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This special issue of *Token* is dedicated to
Prof. zw. dr hab. Jerzy Wełna,
a stalwart international scholar,
and an inspiration to generations of students,
a man with a no-nonsense intellect,
but one also with a refreshingly
ludic sense of humor…

UNIWERSYTET
WARSZAWSKI

Rektor
prof. dr hab. Alojzy Z. Nowak

Szanowny Pan Profesor
Jerzy Wełna

Szanowny Panie Profesorze,

choć nie sposób mnie, zwykłemu użytkownikowi współczesnej angielszczyzny, wypowiadać się ze znawstwem o osiągnięciach Pana Profesora w dziedzinie wiedzy tak tajemnej i trudnej, jaką jest historia i gramatyka języka staro- i średnioangielskiego czy choćby o subtelnościach rymów u Chaucera lub Szekspira – to przecież bez trudu uznać mogę ogrom Pańskich osiągnięć w tej materii. Zaświadcza o tym pozycja Pana Profesora wśród znawców tematu, potwierdza lista publikacji w prestiżowych pismach specjalistycznych a przede wszystkim dowodzi tego imponująca liczba wypromowanych i oddanych Panu wychowanków.

Wielkiej charyzmy i znakomitego kunsztu dydaktycznego trzeba a zwłaszcza szczególnej pasji i miłości do przedstawianego tematu, by dziedzinę – tak skomplikowaną i wymagającą, że nawet dzisiejsi profesorowie anglistyki wspominają swój pierwszy kontakt z nią „jako coś przerażającego" – nie tylko uprzystępnić studentom, ale i zauroczyć nią, często na całe ich zawodowe życie.

Ścieżką Pana Profesora podążyło już z powodzeniem wielu Jego wychowanków, tak wielu, że – jak twierdzą znawcy dyscypliny – można wręcz mówić o rozwiniętej przez Pana „warszawskiej szkole językoznawstwa historycznego". A przecież poświęcenie się tej trudnej dziedzinie wiedzy jaką jest językoznawstwo diachroniczne wymaga szczególnych predyspozycji. Sama rekonstrukcja graficznego zapisu staroangielskich leksemów – oprócz wszechstronnej wiedzy – zakłada konieczność posiadania zasobów benedyktyńskiej wręcz cierpliwości i umiejętności poświęcania się mozolnej pracy; z kolei odtwarzanie ich fonetycznej postaci, wzorca wymowy – zdolności iście detektywistycznych. Może to stąd bierze się hobbistyczne zainteresowanie Pana Profesora powieścią kryminalną – jako swoistą „wprawką warsztatową"?

Dzisiejsi następcy Pana Profesora martwią się, że kolejnych pasjonatów „raczej długo nie będzie, bo dyscyplina jest mało popularna, niestety". Niepotrzebnie, jak sądzę – myślę bowiem, że i na to znajdzie Pan Profesor kolejny świetny sposób i kolejnych oddanych adeptów – może pośród młodych laureatów Ogólnopolskiego Konkursu Krasomówczego – Public Speaking Contest – z języka angielskiego, którego bywa Pan jurorem?

Szanowny Panie Profesorze,

z okazji przypadającego w tym roku Jubileuszu 80-tej rocznicy urodzin, proszę przyjąć nasze najserdeczniejsze życzenia wszelkiej pomyślności i dobrego zdrowia, które pozwalam sobie złożyć imieniu własnym oraz władz rektorskich macierzystego Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego. Mając świadomość Pańskich rozległych zainteresowań i pasji nie wątpię, że właściwie tylko dobrostanu fizycznego i sprzyjających wiatrów potrzeba Panu do pełnej życiowej satysfakcji. O wszystko inne świetnie Pan przecież zadba sam!

Ad multos annos!

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Rektor
prof. dr hab. Alojzy Z. Nowak

Professor Jerzy Wełna

Dear Professor,

Even though it is impossible for me, an ordinary user of contemporary English, to speak with authority about your accomplishments in a field of such intricate and arduous learning as that of the history and grammar of Old and Middle English, or even the subtleties of rhymes in Chaucer or Shakespeare, I can readily acknowledge the magnitude of your achievements in this area. Your position among specialists in your field confirms this, as does the list of your publications in prestigious specialized journals and, most importantly, the large number of your students whose work you have supervised and who demonstrate continued respect for their professor and mentor.

