ON THE LINGUISTIC STATUS OF MEDIEVAL COPIES AND TRANSLATIONS OF OLD ENGLISH DOCUMENTARY TEXTS

1. ORIENTATION

The future *Linguistic Atlas of Early Medieval English (LAEME)* will for the first time provide a full survey of linguistic variation in Early Middle English texts written between 1150 and 1300. Differences between this project and the previous *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English (LALME)* are many, and derive mostly from the scarcity of written material from the early period arrived to us.

Laing (1993: 26) proposes the following classification of the bulk of surviving texts from this period:

1. Documentary texts:
   (a) copied Old English documents
   (b) post-Conquest documents
2. Literary texts:
   (a) copied Old English literary texts
   (b) Early Middle English literary texts
3. Glosses

As can be seen, texts originated in the Old English period have acquired a central role for the compilation of *LAEME*. In this paper, I am proposing an analysis of a group of copied Old English documents that intends to account

for the principles underlying their inclusion as dialect informants in a large-scale survey on early Middle English.

2. ANCHOR TEXTS IN EARLY AND LATE MIDDLE ENGLISH

Since the publication in 1986 of *LALME*, documentary texts of known date and local origin (such as charters, writs and grants) have become a central source for the study of linguistic variation in Middle English. These documents constitute the basis for the creation of a dialectal matrix into which many other texts of unknown origins are progressively incorporated. The impressive number of vernacular "anchor" texts written in England between 1350 and 1500 allowed the compilers of *LALME* to create a complex and reliable network of issogloses that are the previous step for the precise localisation of the mass of literary texts.

However, the situation becomes much more complex when turning to early Middle English. The Norman Conquest of England meant an abrupt disruption in the use of written English, that was almost completely replaced by Latin and French (Southern 1973: 2). For this reason, the number of Post-Conquest documents is too low to provide a similar network of localised material, that would eventually permit the localization on linguistic grounds of other early Middle English literary manuscripts and the compilation of the future *LAEME*.

According to Pelteret (1990), while documents in the vernacular continued to be produced in England between the Norman Conquest and the end of the reign of Henry II (with a total of 148 surviving texts, most of which do not show significant degrees of linguistic variation in relation to documents from the Anglo-Saxon period), only a few original documents were drawn up in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.[1] In this situation, it is obvious that the developing of a network of isoglosses that permits the localization of the bulk of early Middle English texts requires the utilization of other types of manuscripts.

In a recent paper preliminary to the compilation of *LAEME*, Laing (1991) has suggested that both literary texts in early Middle English localized on extra-linguistic grounds (such as *Ormulum*, *Layamon*, or the Corpus version of *Ancrene Wisse*) and medieval copies and translations of Old English doc-

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[1] Laing (1993) lists a total of 20 different manuscripts with original documents in Early Middle English written during this period.

uments of known origins should be included into the category of "anchor" texts, in order to allow the "placing" of the remaining linguistic profiles.

Anacronistic as it may sound, the idea of copies of Old English texts being treated as a basic source of information of dialectal diversity in the early Middle English period represents one of the most solid methodological principles the *LAEME* project lies on. The numerical predominance of these documents as respects other types of anchor texts is too obvious to deny them a major role in a research of these characteristics. For this reason, a deeper insight into the linguistic profiles represented by copies of Old English documents is needed, that will account for their different levels of modernization and their linguistic relation to contemporary early Middle English texts.

3. CHRONOLOGICAL AND DIALECTAL VARIATION IN COPIED OLD ENGLISH DOCUMENTS

The corpus chosen for this research consists of the following seven copies of Anglo-Saxon writs made in the South West Midlands between the middle of the 11th century and the beginning 15th century (Harmer 1952; Sawyer 1968):

1. London, British Library, Additional Charter 19802 (Wo C11b1).

2. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Dep. c. 392 (Gl C13a2).

3. Glocestershire Record Office, D 4431 (Gl C13b2).

4. Worcester, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Record Office, BA 3814 (Wo C13b2-C14a1).

5. Herefordshire, Diocesan Registry, Registrum Ricardi de Swinfield (He C14a1).

6. London, Public Record Office, C 53, Charter Rolls, 6 Edward II, nº 27 (Wo C14a1).

7. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Rawlison B. 329, f. 104 (He C15a1).

