously even when recorded in trials presided over by the same bishop and copied by the same scribe – suggests that the variation is predominantly brought about by abjurers responding to the same situation in different ways, some of them seemingly acting more freely than others. Following from this, abjurations as a whole might be seen as being neither representations of fully individual voices nor examples of "ventriloquism" (see Gertz 2012: 33), but rather something intermediary between the two extremes, where the confessional content in particular seems to reflect the individual voice of abjurers to a considerable degree.

Appendix.

Table 10.2 The abjuration texts included in the study

MELD code	Diocese	Date	Abjurer(s)	Repository
D0677	Ely	1457	Robert Spark	Cambridge, Cambridge University Library: EDR G/1/5, fols. 132v-133r
D3049#1	Winchester	1487–1492	Richard Pytsyne/Sawyer	Winchester, Hampshire Record Office: 21M65/A1/15, fol. 27r
D3049#2	Winchester	1491	Isabell Gartrygge	Winchester, Hampshire Record Office: 21M65/A1/15, fol. 45v
D3050#1	Winchester	1496–1501	Court Lamporte	Winchester, Hampshire Record Office: 21M65/A1/16, fol. 63v
D3050#2	Winchester	1496	Thomas Maryet/ Stayner	Winchester, Hampshire Record Office: 21M65/A1/16, fol. 66r
D0746#1	Hereford	1505	John Crofte	Hereford, Herefordshire Archives: AL19/12, fol. 25r
D0746#7	Hereford	1509	Thomas Hygons	Hereford, Herefordshire Archives: AL19/12, fol. 52v
D4440#3	Lincoln	1457	Thomas Hulle	Lincoln, Lincolnshire Archives: DIOC/REG/20, fol.14r
D4440#17	Lincoln	1462	John Polley	Lincoln, Lincolnshire Archives: DIOC/REG/20, fols. 57r-v
D4440#18	Lincoln	1464	John Qwyrk	Lincoln, Lincolnshire Archives: DIOC/REG/20, fols. 59v-60r
D4440#22	Lincoln	1464	John Baron	Lincoln, Lincolnshire Archives: DIOC/REG/20, fol. 62v, item 2
D4440#23	Lincoln	1464	Geffray (Geoffrey) Symeon	Lincoln, Lincolnshire Archives: DIOC/REG/20, fol. 62v, item 3
D4112#4	Salisbury	1485–1493	Thomas Tailor	Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: D1/2/12 (part 2), fols. 35r-35v
D4112#7	Salisbury	1485–1493	Alis (Alice) Hignell	Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: D1/2/12 (part 2), fol. 39v

Table 10.2 (*continued*)

MELD code	Diocese	Date	Abjurer(s)	Repository
D4112#8	Salisbury	1485–1493	William Carpenter	Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: D1/2/12 (part 2), fol. 40r
D4112#10	Salisbury	1485–1493	John Tanner	Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: D1/2/12 (part 2), fols. 41r-v
D4112#11	Salisbury	1485–1493	Isabell Dorte	Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: D1/2/12 (part 2), fols. 41v-42r
D4113#2	Salisbury	1498	John and Alice Bishop; John Roye; Thomas Schochyn; John Stanwey	Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: D1/2/13, fols. 70r-v
D4113#4	Salisbury	c.1498	Annes (Agnes) Scochyn	Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: D1/2/13, fol. 72r
D4113#5	Salisbury	1498–1499	Richard Herford; Richard Hughlott	Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: D1/2/13, fols. 72v-73r
D4113#7	Salisbury	1498–1499	Thomas Boughton	Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: D1/2/13, fols. 74r-75r
D4113#14	Salisbury	1498–1499	Joan Martyn	Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: D1/2/13, fols. 78v-79r
D4114#1	Salisbury	1504	John Godwyn	Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: D1/2/14 (part 1), fol. 108r
D4114#2	Salisbury	1504	John Barly	Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: D1/2/14 (part 1), fol. 108v
D4114#6	Salisbury	1506	Robert Makam/Bragge	Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: D1/2/14 (part 1), fols. 131r-v
D4114#8	Salisbury	1507	John Polle	Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: D1/2/14 (part 1), fol. 134v

(*continued*)

Table 10.2 (*continued*)

MELD code	Diocese	Date	Abjurer(s)	Repository
D4114#13	Salisbury	1508	John Stillman	Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: D1/2/14 (part 1), fols. 148r-v
D4114#15	Salisbury	1508	John Goodson	Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: D1/2/14 (part 1), fol. 149r
D4114#17	Salisbury	1508	Richard John	Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: D1/2/14 (part 1), fol. 149v
D4114#20	Salisbury	1508	John and Margery Swayne/Barnard; Thomas Smyth; John and Cristiann Nicols	Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre: D1/2/14 (part 1), fols. 155v-156r

CHAPTER 11

Multilingual practices in Middle English documents

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11.1 Introduction

The documents included in the MELD corpus are written in or contain English. However, as with most Middle English text types, a large number of them contain more or less clearly definable elements of other languages, most notably Latin. As has been noted in preceding chapters, the production of administrative texts in late medieval England was a highly multilingual practice (see p. 56). In the period here concerned, the use of English was expanding while French was on the retreat; however, Latin remained the dominant administrative language. The English documents emerge from a Latin tradition and only gradually develop their own set formulae; during this process, the documents commonly show degrees of multilingualism.

The aim of this final chapter is to study the multilingual elements present in English local documents in the period 1400–1525. It draws both on the MELD materials and on a detailed study of documents housed in the Hampshire Record Office, carried out in conjunction with a larger project on multilingualism in the Hampshire materials (Schipor 2018). The questions to be addressed concern the distribution and function of instances of multilingual practice, here termed **multilingual events**, in the documentary materials: what kind of multilingual events are there, in what kind of texts do they appear, and how far do they form a predictable or formulaic part of the language of administrative texts? Finally, the patterns of multilingual practice are related to the sociohistorical context in which the documents were produced.

It should be noted from the outset that the concept "multilingual" in the context of late medieval English documents is far from straightforward. At the level of individual vocabulary choices, virtually any text may be considered potentially multilingual (cf. Pahta, Skaffari & Wright 2017: 4–5). The coexistence of three written languages in the same communities and functions, and the lexical

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interchanges resulting from this, mean that the boundaries between languages are very fluid, making the distinction between borrowings and code-switches extremely problematic (for approaches dealing with this problem see e.g Schendl 2017; Sylvester 2017).

On the other hand, the combination of longer stretches (consisting of more than a single word or a lexeme-equivalent phrase, such as *et cetera*) in different languages is much less common in the material, shows pronounced patterning, and is also far more straightforward to discuss in terms of multilingual practices. It is this type of multilingual event that forms the focus of the present chapter. This delimitation means that we leave out aspects of the texts that undoubtedly fall within the scope of multilingual studies: at the same time, it seems to us that single-word switches/borrowings at least to some extent constitute a different phenomenon from the mixing of multi-word strings, and should be considered separately.

In keeping with the principles outlined in Chapter 1 (see p. 6), this chapter applies a framework for the classification of multilingual events that takes as a starting point the nature of the material itself: handwritten historical texts, rather than printed books or spoken discourse. This framework combines semiotic, visual and literacy perspectives, in line with that developed by Sebba (2012a) for the analysis of present-day multilingual texts. In addition, it considers the criterion of predictability, suggested in Chapter 5 to form a major factor in the use of Latin in documentary texts (p. 62). The framework is described in sections 11.2 and is then applied to the documentary materials in order to address the research questions.

11.2 A framework for describing multilingual patterns in manuscript texts

11.2.1 Spoken and written multilingualism

Like virtually all use-based approaches to language, the study of multilingualism was first developed as a study of contemporary spoken language, and the terminology and classification of multilingual patterns reflect this focus.[1] Perhaps the most universal concept within multilingualism studies is that of **code-switching** (see e.g. Poplack 1980: 583; Winford 2003: 14), generally referring to the use of more than one language within the same linguistic event, most typically a spoken conversation. The focus on interactive, typically conversational data, is prominent in the most central frameworks of sociolinguistic research on code-switching, such

1. Landmark works in the study of multilingualism in speech include Blom and Gumperz 1972; Myers-Scotton 1988, 1993a, 1993b, 2002; Auer 1984, 1998; Gardner-Chloros 1997 and Muysken 2000.

as the Markedness model (Myers-Scotton 1993a) and the Conversation Analysis model (Auer 1984, 1998; Wei 1998, 2005), both of which presuppose the presence of more than one participant; as Sebba (2012a: 99) has pointed out, these models are applicable for some types of written data (such as emails) but may be less useful for other, less interactive kinds of writing.

Most frameworks for the study of code-switching analyse switches in terms of the grammatical structures involved. The Matrix Language Frame model (Myers-Scotton 1993a, 2002), makes use of the main syntactic structure of a clause – the Complementizer Phrase – as the unit of analysis; basic assumptions are that each such phrase is based on the grammatical structure of a **matrix language**, and that code switching is always asymmetrical. A broader model of code-switching is provided by Muysken's (2000) typology, which distinguishes between **insertion** (single constituent elements, typically noun phrases or prepositional phrases, embedded within a grammatically coherent utterance in another language), **alternation** (switching from one grammatical frame to another) and **congruent lexicalisation** (a blending of two related languages within the same grammatical frame), only the first of which presupposes a matrix language.

While originally developed for the study of spoken language, code-switching theories have over time been applied to a range of written data, most commonly interactional or informal data such as letters, diaries and communication through social media.[2] As the study of multilingualism has expanded to deal with historical periods for which only written evidence is available, the genres studied have come to include a wide range of non-interactive written material, such as religious and secular literature, sermons, treatises and documentary texts.[3] Such studies have contributed much to our understanding of historical texts; at the same time, they have both helped refine existing theories and bring to the light important differences (as well as similarities) between spoken and written data with regard to the study of multilingual practices.

The preference in historical sociolinguistics – whether or not dealing with multilingualism – has, naturally enough, been for "speech-like" texts such as correspondences (cf. p. 37). However, the great majority of written genres provide very different kinds of material, which may be considered no less interesting to study

2. Important early work on written code-switching includes McClure 1998, 2001 and Montes-Alcalá 2000, 2007.

3. Groundbreaking studies of multilingual texts from medieval Britain include Schendl (2000, 2012); Pahta (2004); Pahta & Nurmi (2006) and Wright (2000b, 2005, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015); see also Trotter (2000), Schendl & Wright (2011), Jefferson & Putter (2013), Ashdowne & White (2017) and Pahta, Skaffari & Wright (2017) for important collections of papers on historical multilingualism.

from the point of view of multilingualism. Adams (2003), working on data that are very far removed from the spoken conversation – inscriptions on stone – notes that “bilingual performance as it appears in a written text is a very different matter from bilingual performance in speech” (Adams 2003: 106–107): the circumstances of production are entirely different, as is the communicative function. Accordingly, the concepts and terms used to describe multilingual conversations are not necessarily in all respects well suited for describing what is going on in a multilingual text.