It takes great charisma, excellent didactic artistry, and a special passion and love for the subject to make accessible to students a field so complex and demanding that even today's professors of the English language recall their first contact with it as "something frightening". To your credit, no small number of students have even become enchanted with your discipline, some for their entire professional lives.

Many of your students have successfully followed in your footsteps, so many that, according to experts in the field, one can even speak of the "Warsaw school of historical linguistics" that, indeed, you founded.

To devote oneself to this difficult field of study, diachronic linguistics, however, requires special abilities. The reconstruction of the orthographic representation of Old English lexemes presupposes, in addition to extensive knowledge, the need for Benedictine patience and the ability to devote oneself to gruelling work; the reconstruction of their phonetic form, the pattern of pronunciation, requires true detective skills. As a form of "transferred skills" could this be the reason for your hobbyistic interest in crime novels?

Your successors are concerned that there will be no more enthusiasts for "quite a while" because the discipline is "unfortunately not very popular." Unnecessarily so, I believe - because I trust that you will find a worthy solution to this dilemma and you will look for future dedicated proponents perhaps among the young winners of the English National Rhetorical Contest which you happen to support as a juror?

Dear Professor, as you celebrate your 80th birthday this year, I wanted personally to extend my best wishes for continued success and good health on behalf of myself and the rectorial authorities of your Alma Mater, the University of Warsaw. Considering how many different things interest you, I have no reason to doubt that you need only physical well-being and favorable winds to be fully content with life. Indeed, you will handle the rest on your own!

Ad multos annos!

Warszawa, 23 września 2022 roku

UNIWERSYTET
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Wydział Neofilologii

Dziekan
prof. ucz. dr hab. Robert Małecki

Professor
Jerzy Wełna

I do not know if contemporary literary studies are in any way close to historical linguistics. I do know that many years ago I met Prof. Wełna during the meetings of one of the committees of the Council of the Faculty of Modern Languages, and that the two of us were both more and less close, because we had similar opinions on some matters and a less similar ones on others. Still, Prof. Wełna captivated me with his determination and composure, but above all with his style. He had the class of an academic.

I know that Prof. Wełna has been shaping the Polish school of historical linguistics for years. I know that it was with great composure and class that he took care of such a large group of linguistics adepts. And although I know that in the year that Prof. Wełna defended his doctoral dissertation, I had just came into this world, I still strongly believe that the community of our entire Faculty would like somehow to experience the impact of his knowledge and his competence.

Therefore, Professor, I would like to wish you all the best, but most of all good health! The Faculty of Modern Languages at the University of Warsaw is always open for you. Because today I know one thing above all: Our Faculty wants and needs to benefit from the erudition and mastery of such distinguished researchers as Professor Wełna.

UNIWERSYTET WARSZAWSKI
Wydział Neofilologii

INSTYTUT ANGLISTYKI

Head of the Institute of English Studies
Dr hab. Agnieszka Piskorska

Reminiscences on the occasion of Professor Jerzy Wełna's jubilee

As a student at the Institute of English Studies, I studied the history of English phonology from a book metonymically referred to as "Wełna" - the usual way classics are called - the official title of which is *A Diachronic Grammar of English, Part 1: Phonology.*

At the same time, I attended lectures by its author, Professor Jerzy Wełna, never ceasing to be amazed by his knowledge and expertise on the broad and complicated subject of the diachronic studies of English. I distinctly remember my feeling of pride and joy after obtaining a grade of "very good" on the final exam, which included transcribing a fragment of Romeo and Juliet in Shakespeare's pronunciation. Well, it is actually easy when you know that Romeo is pronounced [ˈrəʊ.mi.əʊ] in contemporary British English… And it is not difficult either to understand why most American dialects are rhotic, whereas most of those spoken in Britain are non-rhotic. That is, when you were as lucky as I was to have a great teacher.