One of the most important advantages inherent to the study of this type of legal documents lies on the striking parallelism among all the documents included in the corpus, which allows a detailed comparisons of the whole ma-

terial. Further, since the original documents were written in late West Saxon, patterns of linguistic innovation can be easily detected. The following para‐graphs extracted from our seven documents respond to the prototypical opening found in most Anglo-Saxon writs. As can be seen here, words and structures are systematically repeated in all of them:

A. 1. Eadward kyning gret Harold eorl & Ælfgar eorl

2. Edward king gret mine bissopes and mine eorles (…)

3. [lacking]

4. Edward king gret Alfgar herl. & Richard.

5. Edward kynge gret Eldred Erchebissop and Begard Bíssop and Harald eorl

6. + Eadward cyng gret Wulfstan Í. & Ælfgar eorl. & Ricard minne huscarll

7. Edward kyng gret Alfred Eurl. and Harald Eurl.

B. 1. & ealle pa Íegnas on Wigeraceastrescire (…) freondlice.

2. & alle mine peigenes (…) freondliche.

3. [?W]ytey alle myn yenes

4. & alle myne peynes on Wyrcestrechyre. wythynne porte & bouten frendlyche.

5. and alle myne peynes of Herefordshíre and of Saloppshíre

6. & ealle mine pegnas. on Wigrecestrescire freondlice.

7. and all his undurlynges in Herefordshire ffrendelich.

The Anglo-Saxon double graphs <ea> and <eo> are maintained exclu‐sively in texts 1 and 6, while copies made from a less conservative perspec‐tive (such as texts 3, 4, 5 and 7) present <a> and <e> in their place. Text 2 represents an intermediate stage: the copyist maintains Anglo-Saxon <eo> in the words eorles and freondliche, but prefers to substitute it for <a> in the form alle. Graphs <i> and <y> are interchangable in texts 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7, but their use corresponds to the orthographical rules of late West Saxon in texts 1 and 6. Moreover the graph <g> of the word OE pegen, which is found in texts 1, 2 and 6, has been substituted in texts 3, 4 and 7 by <y>.

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Finally, the consonant <ch> is used in less conservative texts for the adverbial suffix -lic (which maintains its Anglo-Saxon orthography in literatim copies). This same graph is sporadically used in text 4 for OE sc (Wyrcestrechyre, l. 2), that appears as <ss> in 2 (bissopes l. 1, also found in text 5, l. 4). Our analysis can be now completed by comparing the central and final paragraphs of these seven documents:

A. 1. & ic cyĺe eow p ic habbe geunnen Wulfstane munuce p. .b.

2. & ic cupe eow p ic wolle p

3. pat ich Alfred King habbe hy ¥une Stening Mine goude mete hom

4. & ich quype ou pat hy chulle pat Wolfstan (…)

5. and ich coupe ow pat ich habbe ¥euen

6. & ic cyĺe eow & ic habbe geumen Alfstane munece p

7. And I do yowe to understonden that I woll that the Prestes in Hereford

B. 1. rice into Wihgeraceastre mid sace & mid socne toll

2. he beo his saca wurĺ. & his socnes. ofer his lond & ofer his men. & tolnes wrth.

3. to seinte Trinitote of Fescampe

4. wyrpe on semtolne & of chyptolne into Seynte Marie munstre

5. Seynte Marie moder Crístes munstres (…) pat hoe boe on hore sake worpe and hore sokene of hore lond

6. he beo his sace weorde & his socne. & tolles & teames ofer his land & ofer his menn

7. (…) that they haue euere Soke and Sake ouere alle heore men and alle

C. 1. & team binan burhge & butan swa full & forĺ swa hit ænig his foregenga fyrmæst (…) on eallan lingan misbeode.

2. (…) swa full & swa forĺ. swa ænig his forgengena toforen him formest weren on Cnutes kinges daie.

3. al so fair and al so goud so he me an and stod.

4. so ful & so forþ so he haued þat oþer þing.

5. (…) bynne burch and wít outentolles (…) and ich nulle ¥e þawyen þat enyman þys abreke by myne froshype.

6. binnan porte & buton. & ic nelle gepafian & him ænig man ænig unlage beode.

7. heore londes withynne bourgh and w^toute so full and so forth so they formest hadde ynne alle thynges.

As can be seen here, while the graph <þ> is used in texts 1-6 with great regularity, <ð> is found only sporadically. Similarly graphs <æ>, <ea> and <eo> are more frequent in texts 1 and 6. Moreover, these two texts have re-tained the Old English nominal and verbal morphemes from their originals, which definitely discards them as dialectal informants.

Texts 2, 3, 4 and 5 are much more interesting from a diachronic perspec-tive. A compromise between conservative and innovative forms is present in these copies, which, in spite of their archaistic appearance, show clear signs of linguistic modernization with the apparent scope of making them under-standable to contemporary readers.