In an important paper, Sebba (2012a) presents an alternative framework of analysis, especially designed for dealing with written texts. He points out, first of all, that a study of multilingual texts should be multimodal, taking into account the visual and spatial aspects of the language on the page (or whatever surface) as well as the purely linguistic ones. In addition, multilingual texts should be studied in relation to the literacy practices “which are embedded in the culture of language communities and which reflect their sociolinguistic and economic circumstances” (Sebba 2012a: 113).

Both points are highly relevant for the study of the present material. Like the signs and newspaper texts studied by Sebba (2012a), medieval documentary texts use the visual dimension in meaningful ways; in addition, they are produced by socially highly stratified communities marked by great variation with regard to literacy, education and language use. As historical manuscript texts, moreover, they may consist of several temporal layers and be the product of more than one language user (cf. Adams 2003: 107). In order to relate their multilingual practices to the sociolinguistic context, it will therefore make sense to base the analysis on the premises of the written data. This means rethinking both our conceptualisation of what goes on in a multilingual utterance (the switches) and the units on which they operate.

11.2.2 Conceptualising multilingual patterns: From switches to events

Code-switching is probably the most commonly used term in the literature on multilingualism, and has proved to be a highly flexible one, with definitions ranging from the strict category of insertions to encompassing basically all kinds of language mixing (cf. Pahta, Skaffari & Wright 2017: 4). At the same time, the idea of “switches” and “switching points” is firmly based on the linear nature of speech and its transmission through time: switches happen when we, at a given point of time, stop doing one thing and start doing another. Code-switching in spoken conversations between bilinguals may be triggered by various catalysts, such as changes of topic or domain, or by language-neutral elements such as proper nouns or bilingual homophones; such elements have been termed “homophonous diamorphs” (cf. Clyne 2003: 162; Muysken 2000: 133).

Triggered switches may certainly also take place in writing, even though the slower production of writing, and its higher degree of self-monitoring compared to speech (in many if not all written contexts) means that they are likely to be somewhat less common.[4] The most favourable conditions for switches in writing are without doubt lists of various kinds, where there is no syntactic flow to be considered, and where individual items may come to a bilingual writer's mind in different languages.[5] In the MELD material, one of the letters of William Partrick, the deposed abbot of Lithum, Lancs., writing from his house arrest in Durham priory in the 1440s, contains a multilingual list of the livestock kept at Lithum:

(11.1) he sayd nay y^{e} way whas to fulle ꝛ to deep̄ and as for y^{e} catell y^{ar} wase xxxıııȷ oxyn̄ ꝛ xl key Jt͛ xvȷ Juuence […] twynters xv Jt͛ stırkes xȷ Jt oues matrıces ccc^{ma} Jt͛ hoggeʒ cc^{ma} xxȷ Jt moton̄ ıııȷ^{xx} xvıȷ Jt angneƚƚ cc xvıııȷ Jt͛ ııȷ taurí Jt͛ vȷ gret sues Jt͛ ıı^{o} aprí Jt xvıııȷ hoggeʒ Jt͛ v porcellí And for suth J neu͛ salde nor west sald ham far as J hafe ın my myde non of all y^{ıs} bot to henry helay excep͛ J bull to mykyl martō (Durham, L0472a)
'he said no, the road was too foul and too deep, and as for the cattle, there were 34 oxen and 40 cows, *item* 16 heifers […] two-year olds 15, stirks 11, *item* ewes 300, *item* young sheep 221, *item* wethers 97, *item* lambs 218, *item* 3 bulls, *item* 6 great sows, *item* 2 boars, *item* 18 hogs, *item* 5 pigs. And certainly I never sold them or knew them to be sold, as far as I can remember, none of all this except to Henry Helay, except one bull to Great Marton'.

Here, some of the names of animals (*oues matrices, tauri, apri* and *porcelli)* appear in Latin while others (*oxyn, key, twynters, stirkes* and *hoggeʒ*) appear in English. The term *moton* 'sheep' is a French loanword that seems to have been well established in English at this point. The terms *juvence* and *angneƚƚ* are Anglo-Norman: see the *Anglo-Norman Dictionary* (*AND*) under headwords JUVENCE, ultimately derived from Latin JUVENCUS 'young bull, heifer' and AIGNEL (with attested spellings starting with the sequence <ang-> and ending with <-gnelle>) ultimately derived from AGNELLA/US/IUS 'little lamb'. It is also possible to read both as Medieval Latin plurals: *juuenc(a)e* and *angnelli*, respectively. Finally, *sues* might be read in any one of the three languages (cf. *OED* SOW, *AND* SUER and *DMLBS* SUS). This

4. For an excellent discussion of code-switching in different kinds of writing, see Stam (2017: 59–62).

5. Several informal polls in classes with international students suggest that multilingual shopping lists are the norm rather than the exception for multilingual writers (as indeed they are for both present authors).

multilingual list presumably reflects Partrick's background in priory management, where accounting would be carried out in Latin, or indeed in mixed code.

In a list such as this, it might make sense to describe the changes from one language to another as "switches". However, written discourse often entails a considerable degree of linguistic ambiguity. In the present example, the numerals preceding the common nouns (such as xxxiiij and xl) and the formulaic *item* may be read in either English or Latin (or, for that matter, French); in addition, abbreviated endings as in *angnell'* 'lambs' may render words ambiguous with regard to language. Such ambiguous written elements, which have been termed "visual diamorphs" by (Wright 2011; see also Horst & Stam 2017), are very common indeed in many kinds of writing and may constitute a considerable portion of a text, making the idea of simple "switching" insufficient.

Further, written texts are often not linear in the way that speech has to be. A written page may consist of several blocks that belong together, making up a single "text" in terms of cohesive content but consisting of semi-autonomous items that are not necessarily read in sequence (cf. also Sebba 2012a: 104). Headings and notes may be read before or after the intervening text, and in medieval manuscripts they could be added to a text afterwards, perhaps even by another scribe, in a different ink and hand, and not uncommonly in a different language.

A medieval document containing elements in different languages is clearly a multilingual text; however, whether the term "code-switching" is appropriate for this kind of combination of different languages is debatable, as there may be no self-evident "switching point" either in the writing or reading process. Instead, the languages may relate to each other visually in a number of ways; as Sebba (2012a: 106) puts it:

> While spoken code-switching is essentially one dimensional, involving the juxtaposition of spoken linguistic units from two languages within a single interactional event, language mixing within multilingual texts is potentially multidimensional, involving juxtaposition or separation on both the linguistic and visual dimensions.

Instead of simply referring to "switches", it will make sense to study instances of written language mixing from the point of view of the visual context – the written page, sheet or whatever – and not only as part of a linear string of language. Such an approach will allow us to take into account the circumstances of text production and the visual features of the material, while the term code-switching may still be applied for insertions and alternations that take place within a continuous string of language.

For this purpose, it will make sense to draw upon some basic concepts from literacy studies. The term **literacy practices** was defined by Street (1984: 1) as "social practices and conceptions of reading and writing", while Barton (2007: 37) suggests that literacy practices may be explained as the social practices involved in any literacy event. Barton (2007: 36) defines a **literacy event** as an occasion "in everyday life where the written word has a role": this broad definition includes both actual instances of reading or writing and meta-activities such as discussing a text or talking about reading. Literacy practices may, then, be described as culturally shared, but individually implemented, patterns of literacy events (Schipor 2018: 30).

In multilingual contexts, it will make sense to refer to multilingual literacy practices, as such contexts will generate specific practices of using each language as well as combining them. In the case of historical texts, the term is for practical purposes equivalent to **multilingual practices**, a term already established in the study of historical multilingual texts (Pahta & Nurmi 2006; see also Pahta, Skaffari & Wright 2017: 4); here it will be used to refer to the (written) linguistic practices behind the texts studied: the "general practices of scribes and readers engaging with texts" (Schipor 2018: 36) that produce the patterns that we observe. The individual occurrences of two or more languages being combined within a text are termed **multilingual events**. It may be noted that, for the present purpose, the definition of "event" is more narrow than Barton's definition of "literacy event", as it only includes actual examples of multilingual language use, and not, for example, comments on languages. Finally, repeated occurrences of multilingual events that may be correlated with non-linguistic variables such as function or chronology are termed **multilingual patterns**.

11.2.3 Classifying multilingual events in written texts

The analytical framework suggested by Sebba (2012a) is presented under four main headings: units of analysis, language–spatial relationships, language–content relationships and linguistic mixing types. The present classification makes use of largely the same categories but with some differences of detail, based on the reality of medieval documentary materials and the needs of a quantitative study involving the analysis of a large number of multilingual events (Schipor 2018). In addition, the criterion of predictability is included here, as being potentially highly relevant for the study of multilingual patterns in medieval administrative writing (see p. 62). The present analysis will make use of the following categories (the values distinguished are given in brackets and highlighted in the following discussion):

1. Linguistic mixing types (discernible main language / mixed code)
2. Syntactic structure (intersentential / intrasentential)
3. Textual structure (interelemental / intraelemental)
4. Visual structure (interelemental / intraelemental)
5. Visual marking (up / down / unmarked / conflicting)

6. Information content (parallel / complementary)
7. Predictability (formulaic / customary / free)

Of these categories, 2–4 correspond to Sebba's units of analysis, 5 corresponds to his language–spatial relationships and 6 to his language–content relationships. Schipor (2018) also considered pragmatic functions such as discourse organization and changes of footing; while a detailed consideration of such aspects falls outside the scope of the present chaper, some of the relevant findings will be referred to in the discussion under 11.5.