During his years of professional activity, Professor Jerzy Wełna was more than a successful scholar and popular lecturer at the Institute of English Studies. Deputy Head for Research in the years 1979-1980, 1983-1987, 1988-1990 and 1992-2005 (which together add up to a period of two decades), he was acting Head of the Institute in 1988-89. He also acted in the capacity of Head of the Department of the English Language in the years 2006-2014 and chaired the Institute's Academic Council between 2008 and 2012.

He supervised the incredible number of over 300 MA theses as well as over 100 BA theses. Among the 20+ PhDs for whom Professor Wełna was thesis advisor are renowned scholars now employed at various universities in Poland and abroad.

Another part of Professor Wełna's legacy is the journal ANGLICA, established in 1988. As the journal's co-founder and co-editor-in-chief for many years, Professor Wełna made a great contribution to the Institute's recognition in the linguistic community. ANGLICA is now being run by a team of editors, including the Professor's former students.

Our dear Professor Wełna…

Thinking ahead to the year 2023 as the 100th anniversary of English Studies at the University of Warsaw, the Institute acknowledges you as a scholar who is not only part of our history, but one who has made history by your academic activities in the Institute on so many levels. We extend our warmest wishes and congratulations on your jubilee, dear Professor, and we are looking forward to your honorary presence at the Institute's jubilee next year!

Ag Piskorska

TABULA GRATULATORIA

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Mariusz Bęcławski
Ulrich Busse
Nuria Calvo Cortés
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Jerzy Wełna's contribution to linguistic studies

Marta Sylwanowicz, Anna Wojtyś

University of Warsaw

1. Introduction

Jerzy Wełna, a noted authority in the field of English historical studies, has tied his career to the Institute of English Studies, University of Warsaw. In 1974, he defended his PhD dissertation entitled *Linguistic Analysis of Borrowings in Old English*, written under the supervision of the late Jacek Fisiak (Adam Mickiewicz University). In 1986, he received the title of Doctor of Letters (habilitation) in English Linguistics based on the book *A Critical Survey of a Historical Phonology of English Vowels (with special reference to K. Luick's* Historische Grammatik der englischen Sprache). He was granted the title of Professor of Humanities by the President of Poland in 2000.

Jerzy Wełna's earliest work was much influenced by the late Alfred Reszkiewicz (Jagiellonian University, University of Warsaw), who kindled Wełna's love for (historical) linguistics when he was still a student of English philology. Other important figures in Wełna's career were Margaret Schlauch (a former Head of the English Department) and Jacek Fisiak, first a supervisor of his PhD dissertation and then his life-long friend.

Jerzy Wełna has published five books, sixty-eight scientific articles and fifteen book reviews, all devoted to the study of the English language, mostly the changes it has undergone from the period of Old English till present times. His work on the history of English has gained international recognition as shown by the innumerable citations by scholars such as Minkova, Hickey, Dance, Ringe, Anderson, Mańczak, Fisiak, Molencki, Krygier, Pons-Sanz, Steponavičius, Kharlamenko, and many others.

Although his publications give priority to English historical phonology and morphology, many important works deal with other areas including studies on (i) spelling alterations, (ii) language contact, (iii) the rivalry

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between lexical items, and (iv) gender change. It is also noteworthy that before Wełna fully committed himself to historical studies, he had been involved in contrastive English-Polish studies to which he devoted his earliest contributions.

Apart from being a diligent researcher, Professor Wełna has also served as a mentor for generations of students and PhD candidates, 17 of whom successfully defended their dissertations. For many years now his monograph *A Brief Outline of the History of English* has served as basic reading material for the students at the Institute of English Studies. He has also reviewed innumerable PhD dissertations and Doctor of Letters theses (habilitations), and has served on promotion committees of various scholars. One can safely conclude that he fathered a new generation of historical linguists in Poland.