Further, these four copies represent two different levels of orthographic innovation, that can be accounted for on chronological and scribal argu-ments; discrepancies between them affect the graphs <a> (for OE aμ), <c> (for OE c=), intervocalic <f> and the personal pronoun, that display the following distribution:

(a) OE aμ is maintained as <a> in text 2 (swa l. 8, 9), but appears as <o> in texts 3 and 4 (so l. 5).

(b) In text 2, OE c= appears as <c> in final position (ic l. 4), but is substituted by <ch> when intermediate (freondliche l. 4, muchell l. 9); the copyists of texts 4 and 5 use <ch> throughout (ich l. 3, frendlyche l. 3, chyptolne l. 4).

(c) OE f in intervocalic position is maintained in text 2 (ofer l. 5), and substituted by <u> in text 4 (haued l. 5).

(d) OE eow is written eow in text 2; texts 4 and 5 present the mod-ernized forms ou and ow in its place.

Moreover, texts 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7 (which is the latest and the most modern-
ized version) share the following series of linguistic innovations, for which a
dialectal origin can be claimed:

(a) Generalized use of the graph <o> before nasal consonants.

(b) Confusion in the use of <i> and <y>.

(c) Use of the form alle for late West Saxon ealle.

(d) Ellimination of nominal morphemes, with the only exception of -
es, that is used for the sg. gen. and for the plural.

(e) Maintainance of h-forms for the 3rd person plural of the personal
pronoum (except in text 7).

In order to represent all these linguistic data the following questionnaire
has been deviced, that intends to reflex the different levels of conservatism
detected in these copies:

	Txt 1	Txt 2	Txt 3	Txt 4	Txt 5	Txt 6	Txt 7
OE Í/þ	Í/þ	þ (Í)	þ/y	þ (th)	þ (th)	Í/þ	th
OE æ	æ	æ	a(æ)	e	a	æ	e
OE a+n	a	o	o	o	o(a)	a	o
OE aµ	a	a	a	o	o/a	a(o)	a/o
OE i/y	i/y	i, y/u	i, y/u	i, y/u	i, y/u	-	i,y/u
OE ea	ea	ea	a	a	a/e	ea	a
OE eo	eo	eo	-	e	o (eo)	eo	e (eo)
OE VfV	f	f/u	-	-	u	-	u
OE g=	g	g	y	y	3	g	y
OE c=	c	c/ch	-	ch	ch	c	-
OE sc=	sc	ss	sc	ch	sh/ss	sc	sh
ALL	ealle	alle ealle	alle	alle	alle	-	all
YOU	eow	eow	-	ou	ow	-	youwe
THEY	-	-	he	hy	hoe	-	they
THEM	-	-	hom	-	-	-	hem

From the questionnaire, it becomes clear that the seven documents described here represent three different approaches to the copying of Old English texts, which we will refer to as literatim-copy (i.e. copies with prevailing West Saxon forms, as texts 1 and 6), modified Old English (copies where a significative number of West Saxon forms has been maintained, as in texts 2 and 3) and diachronical translation (copies thoroughly modernized, as in texts 4, 5 and 7). These categories correspond roughly to three different scribal attitudes towards Old English texts, based on the scope of the linguistic innovations introduced by the copyists (Díaz 1994: 459-465).

4. ORTHOGRAPHIC TRADITION IN EARLY MIDDLE ENGLISH LITERARY ANCHOR-TEXTS

According to the methodology adopted for the compilation of LAEME, the data extracted from copied Old English documents are to be combined with the linguistic profiles corresponding to literary texts in Early Middle English localised on extralinguistic grounds, in order to get a complex of isoglosses complete enough as to permit the progressive placing of the remaining manuscripts. In the case of the South West Midlands, the number of literary texts confidently localized is relatively high, and includes the following manuscripts:

1. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 402 (Wigmore, He C13a2): Ancrene Wisse.

2. London, British Library, Harley 2253 (Leominster, He C14a2): prose and verse in Latin, French and English.

3. London, British Library, Harley 3376 (Worcester, Wo C13): verse piece attributed to the "tremulous hand".

4. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 34 (SC 1883) (Leodbury, Godstow and Much Cowarne, He C13a1): Saints' lives of the Katherine-group.

5. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 86 (Redmarley d'Abitot, Gl C13b2): 22 EME poems.