Linguistic mixing types

As noted at the beginning of the chapter, if multilingual events are taken to include any appearance of a single word or name that seems to represent a language different from that of the preceding or surrounding portion of text, then the great majority of all texts in the material (and, indeed, probably in any historical corpus) may be said to include multilingual events. Virtually all the Latin texts of any length contain English personal or place names or terminology, and words of Latin and French origin abound in the English texts. At the same time, single-word events are extremely difficult to define and categorise, as it is often impossible to decide whether a single word represents a multilingual event or a borrowing, or simply a variant spelling (cf. Example (11.1) above; for studies of single-word events, or "single-word switches", see e.g. Sylvester 2017; Trotter 2006, 2010).

A study including all instances of single words that might potentially be classified as multilingual events would be of a scope and complexity not practicable for the present purpose, as each lexeme would need to be considered in its own right, in relation to its other attestations in English and, preferably, its semantics (cf. Sylvester 2017). However, if the study is limited to stretches consisting of more than one word (or lexeme-equivalent phrase such as *et cetera*), the patterns look very different: multi-word events that (more or less) unquestionably represent linguistic resources from another language are much less common in the material, and furthermore pattern quite clearly in relation to variables such as domain and functional text category. The present study will therefore only consider multilingual events which involve stretches of two or more words, excluding lexeme-equivalent phrases. The only exception is cases where the single word makes up an entire textual element, such as a marginal note.

Sebba (2012a: 107) distinguishes between monolingual, mixed and language-neutral units of text; as the units may be defined in terms of syntactic, textual or visual structure (see below), and be of varying sizes, they may be embedded within each other, smaller monolingual units nesting within larger mixed ones. For the present study, the most crucial distinction turns out to be between units which have a discernible main language and ones that do not – that is, where the constituent languages are so intertwined that no overall frame language may be identified. The great majority of the texts considered here belong to the first category and are easily defined in terms of their **main language** (**English, Latin** or **French**). However, as **mixed codes** are regularly used, even conventional, in certain contexts, it will make sense to consider the language of such texts a code of its own (cf. Wright 2000b: 151, 2013: 124–125).

Units of analysis: Syntactic, textual and visual structure

Studies of code-switching in speech generally relate the switches to syntactic or discourse units. In studies of spoken multilingualism it has been customary to distinguish between **intersentential** and **intrasentential** code-switching, depending on whether the two languages are combined within the same syntactic unit or not (cf. Myers-Scotton 1993b); the same terms may be applied to written multilingual events. The mixed codes discussed above and under 11.5.3 might be described as consisting of extensive intrasentential code-switching, termed code-mixing by some scholars (cf. Trotter 2011; Wright 2011).

Intersentential events make up a highly heterogeneous group, including switches within the same body text as well as the use of different languages in different textual or visual elements, such as body texts, headings and datings. Unlike speech, the permanence of writing on a page makes it possible to take in large multilingual patterns at a glance, and to scan repeatedly the same multilingual text area; the categorization of written multilingual events therefore also has to take into account units beyond the syntactic level.[6]

Written texts are commonly organized on the page into formal elements that may be partly autonomous but that belong to the same scribal text as defined here (see p. 19): for example, the heading, lead paragraph and body text of a newspaper article or the address, dating and signature of a letter. Elements which do not belong to the "body text" are often referred to as *paratext;* however, as was noted in Chapter 3, it is sometimes very difficult to define paratext in medieval documents because of their fluidity (see p. 66). In the present context, we will therefore simply refer to textual elements, irrespective of their status as "text" or "paratext". Often the definitions of textual elements coincide with visual patterns, whether marked by layout or otherwise; however, this is not always the case, and the two aspects are

6. Kopaczyk (2017) suggests a framework within which code-switching may be adressed at different linguistic levels: macrogenre, discourse, clause, word, morpheme and orthographic levels. As multilingual events are here defined as being above word level, only the three first levels are relevant for the present purpose; the discourse level corresponds to the interelemental multilingual events as defined here.

therefore best kept distinct. We might distinguish between (at least) eleven types of textual elements in the late medieval documentary materials: incipit, heading, subheading, dating, body text, note, sum total, summary, explicit, signature and appendix. These elements may or may not be marked visually: for example, datings may be provided in the margins for register entries but are most commonly embedded in the body text.

As far as visual elements are concerned, we will differentiate between three main categories: heading, body text and attachment. The heading is always positioned above the body text and generally corresponds to the functional categories heading, subheading and (sometimes) sum total. The attachment category includes all other text blocks separated spatially from the body text: marginal notes and footnotes, summaries, signatures and so on. A more detailed classification would be possible, and indeed desirable for studies focussing on a more limited corpus: however, the extreme variety of layouts encountered in the present material means that a simple tripartite categorization is the most useful one.

The main visual elements in a text tend to correspond to textual categories: even though a body text may stretch over several pages, such text blocks are separated by necessity and may be treated as a single visual element. The converse is, however, not the case: a visually unmarked dating clause is a functional textual element but not a visual one. Multilingual events may, therefore, be classified as **inter**- or **intraelemental** with regard to either textual or visual structure. Unless otherwise indicated, the figures presented under 11.5 refer to visual elements.

Visual marking

As defined here, visual elements are distinguished spatially: that is, by occupying different positions on the page or sheet, usually separated from each other by some blank space. Such spatial ordering may be significant in terms of salience: top is generally more important than bottom, while the centre is more important than the margins (cf. Scollon & Scollon 2003: 122). However, spatial relations are not the only visual means by which parts of text may be highlighted or marked for relative importance. Visual marking may be achieved by script size as well as the use of different script styles and colours, the addition of emblems and the like; if prominent enough, such marking may balance or even override the spatial arrangement, as in the case of an illuminated initial and rubricated title introducing a new chapter at the bottom of a manuscript page.

The visual unit termed "body text" may be considered the default, unmarked element against which the other elements are compared; this does not, however, exclude the possibility that parts of the body text, such as discourse markers, may be visually highlighted or marked. All units of a text – visual and textual elements and shorter stretches of text – may therefore be classified as visually marked **up** or

down; alternatively, they may be **unmarked** or their marking may be **conflicting.** Headings, for example, are virtually always marked up, since they are positioned above the body text and may also be written in a larger and more formal style than the body text. Certain attachments, such as footnotes, are typically marked down since they are written under the body text and usually in a smaller size. Conflicting marking occurs when two or more means of marking give different signals: a note may be positioned under the body text but be written in a more formal script, so that it is marked down by position, but marked up by script style.

An additional complication with regard to visual marking is the multi-layering of historical texts: over time, users may have engaged with a text and introduced new visual elements, sometimes in a different language, creating new multilingual events. Such elements, which are generally written in a different hand (although later additions by the same scribe are by no means exceptional) may appear visually marked in ways that were not intended (for example, by being written in a less formal hand) and are sometimes extremely difficult to distinguish from "original" parts of the text.

Language – content relationships

Based on their information content, multilingual events may be classified as **parallel** or **complementary** (cf. Sebba 2012b: 14–15). Parallelism occurs when the same information is provided in different languages: for example, in the case of English register texts with Latin marginal summaries or headings, such as *abiuracio Joħis polley* 'abjuration of John Polley' marking a Lincolnshire abjuration text which in itself provides all the information (D4440#17). In complementary multilingual events, on the other hand, the stretches in different languages provide new information. The most common examples of such complementary events are the use of Latin dates and set phrases such as *solutus est* 'paid'.

It may be noted that not all multilingual events may be classified as either parallel or complementary. Their content may be partially, but not completely, repeated in the other language, or it may be difficult to establish in any sensible way; in such cases, the events have simply been left unclassified.

Level of predictability

Finally, based on their level of predictability, multilingual events have been categorized as **formulaic, customary** and **free.** Formulaic events reproduce a set phrase, word for word or nearly so: the divine invocation and its English counterpart "in the name of God amen" are formulaic, as is the French formula *le Roy le veult* 'the King wishes it'. As noted in Chapter 10, the variability in Middle English means that absolute formal identity cannot be expected in formulaic phrases: thus, the various versions of the opening phrase “this indenture witnesses” in Example (5.1) (see p. 95) may be considered formulaic, even if their precise linguistic form varies.

Customary multilingual events, on the other hand, do not reproduce the same wording, or even the same content, but simply represent the expected use of a particular language in a given context and function. For example, English texts frequently contain dating clauses in Latin, showing a variety of dating conventions and formats. Similarly, scribal comments at the end of English abjurations are customarily in Latin, and provide the same kind of information. For example, the abjuration of Thomas Maryet, dated to 1496, ends as follows:

(11.2) Jn wıttenese wherof J make here wᵗ myn own̄ hand a crosse Et fecıt sıgnu
’ crucꝭ Acta sunt ın Eccłıa Conuentualı b̄te marıe Ou̾ey ın Suthwerke
quınto dıe menꝭ Nouembrıs Anno dm̄ Mıłłmo CCCC nonagesımo sexto
pn̄tıbꝫ ven̾abılıbꝫ vırıs Carolo Both ⁊ Rıc̄o wılton̄ legu’ doctorıbꝫ ⁊ alıȷs
multꝭ (Hamps D3050#2)
‘In witness whereof I make here with my own hand a cross; and he made the sign of the cross. These things were performed in the convent church of St Mary Overy in Southwark 5 November 1496 in the presence of venerable men, Carl Both and Richard Wilton, doctors of law, and many others.’

Here the scribe uses Latin to provide information about the precise context of the abjuration and the non-verbal behaviour of the abjurer. Such Latin notes are present in virtually all register copies of abjurations and may be said to represent customary multilingual events.

Multilingual events are, finally, classified as free when their content and form are, on the whole, unpredictable from the context. Such events may consist of notes or additions to an English text that are, for no obvious reason, written in Latin; in other cases, the use of Latin may be expected in the context, as when it signals the voice of the registrar in a register, but the function is not predictable:

(11.3) Noᵘ qd testam̄ istiꝰ defuncti scribitᶻ in fo prox’ preceden̄
(Hamps D3050#16)
‘Note that the testament of the deceased is written on the immediately preceding folio’.

In some cases, it may be difficult to establish the degree of predictability of multilingual events. A particular event may come across as free, even creative, until more examples of the same are found: the more data we have already encountered, the more likely we are to make accurate categorisations about predictability.

11.4 The material for the present study

Most of the findings presented here are based on a database of multilingual events that was compiled by Schipor for her doctoral project (Schipor 2018) from a corpus of late medieval documents collected at Hampshire Record Office. The multilingual events were labelled for all the categories described in Section 12.2, and provide the basis for all the quantitative data presented here. The MELD corpus (version 2017.1, altogether 2,017 texts) is, in addition, drawn upon for illustrative examples.