The present paper offers an evaluative survey of Jerzy Wełna's contribution to the study of English linguistics. The first part (section 2) is devoted to the area of his primary concern, i.e. historical phonology and morphology, whereas the second (section 3) concentrates on the studies addressing problems from other linguistic areas. These sections have been written, respectively, by Anna Wojtyś (phonology and morphology) and Marta Sylwanowicz (other areas), Professor Wełna's students from their second-year obligatory course in the history of English (BA studies) till the achievement of their doctoral degrees.

2. Research in phonology and morphology

As mentioned above, Jerzy Wełna's work presents him as a truly multifarious historical linguist engaging in the research on phonology, morphology, semantics and lexis with references to sociolinguistics, dialectology, present-day varieties of English and contrastive studies. Yet, undoubtedly the jewel in the crown of his achievements is his work on English historical phonology. This area has inspired him throughout his whole career, resulting in three books and forty-four articles published between 1978 and 2021.

2.1 *A Diachronic Grammar of English*

It is indeed astounding that the outpouring of Wełna's publications in historical phonology did not begin with an article but rather with a

monograph, the highly regarded *A Diachronic Grammar of English: Part one: Phonology* (1978). The book is a concise but extremely informative and exhaustive study of sound changes in the history of English. Divided into eight chapters corresponding to the recognized diachronic stages (typically some 200 years in length), it traces changes in vowels and consonants of both native and foreign words. The greatest advantage of this book, which is, after all, one of many such publications on English historical phonology, is its unique structure. The chapters are divided consistently into sections on (1) general characteristics of the phonological changes in the respective period, (2) qualitative changes and (3) quantitative changes affecting vowels, (4) diphthongs, and (5) vowels in unstressed syllables, followed by (6) the developments in consonants, which are discussed according to their manner of articulation. Such a treatment allows for immediate identification of changes affecting a particular phoneme at a given period in time. Additionally, all processes reviewed are illustrated with numerous examples of lexemes exhibiting each change. Possible exceptions are explained in meticulous notes referring to all relevant publications on the topic. Still, from the point of view of the reader the most valuable element is the excellent word index, which lists all items specified (which amount to around three thousand) together with references to the sections where they are mentioned. This enables one to quickly trace each word throughout the history, identifying all relevant phonological rules that have contributed to its present shape. The impressive bibliography contains the names of authors of fundamental works on the history of English, including (in alphabetical order) Brunner, Campbell, Dobson, Fisiak, Jespersen, Jordan(-Cook), Kökeritz, Lass, Luick, Mossé, Reszkiewicz, Vachek, and the Wrights. For the next 44 years, those scholars's publications served as points of reference for Wełna, who much respected and appreciated their painstaking research, and often aimed to complement and verify their hypotheses. Still, the most prominent figure among them, the one that had the greatest overall impact on Wełna's academic career was Karl Luick.

2.2 Luick's impact

Karl Luick (1865–1935), a professor at the University of Graz and the Rector of Vienna University, was first fascinated with metrics, but moved onto the area of historical phonology, which resulted in the monograph *Historische Grammatik der englischen Sprache*. This opus, published in nine instalments

(1914–1929), concerned the developments in English vowels. The chapters on consonants, left incomplete by Luick at the time of his death, were finished and published by his students, Wild and Koziol (Luick 1940). The monograph was, in Wełna's (2010: 2491) estimation, "an invaluable source of information on how English pronunciation evolved through centuries both in the standard speech and in dialects". It is the book that became the source of inspiration for Wełna's monograph *A Critical Survey of a Historical Phonology of English Vowels (with special reference to K. Luick's* Historische Grammatik der englischen Sprache*)* (1987), the achievement that granted him a habilitation degree.