6. Oxford, Corpus Christi College 59 (Llanthony Priory, Gl C13b2): 3 EME poems.

In order to determine the linguistic relations between both groups of texts, the previous questionnaire has been applied to these six texts with the following results:

	MS 1	MS 2	MS 3	MS 4	MS 5	MS 6
OE Í/p	p, Í	p (Í)	th	p, Í	_	p (Í)
OE æ	e ((eo))	e	e	e ((eo))	e	e
OE a+n	o	o	o	o	o	o
OE aµ	o ((a))	o	o	a	o	o
OE y	u	u	u	u ((e))	u ((e))	u
OE ea	ea ((a))	e	e	ea	e	e
OE eo	eo	e	eo	eo	e	e
OE VfV	u	u	u	u	u	u
OE g=	¥	¥	g	¥	¥	¥
OE c=	ch	ch	ch	ch	ch	ch
OE sc=	sch	sh	sch	sch	sh, s	-
ALL	all / (eall)	alle	all	al	-	-
YOU	ow	ou	-	ow	-	-
THEY	hi	hue	thei	hi	hy, hoe (pey)	-
THEM	ham	hem	-	ham	hem	-

A brief comparison between these two groups of profiles shows that most of the typically Anglo-Saxon orthographic conventions maintained in litera-tim-copies of Old English documents (i.e. texts 1 and 6) are avoided by copyists working on literary early Middle English texts. Text 3, which was

probably written at the beginning of the 13th century, shows some significative coincidences with literatim-copies, such as the use of the graphs <eo> and <g> (for OE g=). Moreover, in the cases of CCCC 402 (MS A of Ancrene Wisse) and Bodley 34 (Katherine-group) a relation can be established between these two groups of texts based on the use of the double graphs <ea> and <eo> and the partial maintainance of the distinction between Í and þ. Other conservative graphs in these two manuscripts are the sporadic use of <a> for Old English aµ and the appearance of the form ealle.

In spite of the presence of these archaistic features, the number of linguistic innovations in these two texts is far from scarce. The combination of conservative and innovative graphemes in CCCC 402 and Bodley 34, as represented by the homogeneus variant of early Middle English traditionally refered to as 'AB-language', has been recently stressed by Smith (1992: 586). Innovations (a)-(d) are exclusive to these two manuscripts, while (e)-(h) can be found in the six texts studied here:

> (a) Use of <e> and sporadic <ea> for OE æ; the use of <ea> in these words is to be attributed to Mercian influence (Smith 1991: 54), while <e> (which also appears in most South-West-Midlands texts) reflects the regional development of West Germanic a (Díaz forthcoming).
>
> (b) Sporadic use of <e> for OE y (only in Bodley 34).
>
> (c) Use of <sch> for OE sc.
>
> (d) Use of the pronominal forms ow, hi and ham.
>
> (e) Generalization of pre-nasal <o>.
>
> (f) Use of <u> for OE y.
>
> (g) Use of the graphs <¥> and <ch> for OE g= and c=.
>
> (h) al- forms are used for OE ealle.

Other innovations exclusive to non-AB texts are the use of <o> for OE aµ and <e> for both OE ea and eo. Although most of these features have been detected in modernized versions of Old English texts (i.e. texts in modified Old English and translations into Middle English), their use in these texts is far from general, with the old forms frequently predominating over the new ones.

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5. CONCLUSIONS

From this discussion, it becomes obvious that the deep differences between both types of linguistic material would make of this combination of data under the generic category of anchor texts an extremely controversial task. On the one hand, copied Old English documents represent different levels of linguistic archaism, while Middle English literary texts witness a slow but continuous separation from the Anglo-Saxon orthographical traditions. On the other, all the texts included in the second group were written between c1210 and c1325 (which roughly corresponds to the period traditionally referred to as early Middle English), while copied Old English documents span the period between c1050 and c1425 (i.e. from late Old English until Late Middle English). For these two reasons it seems clear that while literary anchor-texts can be confidently taken as representative of the linguistic habits of the 13th and 14th centuries, copied Old English texts act rather as markers of the numerous processes of orthographical maintainance occurring during this period.

However, the fact that the few early Middle English literary texts geographically localized offer first-class evidence of the state of the language during this period can not account for the neglect of copied Old English texts as dialectal informants. Copies of Anglo-Saxons charters and writs witness more confidently than any other type of material the language used during the period immediately after the Norman Conquest. As markers of the transition between late Old and early Middle English, most of them include information on the dialectal reality of both periods and, what is more important, about the traditional orthographies of Anglo-Saxon monasteries, offering thus a solid starting-point for the creation of a dialectal matrix that will serve as a basis for the study of diatopic variation in Old and early Middle English and, eventually, for the compilation of the future *LAEME.*

Javier E. Díaz Vera

Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha

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