In her study, Schipor collected data from three collections housed in the Hampshire Record Office, representing three different domains: the Winchester City Archives (municipal), the Jervoise family collection (manorial) and the Winchester Diocesan Archives (episcopal). The three collections provide very different kinds of material. The diocesan collection makes up the vast majority of texts and text categories in the material, including a large range of specialized Latin text types that belong to church administration; the city archives contain documents connected to municipal administration, including court rolls, accounts and memoranda, while the Jervoise collection contains a large range of documents relating to landholdings and property.

Schipor's study had the same chronological range as MELD (1399–1525) and many of the English texts collected are also included in MELD. In one respect, however, the sampling principles were different, as the study included all the late medieval material housed in the three collections, irrespective of its origin. This means that the corpus used in Schipor (2018) includes a small number of texts which do not fall under the definition "local documents" or which represent later copies; most importantly, these include a group of 19 late sixteenth-century copies of parliamentary rolls in the Jervoise family collection (archive reference 44M69/L39). These texts have not been included in the present study. A small group of six Chancery documents from the late fifteenth century, also found in the Jervoise collection, is, however, included in the present material as it provides a useful comparison to the local documents.[7]

By far most texts in the Hampshire material have a clearly discernible main language (see p. 257). Of these, the vast majority (6,864 texts) are in Latin while 166 are in English and 10 are in French. Only in one text (D3050#33) do English and Latin alternate in similar proportions, while nine texts are written in a mixed code with an English element. The proportions of the languages vary considerably

7. These texts include three Chancery copies of petitions (44M69/D10/5/6, G2/1/2 and G2/1/4), an attainder (44M69/G2/1/1), an inquisition post mortem (44M69/D12/3/12) and an agreement (44M69/G2/1/3).

between the collections, the Jervoise family collection containing a much larger proportion of English texts (20%) than the City Archives and the diocesan collection (1.7% and 1% respectively). The proportions also change over time, although very gradually: Latin remains the majority language in all the collections throughout the period, with English rivalling its position only in the Jervoise family collection, where English texts make up 41% in the first quarter of the sixteenth century (see Schipor 2018: 104, 124, 138).

Schipor (2018) found that multilingual events, as defined above, are much more common in English texts than in Latin ones, with 49% of the English texts and only 0.2% of the Latin ones containing multi-word multilingual events. This lack of symmetry, which is commonly found in language contact situations, presumably reflects both the higher status of written Latin and its continued role as the main language of official communication; Latin formulae and specialist terminology would be readily available while the use of English for official purposes was still at its incipient stage.

The present study is limited to the texts with English or mixed code as their main language. The total number of texts included from the Hampshire corpus is, accordingly, 175, including 166 texts with English as their main language and nine texts in mixed code. It should be noted that this subcorpus makes up only 2.5% of the entire Hampshire corpus, and thus represents only a small proportion of the overall documentary materials contained in the three collections, which are completely dominated by Latin.

11.5 Presentation of findings

11.5.1 The distribution of multilingual events in the English texts

The 166 English texts in the Hampshire corpus contain altogether 256 multilingual events, found in 80 texts. In addition, nine texts are written in mixed code. Accordingly, multilingual events consisting of more than a single word are common, but not ubiquitous in the material, appearing in about half of the English/mixed texts. For comparison, it may be noted that the part of MELD so far labelled for multilingualism, the Eastern Counties, shows a somewhat lower figure at 32% (185 texts out of 570).

The distribution of multilingual events across the texts is uneven: while many texts contain only a single event, others contain large numbers of them, either of the same type or of various types. The following sections discuss the patterns of multilingual events found in the material, considering in turn their distribution, structural and visual characteristics, functions and predictability.

In all the 256 multilingual events found in the English texts, the main language is indeed English: no "inverted" multilingual events with English appearing within Latin textual or visual elements are found in the material. The second language is Latin in all except five events, which show French; all of these appear in the group of Chancery documents, in set phrases indicating royal approval (*soit fait comme il este desire* 'let it be done as it is desired'; *le Roi le voet en touz pointz* 'the King wishes it in all points').[8] Accordingly, French does not appear at all in the English local documents.

It might be noted, for comparison, that the MELD corpus contains French in only two texts, not counting the few mixed-code accounts included. One of these is the address clause written on the dorse of a letter to the king from the Mayor and aldermen of London, dated 1418: *Au Roy nre' tres sou᷑aign̄ & tres redoubte seignour* 'to the king our very sovereign and honoured lord' (D4195#3). The second instance of French is found in headings, consisting of parish names, in the record of a London inquest of 1421: *la ꝑoch de seint leonard, la ꝑoch de seint Botulfus, la ꝑoch de seint Marie atte hille*, and so on (D4201#2). These headings are, in fact, the only example of multilingual events with French in the two corpora that appears outside mixed-code texts and is not connected to the King.[9]

In the Hampshire corpus, multilingual events appear in most text types. They are, however, particularly common in two functional categories: testamentary texts (wills and testaments) and financial texts such as accounts and inventories (see Table 11.1): in these categories, more than 65% of all the texts with English as their main language contain multilingual events. Functional categories that show few or no multilingual events include correspondences, leases, marriage articles and sales (of a total of twelve leases and four sales, none include multilingual events); they are also relatively uncommon in receipts. It may be noted that the categories with few or no multilingual events (as defined here) are also ones in which the use of English had become well established during the period (see p. 58) and which may therefore be expected to have been well on the way to developing purely English conventions and formulae.

8. It might be noted that a shorter form, *le Roy/la Reyne le veult*, is still used to indicate royal assent when passing a public bill. The set phrase *soit fait comme il est désiré*, and variants of it, have been conventionally used to signal the royal assent to private acts of parliament.

9. The Hampshire corpus also contains ten texts with French as their main language. Of these, all except two are dated to the first decade of the fifteenth century. The only substantially later French text is the jurament of Agnes Burton on her election as abbess of the Abbey of St Mary in Winchester in 1449. The use of French in this text is of some interest, as it suggests that French might have been felt appropriate for a woman in a context where Latin would otherwise be the rule (cf. Schipor 2018: 130–131).

Table 11.1 The distribution of texts with multilingual events in the Hampshire corpus according to functional category. The list does not include the texts in mixed code

Functional category	Texts with English as main language, containing multilingual events	Total number of texts with English as main language	%
Financial accounts	18	24	75
Testamentary texts	26	38	68
Inventories	4	6	67
Notes	9	21	43
Agreements	2	5	40
Abjurations	4	11	36
Receipts	2	11	18
Other	15	50	30
Total	**80**	**166**	

While testamentary texts in English commonly include a divine invocation in Latin, the main reason for their high number of multilingual events is that all except one of the testamentary texts are register copies, set in a Latin framework and usually with marginal headings in Latin. The other functional categories with numerous multilingual events, accounts and inventories, appear both as single-sheet documents and on rolls. Here, the multilingual events generally consist of headings, summaries and sum totals in Latin, English being used for the more unpredictable list entries that constitute the body text (see Example (11.4) below). Some of the longer financial accounts, typically written on rolls, therefore contain a very large number of individual multilingual events. It may be noted that rolls, being a format largely restricted to financial texts, are the format most likely to contain multilingual events in the material: all the 17 rolls in English that appear in the material contain multilingual events, while the corresponding proportions are 48% for register texts and 36% for single sheets.

Of the three Hampshire collections, the diocesan and city archives contain the largest proportions of English texts with multilingual events: 61% and 52% respectively for the total collections. The Jervoise family collection has a considerably lower proportion at 40%. The high proportion of multilingual texts in the diocesan collection is not surprising, considering that all the diocesan texts consist of register copies and would have been produced by the highly Latinate episcopal administration (cf. Schipor 2018: 144). Whether the conventions of municipal administration might have a similar effect is less clear: as the city archives only contain 21 English texts in total, the figure should be considered with caution.

Finally, as Schipor (2018: 151–52) shows, English texts with multilingual events become progressively more common during the period studied. Their absolute number rises sharply towards the end of the period, with more than half of all texts showing multilingual events dating from the first quarter of the sixteenth century. The proportional number of multilingual English texts also increases throughout the period compared to monolingual English texts, eclipsing them in the early sixteenth century. This development, which goes against the overall expectation that monolingual English should be gaining ground by this time (cf. Wright 2015), may partly reflect the dominance of the episcopal material in the Hampshire study, where multilingual English testamentary texts suddenly appear in great numbers in the early sixteenth century (see Schipor 2018: 155). However, as the discussion of mixed-code texts suggests, the overall situation is probably somewhat more complicated.

11.5.2 The mixed-code texts

Mixed-code texts consist, by definition, of free intraelemental multilingual events. The nine mixed-code texts in the Hampshire material are all inventories, consisting of lists of goods such as *cofris* 'coffers', *bedde duble* 'double bed' and *fyrtonge* 'fire tongs', all of which are found in the inventory of the goods and chattels of Peter Baker, fuller, dated to 1432–33:

(11.4) j potelpot de stanu’ p^{1}c̉ vııȷ d Jt̉ fullorꝭ cleı p^{1}c̉ xvȷ d ȷ sharebord p^{1}c̉ xx d ıx teseƚ p^{1}c̉’ vȷ s̉ ıııȷ^{xx} Stokhandeƚ p^{1}c̉ ıȷ s ıııȷ d vȷ lıbr̉ lane dıu̍soꝝ coloꝝ p^{1}c̉ xıȷ d x lıbr̉ de lana gͦssa alƀ p^{1}c̉ vııȷ d ıȷ sherhoukꝭ p^{1}c̉ ıȷ d, ıııȷ burlıngyrꝭ p^{1}c̉ ıȷ d x wulkomb p^{1}c̉ ıȷ s̉ … … ȷ cısta ꝑu’ p^{1}c̉ ıȷ d … ȷ toga de mustredeuylerꝭ furrat̉ cū peƚƚ cunīclorꝭ p^{1}c̉ ıx s’ … ȷ ꝑu’ cooꝑtorıu’ p^{1}c̉ xıȷ d … ȷ al cooꝑtorıu’ vetꝰ p^{1}c̉ xvȷ d ȷ toga de broun̉ veter̉ p^{1}c̉ xvȷ d v quyshones p^{1}c̉ x d ȷ banker p^{1}c̉ vȷ d ıȷ kembyngstockꝭ p^{1}c̉ ıııȷ d (Hamps M3364#3)
'1 pottle pot of stone, price 8 pence; Item fuller's clay, price 15 pence; 1 cutting board, price 20 pence; 9 teasels, price 6 shillings; 80 stock handles, price 2 shillings 4 pence; 6 pounds of wool of various colours, price 12 pence; 10 pounds of white coarse wool, price 8 pence; 2 shear-hooks, price 2 pence; 4 burling combs, price 2 pence; 10 wool-combs, price 3 shillings […] 1 small chest, price 2 pence […] 1 gown of musterdevillers lined with rabbit fur, price 9 shillings […] 1 small coverlet, price 12 pence […] 1 other old coverlet, price 16 pence; 1 old brown gown, price 16 pence; 5 cushions, price 10 pence; 1 banker, price 6 pence; 2 combing-stocks, price 4 pence'.