This publication is Wełna's next important contribution to the field of English historical phonology. In the preface, he explains that Luick's grammar was chosen as "the only uniform, detailed and comprehensive study covering the whole history of English" which contains "numerous pioneering theories of English phonological change" (Wełna 1987: 9). As the title suggests, Wełna is far from being uncritical of Luick's ideas. He carefully examines Luick's hypotheses, comparing them objectively to those of other scholars (Dobson, Jordan, Mossé, etc.) and juxtaposing them with historical data. There is open criticism for what he considers overcomplexity in some of Luick's ideas. For instance, regarding the development of /ü/, he finds fault with Luick's account asserting that the sound changed into /üü/ during the Great Vowel Shift and then to /iü/, resulting in the Early Modern English diphthong /iu/ (as in *new*). This explanation is rejected by Wełna as following from a misinterpretation of the data found in 17th century dictionaries and including a very unlikely stage of /iü/. Instead, Wełna opts for the hypothesis that fronting of /u:/ or its diphthongization occurred via the insertion of a glide. The analysis of Luick's theories reveals features that are later conspicuous in many of Wełna's studies: a detailed examination and comparison of the previous hypotheses on the subject postulated in linguistic literature, cautiousness towards any explanation that lacks evidence from the historical data, rejection of unnecessarily complicated explanations, and belief that a change should not be examined in separation from other developments. *Historische Grammatik* is also the subject of an article from 2008, which focuses on the last part of the book devoted to consonants. Here Wełna (2008a: 83) attempts to explain the "undeservedly lukewarm perception" the instalment was met with. As previously, he praises some theories and criticizes others.

The impact of Luick's work does not end with the texts about the monograph but remains powerful in most of Wełna's phonological research.

The two above-mentioned publications draw the reader's attention to various phonological processes tackled by Luick but often in an unsatisfactory way. On perusing the list of titles by Wełna, it becomes evident that those were the developments he found intriguing and worthy of examination. Hence, his future articles discussing:

- the process of *e*-raising,
- changes affecting vowels in the following contexts:
    - unstressed syllables,
    - velar fricatives,
    - the liquid *-r*,
    - nonprimary homorganic clusters,
- developments of English diphthongs,
- changes affecting consonants including
    - (de)spirantisation,
    - the loss of the semivowel /w/,
    - the elimination and epenthesis of stops,
    - voicing and devoicing of obstruents, and
- the processes of metathesis and geminate simplification.

2.3 Contribution to historical phonology

While Wełna's monographs discuss the inventory of English phonemes and chief phonological rules in all historical periods, his articles are typically focused on minor changes including irregular developments. Such studies are highly valuable since they complement historical grammars, which generally do not devote much space to such peripheral issues. Note also that, apart from a few (typically early) theoretical publications (e.g. 1980b, 1986a, 1990a), the articles are based on data that come from historical dictionaries and/or electronic texts corpora. Among the latter, Wełna's preferred choice has been the *Innsbruck Corpus on Middle English Prose*, which contains texts from the 12th to 15th centuries. What makes it his favourite source is the completeness of the texts collected and the fact that they represent all major Middle English dialects. The additional advantage is that prosaic texts are believed to contain a more natural language than poetry and hence those data are a reliable illustration of language changes. This, however, is by no means the only corpus Wełna has drawn data from; he has also based papers on the *Helsinki Corpus* (2002d, 2005b) and, whenever data from

poetry were relevant, completed the picture with material from Chadwyck-Healey *Literature Online Corpus* (2006a, 2008ab). The main advantage of studies based on data is obviously the comfort of drawing conclusions that are well-grounded. Wełna has typically used such historical material for verification of the hypotheses postulated earlier, producing articles that mostly dealt with the identification of temporal and areal conditioning of various linguistic changes.

Thematically the phonological articles by Wełna can be grouped into five major categories collecting texts discussing (a) changes in a single word or groups of words, (b) changes of particular sounds, (c) insertion or a loss of a sound, (d) relation between spelling and pronunciation, and (e) rhymes and stress in poetry.