The mixed-code inventories are characterized by the use of medieval Latin, Anglo-Norman and Middle English in a mixed-language system that is for the most part grammatically governed by Latin (cf. Wright 2013: 125). Wright (2000b: 151, 2013: 125) has identified three main characteristics of such texts. Firstly, they show an almost exclusive use of Latin function words, such as *de* 'of' and *cum* 'with', as well as adjectives and nouns, such as *lana g°ssa alƀ* 'white coarse wool'. Secondly, they tend to contain visual diamorphs (cf. Wright, 2000b: 151), such as the preposition *in* and abbreviations such as *pᶦc*' 'price', which may be read in more than one language. Thirdly, code-mixing is characterized by the implementation of both the Germanic and the Romance rule concerning the position of modifiers. For example, *ꝑu' cooꝑtoriu'* 'small coverlet' and *cooꝑtoriu' vetꝰ* 'old coverlet' are here found in the same text.

The Hampshire mixed-code inventories all follow, on the whole, the pattern described by Wright. Somewhat different patterns are found in the few mixed-code texts included in the MELD corpus, most of which consist of churchwardens accounts from Oxford:

(11.5) Itm̃ Solutu' est pur le Sute of vestmētꝭ of blewe velvett . s. A cope & vestmēt for þe pᶦ st decon & sƀdecon̄ ~ xxıȷ lı […]
Itm̃ ꝓ ꝑgameno ad facıend nostr̃ compot̃ ~ ıȷ d
Itm̃ ꝓ fact̃ ıstıus compotꝰ ~ vııȷ d
Itm̃ ꝓ fact̃ de le hed wale & vnd'pȳnyng̃ of þe growndsyllꝭ wt od' r̃ꝑacōns ın the churchehowsse ~ xıȷ d (Oxfords D2314, 1502–3)
'Item, it is paid for the suit of vestments of blue velvet: a cope and vestment for the priest, deacon and subdeacon, £ 22 […] Item, for parchment to make our account, 2 pence. Item, for making this account, 8 pence. Item, for making the head wall and underpinning the groundsels, with other reparations in the church building, 12 pence'

While some of the Oxford mixed-code texts are similar to Example (11.4) in that they consist of a mainly Latin framework containing English lexical items, others, such as Example (11.5), may rather be characterized as patchworks of units of varying size, overlapping at the edges. Here, each line begins in Latin, using formulaic expressions such as *Solutu' est* and *pro*, and continues in either language, also making use of conventionalized French prepositions and articles (*pur le*). Rather than being grammatically governed by Latin, with mainly Latin function words, the grammar switches from one language to another: from the Latin *Itm' ꝓ fact'* via the mixed *de le hed wale* to the fully English *vnd'pyn̲nyng' of þe growndsyllꝭ wt od' r̃ꝑacōns*. This pattern thus corresponds to the "alternations" of Muysken's typology (p. 251). It may be noted that the text abounds in visual diamorphs: apart from the language-neutral symbols, a large part of the vocabulary may also be read in more than one language.

Wright (2015) has suggested that the late medieval written-language shift in England involves a period of code-switching and mixed-code usage in the language of record-keeping, before a shift to monolingual English, which she dates to sometime between *c*1380 and *c*1480 (Wright 2015: 50). Of the nine mixed-code inventories in the Hampshire material, eight are dated to the period 1417–1433 while one is dated to 1454/55. The Oxford mixed-code accounts, on the other hand, are mainly dated to the first and second decades of the sixteenth century, making them considerably later in time. This suggests that the switch from Latin to English via mixed-code texts was far from synchronized between different institutions and areas.

The common denominator for all mixed-code texts in the material is that they contain lists and values, whether of things or of expenditures; in such contexts, the corpora here studied show clearly that the mixed code was an established and accepted form of written language, as has been noted by Wright. It is, however, clear that the use of mixed code is restricted to specific places and periods as well as to specific kinds of text, and not all mixed texts follow the same linguistic patterns. In the Hampshire corpus, mixed code is the most common language of inventories, with nine mixed texts compared to six English and four Latin ones. On the other hand, the Hampshire corpus contains 190 financial accounts, of which 24 are in English and the rest in Latin, with no examples of mixed-code ones, while mixed codes in MELD appear nearly exclusively in sixteenth-century financial accounts. Accordingly, the material does not suggest a general development from Latin via mixed code to English throughout the country, even though such developments certainly took place locally (Wright 2015; Alcolado Carnicero 2015; Thengs 2016).

11.5.3 Multilingual events in the English texts: Structure and visual marking

Of the three levels of structural analysis – syntactic, textual and visual – it makes sense to begin with the visual structure, as providing the largest units. Of the 256 multilingual events found in 80 English texts in the Hampshire material, 184 may be classified as interelemental in terms of visual structure, while 71 are classified as intraelemental. The great majority of multilingual events in the English texts, accordingly, involve clearly separated parts of the texts, with little direct contact between the languages. The interelemental events involve most commonly attachments: in 168 cases (91%), they consist of a Latin attachment to an English body text, while only 17 instances involve a Latin heading. In terms of textual structure, most of the attachments (121 out of 168, or 72%) are marginal notes, while other types are much less common: there are 16 visually separated dating clauses, 15 sum totals, 10 summaries and 2 signatures.[10]

It may be noted that financial accounts, which frequently have Latin sum totals and summaries, contain 56% of the total number of interelemental multilingual events. In the Hampshire material, title headings in Latin are rare, most of the 17 headings being sum totals rather than titles. In the MELD corpus, however, Latin title headings for English financial accounts are common. The typical "framing in" of the unpredictable English content by formulaic Latin headings and attachments may be exemplified by the Christmas expenses at the Church of St Michael at the North Gate in Oxford, in the year 1444:

(11.6) **Procuratores eccłe Scī Michaeł apud portā borialem oxōnem**
S. Walterꝰ boyer & R Tayler anno doˡMᵐᵒ CCCCᵐᵒ xliiijᵒ
Exspensis …
Jtem for vıȷ lı of new wex makynḡ & all ııȷ s̃ ıııȷ d […]
Jtem for weshynḡ of surplycꝭ & auť cloþꝰ ~ ıȷ s̃ […]
Jtem for oyle to þe lampe ~ xvııȷ d
Jtem for scowrynḡ of þe standerdys ıııȷ d
Jtem for yvy & holy ~ ıȷ d […]
Jtem for ııȷ tapurs y bowt of þe parıche p*re*ste ııȷ d
Jtem for drynkynḡ at þe wex makynḡ ıȷ d
Jtem for drynkynḡ at þe recevynḡ at Osynney & Magdaleneys ıȷ d
Jtem for wrytyng ~~of~~ & ꝑchement ~ ıȷ d
Sm̃ Totalıs ~ xxxv s̃ ııȷ d
Cū debent pᵒdıctꝭ computantıbꝫ ~ ııȷ s (D2255#1)
'The Churchwardens of the Church of St Michael at the North Gate of Oxford, S. Walter Boyer and R. Tayler in AD 1444. Expenses: […] Item, for making 7 pounds of new wax, 3 shillings and 4 pence […] Item, for washing surplices and altar cloths, 2 shillings […] Item, for oil to the lamp, 18 pence; Item for scouring the standards, 4 pence; Item for ivy and holly, 2 pence; Item, for tapers bought from the parish priest, 3 pence; Item for drinking at the wax making, 2 pence; Item, for drinking at the reception at Oseney and Magdalen's, 2 pence; Item, for writing and parchment, 2 pence. Sum total: 35 shillings 3 pence, of which the aforesaid accountants will have 3 shillings.'

Interelemental multilingual events are especially characteristic of registers, where, as noted above, body texts in English are frequently accompanied by Latin mar-

10. It might, however, be noted that these patterns to some extent reflect the high proportion of register texts in the Hampshire corpus: in the MELD material, visually separate signatures introduced with the formulaic *per me* are very common indeed.

ginal headings or summaries: such register texts in the Hampshire material include above all testamentary texts, abjurations and memoranda.

The intraelemental events, which are less common, arguably make up the most interesting material from the point of view of the interaction of the languages. The 72 intraelemental events appear in 38 English texts, including 17 testamentary texts, 6 notes, 3 petitions, 3 financial accounts, 4 abjurations and five single representatives of functional categories (attainder, court proceedings, inquest post mortum, licence and receipt). On the whole, the texts turn out to show quite regular patterns of intraelemental events.

In the testamentary texts, the intraelemental events almost exclusively consist of the divine invocation (*in dei nomine amen* 'in the name of God, amen') that appears initially in the body text. In all 17 texts, the invocation is marked up by size and usually also by script, mostly using a formal script tending towards textura. In addition, one testament ends the list of witnesses with *et alij* 'and others', while another has a Latin addition directing the reader to another folio (Example (11.3)). In the notes, on the other hand, all intraelemental events consist of dating clauses that form part of the body text; datings also appear in one licence and two financial accounts, and are never marked visually.

Five episcopal texts relate to heresy trials: in addition to four individual abjurations (D3049#2, D3050#1, D3050#2, D3051#9), the register of Bishop Richard Fox (1501–28) contains a long extract from a court session of 1514, including both the articles of which the defendants were accused and the actual (and much shorter) abjuration texts (D3050#33). While the abjurations themselves contain the usual final Latin notes describing the non-verbal part of the ritual (Example (11.2)), the court proceedings contain large portions in Latin, including contextualizing notes as well as the final absolution. While the text contains a large number of keywords marked in a large script (*Decimonono* 'the nineteenth', *In the name of god amen, First we, also we, Item*, etc.), these include both English and Latin ones and mostly do not coincide with code switches: they clearly mark textual and discourse elements rather than multilingual events.

Four of the texts containing intraelemental multilingual events are Chancery copies of, respectively, one attainder and three petitions. Just like the City and Bishops' register texts, these four copies represent English texts framed in by Latin, as in the petition of Lord Dudley (D3102), which is introduced in Latin:

(11.7) Jtem quedam petıcıo exhıbıt̃ est dn̄o Regı ın parlıamento p̃dc̄o
ꝑ cōıtatem p̃dc̄am ex parte Edwardı Dudley Mılıtıs dm̄
Dudley ın hec v̾ba /
'Item, a certain petition was shown to the Lord King in the said parliament
on behalf of Edward Dudley, knight, lord Dudley, as follows'

The Latin incipit is followed by the English text of the petition, beginning as follows:

(11.8) To the kyng oure souᷣaygn lorde / Jn moost humble wyse besechyth your hyghnes your trewe and faythfułł subıect Edward Dudley knyght lorde Dudley
‘To the king, our sovereign lord: your true and faithful subject Edward Dudley, knight, lord Dudley, beseeches your highness in the most humble manner’

Finally, the petition is followed by a short note in Latin, not visually distinguished from the main text, stating the outcome:

11.9 Qua petıcōe sepıus lecta matᷣıaꝙ eıusdem plene ıntellecta ꝑ dc̄u đūm Regem assensu & auctorıtate pᷣdc̄ıs vt sequıt² responsum est eıdem / Soıt faıt cōme ıl este desıre
‘When the petition had been read several times and its contents were fully understood by the said lord king, with the said agreement and authority the response was given to the same as follows: let it be done as it is desired’

The Latin, English and French parts of the text are separated by a virgule but not otherwise distinguished visually. As the virgule is also used to separate the formal address to the king from the ensuing presentation of the petitioner, it does not seem to be used to distinguish between the languages but rather to separate elements of the discourse. Such a use of virgules appears commonly in all the six Chancery texts, but they are not in general use in the Hampshire material: while the abjurations found in Bishops’ registers are similarly framed in Latin, the different functional elements are marked neither by punctuation nor by other means.

On the whole, where visual marking appears in the Hampshire material, it seems to be used to mark discourse structure, rather than to indicate multilingual events: while all 17 Latin invocations in testamentary texts are visually marked, the same is also the case for the English equivalent, *In the name of god amen*. This seems to be the case commonly in late medieval English documents (cf. also Schipor 2013).

Finally, in the English texts of the Hampshire material there are very few examples of multilingual events that could be termed properly intrasentential: mostly, these consist of Latin forms of dating:[11]

(11.10) Alys Husey late sᷣu*a*nt vnto Wıllẏᷘm Fleccher of lytelton̉ abowte the begynnıng̉ of Marche **anno RR hēꝛ vııȷ xıȷ** hathe wrongfully takyn̉ awey of

11. The ubiquitous use of the phrases *In primis* and *Item* is not here considered a multilingual event, as both phrases seem to have been fully integrated into administrative English by this time; rather, the terms may be considered to form visual diamorphs.

the guddꝭ of the seıd W Fleccher a gowne of sad tawny colo² lyned wt black coton̄ pˡce xxııȷ š ıııȷ d . (D3040#2)
'Alys Husey, formerly servant of William Fletcher of Lytelton, about the beginning of March in the twelfth year of the reign of Henry VIII, has wrongfully taken away of the goods of the said W. Fletcher a gown of rich tawny colour, lined with black cotton, worth 23 shillings and 4 pence'.

In the larger MELD corpus, there are several examples of intrasentential multilingual events, even if they are much less common than intersentential ones here as well. Example (11.11) is a receipt from the steward of Shingay manor, held by the Knights Hospitallers, who seem to have been involved in the building of a new Cambridge hostel:

(11.11) Thys byłł made the xvıııȷᵗꝭ daye off octobr ī the neent yere of the Reıgne of kyng henr̄ the vıııȷᵗꝭ Wytnessethe that J thom̃s Dalyson̄ preest haue receyued this p̄sent daye bıe thys berer ȷohn Redere mye s̄ũnt of the Masters of the kyngꝭ College ī Cambrege — vııȷˢ ıȷ d due to Shengaye ín the feast of senct Mıghełł tharchaungełł last past before the dat̄ heroff wheroff vȷˢ vııȷ d ís due for ꝑt of the new College ther **quond vocat̄** Crowthe hostełł and vȷ d ıs due for fre Rent of ther londꝭ […] **Jta** d' thom̃s dalyson preest Stewart at shengay **ın manu ꝑpˡa** (Cambs D6044)
'This bill made the 18th day of October in the ninth year of the reign of King Henry VIII witnesses that I, Thomas Dalyson, priest, have received today by the bearer of this, John Reder, my servant, from the Masters of King's College in Cambridge, 7 shillings 2 pence due to Shingay by the Feast of St Michael the Archangel last passed, of which 6 shillings 8 pence is due for part of the new college there, formerly called Crowth Hostel, and 6 pence is due for the free rent of their lands […] So Don Thomas Dalyson, priest, steward at Shingay, in his own hand.'

What seems to take place in the final sentence is a switch of grammatical frame from English to Latin, only the name and titles (*Thomas Dalyson preest Stewart at shengay*) being given in English. The pattern here would thus, again, seem to correspond to Muysken's "alternation" (see p. 251) A more clear-cut switch appears in a York guild ordinance, which simply switches from monolingual English to monolingual Latin when citing the official ruling:

(11.12) **Constıtucıōes cocoꝝ**
In p*rı*mıs yt ys ordand the xȷ day of Septemr̄ ın þe yer̄ of our̄ lord MˡCCCCxxv […] be wıłłm Ormesheued than Maır̄ of thıs Cıte of york þat fra than furth **nullus forınsecus admıttat² ınfra cıuıtatē ıstā nec tolerat² parare prandía ın gen̄alıbꝫ festís** (YER D0836#17)

> ‘Constitutions of cooks. First it is ordained the 11th day of September in the year of our lord 1425 […] by William Ormesheued, then Mayor of this city of York, that from then forth no outsiders are admitted within this city nor allowed to prepare meals at general holidays’

Intrasentential multilingual events such as these are, on the whole, rare in the English material compared to the more loosely integrated intersentential, and in particular interelemental, events. Despite their conventionalized use in mixed-code record keeping, such events should therefore be seen as occasional rather than typical features of English local documents. Where they do appear, as in Examples (11.11) and (11.12), they may on the whole be assumed to reflect a certain level of Latin competence, not necessarily required for the insertion of formulaic Latin headings or notes.

11.5.4 The functions and information content of multilingual events

Multilingual events play a wide range of roles in the material. They serve to structure the discourse, create a template for financial accounts, provide navigational support to the reader and allow readers fast access to information by means of summarizing. Although many types of multilingual event are to some extent predictable, in the sense that we expect to find Latin in particular elements, their content and functions vary greatly. Most interelemental multilingual events (82% of those found in the Hampshire material, see Table 11.2) may be classified as parallel, as they repeat the information provided in the text by way of summary or marginal title. Complementary multilingual events, on the other hand, include both short phrases such as dates and larger elements of text providing independent information, such as the Latin passages that form part of court proceedings and abjurations.

Table 11.2 Parallel and complementary multilingual events in the Hampshire corpus

	Interelemental	Intraelemental	Total
Parallel	151 (82%)	23 (31%)	174 (67%)
Complementary	29 (16%)	32 (43%)	61 (24%)
Unclassified	4 (2%)	19 (26%)	23 (9%)
Total	184 (100%)	74 (100%)	258

Multilingual events take on various pragmatic functions in different texts. Interelemental events often take the form of marginal summaries or titles with a navigational function, making it possible to quickly retrieve information in a register or log. Financial accounts in English are generally organized around visually marked multilingual events, with Latin headings, sum totals, summaries and marginal notes, indicating that a Latin template was used for financial accounts and preserved even when the accounts were otherwise written in English.

Intraelemental multilingual events often act as discourse-organizing devices in specific text types. English testamentary texts, letters and town rules, for example, show Latin incipits and/or explicits, which may help identify the function of the texts to which they belong. For example, the presence of the divine invocation suggests that the text in which it appears may be an abjuration or a testamentary text, or, at any rate, that it relates to ecclesiastical authority. Similarly, the explicit *et alijs multes* 'and many others' implies that the text containing it consists of a statement or transaction that requires the presence of witnesses.

In other cases, multilingual events indicate a change of footing. This is particulary typical of register texts, where the scribe alternates between recording events and decisions in his own voice and copying documents. As Example (11.2) shows, the introduction of Latin at the end of English abjurations coincides with a shift from the first to the third person, signalling that the voice of the abjurer is replaced with that of the scribe in order to present extra-textual information. In a lighter vein, a conventional scribal comment in Latin at the end of the town rule of Winchester represents a change of footing, with the scribe turning to first person: *explicit hic totum ꝑ xp̄o da michi potum* 'It all ends here; for Christ's sake give me a drink'.

The last example, which is found throughout medieval Europe, is the kind of convention that would have circulated at grammar schools, and indicates, perhaps, something of the scribe's cultural background (Hunt et al. 2017: 66). The functions of multilingual events, which in the present context generally mean Latin, also vary greatly in relation to their institutional and social context: the role of Latin is very different in the setting of an episcopal administration, where all users of the texts are highly learned and have Latin as their working language, from the setting of a reeve producing the annual accounts of a manor. Parkes (1973: 559) has pointed out that the latter task would not necessarily require much knowledge of the language: "It would require only a knowledge of formulae. Latin terms found in the accounts could probably be regarded as the jargon of the trade". A reading knowledge of Latin formulae would be of crucial importance for those who engaged in any kind of business, something that is reflected in the growing interest among merchants and craftsmen for at least a short period of schooling (cf. Orme 2006: 69).

11.5.5 The predictability of Latin elements

Given the widespread use of Latin as a "jargon of the trade", we might finally ask to what extent the Latin found in the English texts is formulaic or predictable. For the present study, multilingual events were labelled for three categories with regard to predictability: **formulaic**, **customary** or **free** (see p. 259). The first two categories together account for by far most multilingual events found in the material, with 26% and 60% respectively (see Table 11.3): however, it may be noted that "customary" events – where the choice of language reflects a specific function or context – are considerably more common than purely formulaic uses of Latin.

Table 11.3 Categories of predictability in the multilingual events in the Hampshire corpus

	Interelemental	Intraelemental	Total
Formulaic	40 (22%)	26 (35%)	66 (26%)
Customary	122 (66%)	33 (45%)	155 (60%)
Free	22 (12%)	15 (20%)	37 (14%)
Total	184 (100%)	74 (100%)	258 (100%)

Fully formulaic uses are generally associated with a specific function and therefore tend to appear in particular types of text: the divine invocation, *in dei nomine amen* appears in testamentary texts and abjurations, while financial texts contain Latin formulae such as *summa receptorum* 'the sum of receipts' or *Summa totalis de expensis in anno preterito* 'the sum total of expenses in the past year'. Signatures, which in the present material are still largely confined to correspondences, are commonly introduced with the formula *per me* 'by me', and autograph texts or signatures are commonly described as written *in manu propria* 'in (someone's) own hand'. While such usages are fully formulaic, it should be noted that the English equivalents of virtually all of them appear in the material, including *in the name of god amen, by me, in myn owne hand*. Accordingly, they are not compulsory and therefore not completely predictable in the context.

Formulaic elements are far less common than the category termed "customary", which makes up the largest group in the material. Most typically, customary multilingual events consist of Latin marginal notes, dating elements and summaries, carrying out a specific function but varying in wording and detailed content (even though parts of them may well be considered "formulaic"). Most of the common categories of multilingual event discussed in the previous sections may be classified as customary: the marginal headings of testamentary texts or abjurations, the sum totals and summaries of financial accounts and the dating clauses of both accounts and memoranda. In addition to such highly frequent and generally short customary events, larger Latin elements may also be termed customary, as they carry out specific, expected functions and are often to a high degree formulaic. Such elements include probates at the end of wills and the descriptive notes at the end of abjurations (cf. Example (11.2)).

The "free" category is the least common of the three; as it basically consists of any content that is not predicted by the context, it may appear in very different functions. In many cases, even "free" multilingual events in Latin tend to consist of set expressions or citations, from such mundane notes as *ut supra* 'as (stated) above' to fully-fledged Latin tags such as *vox populi vox dei . si deus nobiscum quis contra nos* 'the voice of the people is the voice of God; if God is with us, who shall be against us' scribbled at the end of a long letter providing information for an inheritance dispute (Lancs L0081). Apart from citations, truly free – unpredictable and non-formulaic – examples of Latin are rare in English texts; when they occur, they are mostly practical notes such as Example (11.3), although actual shifting to Latin with unpredictable content does occur, as in Example (11.12).

Overall, the strong and mostly customary presence of Latin in the English texts, together with the dominance of Latin in the vast majority of texts found in the archives, reflects the fact that Latin was still considered the main language of official documents in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Both in register copies and accounts, Latin is virtually always present as the framing language, even if it may occupy less space than the embedded English text. This framing function is largely predictable: however, the precise kind of information conveyed by the attachments and headings is not necessarily so. Also, towards the latter part of the period, the customary functions of the two languages become less defined and are sometimes reversed, as in a 1468 land survey of Bernard's Manor, Isleham, Cambridgeshire (Cambridge Archives 311/M1), which combines English headings with a Latin body text (Stenroos 2016b).

11.6 Conclusions

This chapter has considered the role and distribution of multilingual events in late medieval English documents: what kind of multilingual events are found in which type of texts, and how far do they form a predictable or formulaic part of the language of administrative texts? The findings suggest to some extent conflicting answers: on the one hand, many types of multilingual event correspond to particular text types; on the other hand, practices vary widely between contexts and institutions, making generalizations difficult.

Multilingual events are common in the English materials, and clearly show the continuing role of Latin as the main language of record. At the same time, they are far from omnipresent: just over half the English texts in the Hampshire corpus are monolingual (not counting single-word events), and the figure is even higher (68%) for the Eastern Counties of MELD. Mixed-code texts form a very restricted set in the material, as they are limited to financial accounts and inventories and also cluster in geography and time; in other words, mixed code is not typical of Late Middle English local documents overall.

The chronological patterns in the material give no indication of a single, general development. With regard to the mixed-code texts, the two corpora studied (the Hampshire corpus and MELD) show completely different patterns in terms of chronology and text type, the only common denominator being the use of code-mixing in lists of property or values. The English texts in the Hampshire corpus seem to show a development towards more multilingualism, rather than towards more monolingual texts, as might be expected.

The vast majority of multilingual events are found in two categories of text: register copies, typically of testamentary texts, abjurations and memoranda, and financial accounts. Most register copies are found in the diocese collection, while the financial accounts are limited to the other two collections; on the whole, the former tend to contain more complex multilingual events, including long passages in Latin. While multilingual events also appear in other types of texts, they tend to be rare or nonexistent in text categories where English has already become common, such as leases and sales.

The kind of multilingualism present in the texts does not, for the most part, involve integration or mixing between the languages: by far most commonly, the multilingual events involve separate visual or textual elements of the text, such as headings and marginal notes. In addition, most multilingual events are formulaic or customary. This should not be surprising: the production of documentary texts, or any working texts, tends to rely to a large extent on ready conventions and formulae (even though they seldom make up the entire text), and during this formative period of English official writing, an important role of Latin, besides its prestige, was to supply such formulaic elements where vernacular ones were still lacking.

Here, it is important to note that the local documents that form the subject of this book were not produced exclusively by a small number of learned people, or for the use of such an elite group. Rather, they were produced by a wide range of people of different backgrounds and levels of competence, in an extraordinary number of different places. There is no reason to believe that all or even most of these people had a high general competence in Latin. Some certainly did, and the registrars producing the diocesan texts would have been among those. For others, Latin was a working language used for specific purposes, and in some cases (such as accounting) a very limited competence would be sufficient. Even for such scribes, however, a well-established Latin formula might often have been the quickest and easiest option, rather than an English formulation for which there was no ready model.

The formulaic and customary character of most multilingual events should, finally, not overshadow the richness of variation in the material. While formulaicness and convention are inherent in most writing, the documentary materials here studied represent a text community with a linguistic freedom almost inconceivable outside private domains today. While the choices of writers with regard to language, variety and linguistic form are partly governed by convention, they also reflect the pragmatic needs of each specific situation and the personal preferences of the writer, as well as an intricate network of socially significant choices that we can only hope to understand partially. Such an understanding, with all its implications for today's rapidly changing modes of communication, has to be built on numerous studies of individual texts and corpora, viewed from numerous angles in order to make sense of the data. That such angles can, and should, be based on the premises of the material itself has been the main contention of this volume.

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List of cited documents

This list provides the archive references and dates for those documents which are cited or referred to in the chapters, except for the subcorpora studied in Chapters 7 and 8, for which separate lists are given at the end of each chapter. A complete catalogue of the MELD documents is available on the MELD website.

MELD code	County	Archive reference	Date
D0032	Staffs	Lichfield RO: D 126/5/17 (fols 4r–8r)	1475–76
D0036	Staffs	Stafford, Staffordshire RO: D 593/B/1/23/2/16 verso	(16a1)
D0056	Ches	Chester, Cheshire RO: DLT/A1/16	1440
D0066	Wales	London, British Library: Cotton Cleopatra Fiii, fol. 102r	c1407
D0067	Wales	London, British Library: Cotton Cleopatra Fiii, fol. 102v	c1407
D0074	Shrops	Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives: 5586/2/1/77	1465–66
D0079	Ches	Sheffield, Sheffield Archives: Bagshaw Collection 1374	1458
D0124	Wales	Aberystwyth, NLW: Coed Coch 804	1497
D0125	Wales	Aberystwyth, NLW: Coed Coch 786	1445
D0150	Shrops	Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives: 6000/2291	1454
D0167	Wales	Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives: 3365/2617/11	1462
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D0215	Shrops	Shrewsbury, Shropshire Archives: 6000/1185	1512
D0257	Durham	Durham UL, Dean & Chapter muniments: 3.4. Spec. 6.2	1450
D0269	Cumb	Durham UL, Dean & Chapter muniments: Locellus 25.19	1462
D0281	Oxfords	Durham UL, Dean & Chapter muniments: Locellus 25.80	nd
D0321	Durham	Durham UL, Dean & Chapter muniments: Misc. Charters 2661	nd
D0378	Wml	Carlisle, Cumbria Archive Centre: DWYB/2/55	nd
D0406	Norfolk	Cambridge, King's College: COL/448	nd

https://doi.org/10.1075/ahs.11.lcd

MELD code	County	Archive reference	Date
D0432	Leics	Leicester, The RO of Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland: 44’28/383	1512
D0494	Devon	Exeter, Devon Heritage Centre: 264A/T72	1515
D0518	Suffolk	Huntingdon, Huntingdonshire Archives: DD/M26/2	1498
D0522	Norfolk	Cambridge, CUL, Weasenham Hall Muniments: Coke of Weasenham 2684	1485
D0542	Sussex	Brighton, East Sussex RO: RAY 3/7/3	1475c
D0554	Sussex	Woking, Surrey History Centre: LM/COR/1/9	1506–25
D0599	Sussex	Chichester, West Sussex RO: CHICITY/AY/112	1512
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D0765	Gloucs	Bristol, Bristol RO: 40365/D/2/39	1451
D0836#17	YER	York, York City Archives: Y/COU/1/4/1, York Memorandum Book vol IV, fol 279b	1425
D0858#12	Norfolk	Norwich, Norfolk RO: Norwich Corporation Records, Case 17b/9 (k), p. 269	1469
D0873	Norfolk	Norwich, Norfolk RO: AYL 145	1512
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D2041	Staffs	Matlock, Derbyshire RO: D5236/8/16	1508
D2255#1	Oxfords	Oxford, Oxfordshire History Centre: PAR211/4/F1/1/20 (fol. 11), recto	1444
D2314	Oxfords	Oxford, Oxfordshire History Centre: PAR213/4/F1/1/10 (fol. 19)	1502
D2316	Oxfords	Oxford, Oxfordshire History Centre: PAR213/4/F1/1/13 (fol. 25)	1504
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D2459#1	Worcs	Worcester, Worcester Cathedral Muniments: A.9, p. 48, item 1	(15b1)
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D2788#16	Kent	Maidstone, Kent History and Library Centre: DRb/Pa6 (fol. 80r–v)	1514
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D2788#18	Kent	Maidstone, Kent History and Library Centre: DRb/Pa6 (fol. 92v)	1514
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D2788#20	Kent	Maidstone, Kent History and Library Centre: DRb/Pa6 (fol. 102v)	1515
D2788#21	Kent	Maidstone, Kent History and Library Centre: DRb/Pa6 (fol. 105v)	1515
D2788#22	Kent	Maidstone, Kent History and Library Centre: DRb/Pa6 (fol. 107v–108r)	1515
D2788#23	Kent	Maidstone, Kent History and Library Centre: DRb/Pa6 (fol. 113r)	1515
D2788#24	Kent	Maidstone, Kent History and Library Centre: DRb/Pa6 (fol. 121v)	1515
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D3008	Suffolk	Ipswich, Suffolk RO: HD 1538/365/41	1455
D3014	Suffolk	Ipswich, Suffolk RO: C/6/7/6	1457
D3019	Suffolk	Ipswich, Suffolk RO: HD 1538/202/1/156	1506
D3027	Suffolk	Ipswich, Suffolk RO: EE5/6/45	1502
D3040	Hamps	Winchester, Hampshire RO: W/D1/277	1522
D3049#1	Hamps	Winchester, Hampshire RO: 21M65/A1/15, fol. 27r	1487–92
D3049#2	Hamps	Winchester, Hampshire RO: 21M65/A1/15, fol. 45v	1491–1501
D3050	Hamps	Winchester, Hampshire RO: 21M65/A1/16	(15b2–16a1)
D3102	Hamps	Winchester, Hampshire RO: 44M69/D10/5/6	1495–96
D4142	Beds	Bedford, Bedfordshire and Luton Archives: TW 464	1470
D4160#11	Middx	London, London Metropolitan Archives: MS 645/1, fol. 237r–v	1515
D4169	Herts	Hertford, Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies: DP/12/25/4/4	1491
D4195#3	Middx	London, London Metropolitan Archives: COL/AD/01/009, fol. 209r-v	1418
D4201#2	Middx	London, London Metropolitan Archives: CLA/024/01/02/051, membr. 6r	1421
D4223	Beds	Northampton, Northamptonshire Archives Service: Finch-Hatton FH/B/C/K/545	1463–64

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D4226	Beds	Northampton, Northamptonshire Archives Service: Stopford Sackville 788	1451
D4227#20	Norths	Northampton, Northamptonshire Archives Service: Northampton Borough Records, section IV/1/1, fols. 81v-83r	1509
D4298	Dorset	Dorchester, Dorset History Centre: PE/WM/CW/1/32	1472
D4373#3	Notts	Nottingham, Nottingham University Library: Mi L 3/2 (fols A 5r–8v)	nd
D4422	Suffolk	Sheffield, Sheffield Archives: JC/11/23	1447
D4440#17	Lincs	Lincoln, Lincolnshire Archives: DIOC/REG/20, fol. 57r–v	1462
D4440#22	Lincs	Lincoln, Lincolnshire Archives: DIOC/REG/20, fol. 62v, item 2	1464
D4530	Gloucs	Bristol, Bristol RO: 8153/1/lxxi	1457
D4550	Cnw	Truro, Cornwall RO: AR/4/832	1499
D4699a	Rutland	Leicester, the RO of Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland: DE3214/1971/1	1488
D4699b	Rutland	Leicester, the RO of Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland: DE3214/1971/2	1488
D5000	Bucks	Aylesbury, Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies: CH1/T/9/4	1514
D5001	Bucks	Aylesbury, Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies: PR240/3/1	1517
D5005	Bucks	Aylesbury, Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies: D108/2/2	1480
D5028#2	Bucks	Aylesbury, Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies: BAS/705/39, dorse	1506
D5031	Suffolk	Lowestoft, Suffolk RO: HA12/B2/2/5	1485
D5035	Suffolk	Lowestoft, Suffolk RO: HA12/B2/17/3	1509
D5040#6	Suffolk	Lowestoft, Suffolk Record Office: 116/E1/1, p. 8–9	1524
D5086	Berks	Aylesbury, Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies: BAS 49/53	1509
D6001#1	Cambs	Cambridge, Cambridgeshire Archives: P30/4/1, fol. 2r	1504
D6001#4	Cambs	Cambridge, Cambridgeshire Archives: P30/4/1, fol. 13r	1525–26
D6001#8	Cambs	Cambridge, Cambridgeshire Archives: P30/4/1, fol. 13v	1518
D6006	Cambs	Cambridge, Cambridgeshire Archives: City/PB Box X/80	1446

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D6010	Cambs	Cambridge, Cambridgeshire Archives: City/PB Box X/76	1496
D6014#1	Cambs	Oxford, Bodleian Library: Rawlinson C 541, fols 1r–15r (hand A)	1473
D6014#2	Cambs	Oxford, Bodleian Library: Rawlinson C 541, fols 15v–16r (hand B)	1504
D6018	Cambs	Cambridge, Cambridgeshire Archives: L1/29	nd
D6019	Cambs	Cambridge, Kinga's College: GDH/31	1478
D6025	Cambs	Cambridge, King's College: JEC/1	1518
D6026	Cambs	Cambridge, King's College: CAM/91	1447
D6037	Cambs	Cambridge, King's College: GDH/31 (1489)	1489
D6040	Cambs	Cambridge, King's College: DUN/80 (1522)	1522
D6041	Cambs	Cambridge, King's College: GRA/255	1498
D6042	Cambs	Cambridge, King's College: GRA/257	1519
D6044	Cambs	Cambridge, King's College: GRA/589 (#1)	1518
D6057	Cambs	Cambridge, St John's College: D24/215	1501
D6063	Cambs	Cambridge, King's College: GRA/702	1465–66
D6067	Cambs	Cambridge, St John's College: D19/136	1461
D6068	Cambs	Cambridge, St John's College: D17/115	1511
D6081	Cambs	Cambridge, King's College: KCD/94	1513
D6082	Cambs	Cambridge, King's College: GRA/701	1465–66
D6083	Cambs	Cambridge, St. John's College: D25/228	1501
D6086	Cambs	Cambridge, King's College: KCD/0095	1513
D6088#1	Cambs	Cambridge, King's College: GRA/264, fol 1r–22v	1436–37
D6088#2	Cambs	Cambridge, King's College: GRA/264, fol. 22v	1436–37
D6090	Cambs	Cambridge, CUL: Luard 128	1466
D6094	Cambs	Cambridge, CUL: Luard 145a	1503
D6096	Cambs	Cambridge, CUL: D.III.7	1483
D6103	Cambs	Cambridge, CUL: Luard 145	1503
D6105	Cambs	Cambridge, CUL: Collect.Admin.9 pp. 286–300	1503
D6130	Cambs	Cambridge, King's College: CAM/3	1465
D6137#1	Cambs	Cambridge, King's College: CAM/121	1447
D6140	Cambs	Cambridge, King's College: KCA/343	1447–66
D6141#4	Cambs	Cambridge, CUL: VCCt.Wills.1, fols 4v–6r	1503
D6141#6	Cambs	Cambridge, CUL: VCCt.Wills.1, fols 11v–12r	1504

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L0064#1	Cambs	Cambridge, Trinity College 1343 (O.7.15) Hand A, pp. 1–36	1431
L0064#2	Cambs	Cambridge, Trinity College 1343 (O.7.15) Hand B, pp. 37–40	nd
L0064#3	Cambs	Cambridge, Trinity College 1343 (O.7.15) Hand C, pp. 41–42	nd
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L0084b	Derbys	Sheffield, Sheffield Archives: Bowles Deeds 65	1477–78
L0090	Warwicks	Göttingen UL: Cod. MS Jurid. 822/1/8	1450
L0120	Wml	Carlisle, Cumbria Archive Centre: D/Stan/26	1441
L0282	Cambs	London, PRO SC 8/23/1143 A	1414
L0321	Lancs	London, British Library: Add. 53080	1453–54
L0472a	Durham	Durham UL, Dean & Chapter muniments: Locellus 9.11	1446–49
L0586#1	Lancs	Oxford, Bodleian Library: Rawlinson B 460 (The Black Book of Clayton), fols 91r.9–91v.14	nd
L0586#2	Lancs	Oxford, Bodleian Library: Rawlinson B 460 (The Black Book of Clayton), fols 91v.15–93v.11	nd
L1130#1	YER	Beverley, Humberside County RO, DDCC/19/I, fols 1v–3r.15	1473
L1130#2	YER	Beverley, Humberside County RO, DDCC/19/I, fols 3r.15–4r.19	1473
L1130#3	YER	Beverley, Humberside County RO, DDCC/19/I, fols 4r.20–4r.35	1473
L1130#4	YER	Beverley, Humberside County RO, DDCC/19/I, fols 4v–6v	1473
L1140	Staffs	Göttingen UL: Cod. MS Jurid. 822/1/5	1446
L1141	Staffs	Göttingen UL: Cod. MS Jurid. 822/1/3	1446
L1142	Staffs	Göttingen UL: Cod. MS Jurid. 822/1/7	1446
L1144	Cumb	Carlisle, Cumbria Archive Centre: D/Mus/Penrith/ Medieval Deeds	nd
L1196	Cumb	Carlisle, Cumbria Archive Centre: DMus/Edenhall 2/2/100	nd
L1225	Nhb	Woodhorn, Northumberland Archives: ZSW/02/70	1505
L1234	Wml	Kendal, Sizergh Castle: album no 21 of Henry VI	1430–31

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L1257	YER	Beverley, BC/II/2, Corporation Records: Town Cartulary	nd
L1288	Wales	Aberystwyth, NLW: Coed Coch 793 recto	1471
L1289	Wales	Aberystwyth, NLW: Coed Coch 793 verso	nd
L1363	Wales	London, British Library: Cotton Cleopatra Fiii, fol. 104r	1411–12

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English local documents – leases, wills, accounts, letters and the like – provide a unique resource for historical sociolinguistics. Abundant from the early fifteenth century, they represent the language and concerns of people from a wide range of social, institutional and geographical backgrounds. However, as relatively few documents have been available digitally or in print, they have been an underresearched resource.

This volume shows the tremendous potential of late- and post-medieval English local documents: highly variable in language, often colourful, including developing formulae as well as glimpses of actual recorded speech. The volume contains eleven chapters relating to a new resource, *A Corpus of Middle English Local Documents* (MELD). The first four chapters outline a theoretical and methodological approach to the study of local documents. The remaining seven present studies of different aspects of the material, including supralocalization, local patterns of spelling and morphology, land terminology, punctuation, formulaicness and multilingualism.

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