2.4 Changes in a single word or groups of words

The texts in the first category discuss developments in single words, such as those involved in the change from *macode* to *made* (2015), from *ich* to *I* (2014a), and *wyrcan* to *work* (2017a), as well as in groups of words where the sequences *weor/wyr/wor* underwent levelling (2006a) and those in which the vowel /e/ underwent raising in the context of a nasal (2005b). In the first study here (2015), the absence of forms illustrating the change *k* > *g* > *ɣ* > *w* > *u* (i.e. **magde,* **mawde* and **maude*) leads Wełna to the solution suggested by Wright – Wright (1928: 41), who derive the PDE form *made* via OSL (> *mākede*), the loss of intervocalic *k* (> *mā*(ə)*de*) and the elimination of schwa (> *māde*). An analysis of the distribution of the 1sg pronoun in Middle English (2014a) forces Wełna to conclude that the change from *ich* to *I* was the result of several distinct factors: phonological (the misanalysis of the final affricate as occurring within a sandhi context), orthographic and functional (the awkwardness of the one-letter word spelt with a small *i*) and sociolinguistic (the tendency to capitalize the pronoun to emphasise the status of the author). This is a perfect illustration of Wełna's openness of interpretation – his work is not limited to the arguments from one field but he is always willing to look for the reasons for certain changes both in linguistic and extralinguistic areas. The last of the one-word texts establishes the distribution of the two types of forms of the verb *wyrcan* 'to work' (2017a): the conservative ones with the rounded vowel /y/ and palatalization, and the innovative ones with /o/ and the velar /k/, which, as the data show, were in use mostly after 1520.

The impact of labials on a following vowel is also the subject of the article on levelling of the *weor, wyr,* and *wor* sequences (2006a). The examination of Old and Middle English poetic texts allows the author to confirm that it "was not a chronologically uniform process" but "a sequence of individual developments" (Wełna 2006a: 425). He also discovers that the first word to be affected was *sweord* followed by items with the sequence <weorþ/ð->. The last publication in this group addresses the problem of the change of /e/ in the context of a nasal (2005b), the development responsible, among others, for the PDE pronunciation of *England, ink,* or *finish.* After examining material from dictionaries and corpora, Wełna draws the conclusion that the change was active from the 12th to the 16th century. He also identifies the Southwestern region as the dialect area where that process was initiated. This, he claims, is one of the arguments in favour of his hypothesis that "peripheral sound changes were initiated in the west of England, spreading to the adjacent areas" (Wełna 2005b: 315).

2.5 Changes of particular sounds

The analysis of developments of the front vowel /e/ is one of the leading themes of the studies belonging to the second group, i.e. those addressing changes of particular sounds. Among 15 articles on vocalics and consonants, four focus on the modifications of /e/. The context that seems to be of particular interest to Wełna is that of the liquid *r*. He devotes three papers (1999b, 2002bd) to the problem of lowering of /e/ to /a/ (as in *bern* > *barn*), the change which, he argues, is evidenced already in Old English and continues in the Early Middle English period. And while his evidence supports other scholars' findings concerning the Northern origin of the process, Wełna argues against the hypothesis that the lowering was first attested in the speech of the lower class and then transferred to the language of higher classes (Wełna 1999b). He was also first to devote a whole study to the problem of *e*-lowering in French loanwords (Wełna 2002b) revealing the extent to which such items exhibited the workings of the rule. Apart from *e*-lowering, he also examined the reverse of the change (Wełna 2002d), i.e. the restoration of the sequence /er/, which, he claims, was not a phonological process. The pronunciation was typical of educated people acquainted with Latin words that contained the /er/ sequence. From thence the pronunciation spread to the lower classes eliminating the /ar/ variants from their speech. The final *e*-oriented publication is from 2004 and discusses *e*-raising in Early

Middle English. This change of /e:/ into /i:/, Wełna argues, took place much earlier than suggested by historical grammars – Wełna dates it to the end of the 13th century – and affected items in which the vowel in question was followed by *-r*.

Wełna also studies developments of new phonemes in English. One of his earliest papers (1978b) discusses the merger of /i, u, e/ followed by /r/ into the central vowel /ə:/, a new phoneme in English. Its development is attributed to the necessity of avoiding the confusion between pairs of words such as *sir* and *seer* – here the shortening of the initial element in a diphthong eliminated the distinction between /iə/ (in *sir*) and /i:ə/ (in *seer*) and would lead to the merger of such pairs, which was prevented by the appearance of the new phoneme /ə:/. His second study of novel phonemes (1997a) was written in response to the publication of the new *Longman Pronunciation Dictionary*, in which the symbols /i/ and /u/ appeared. Wełna examines the words transcribed with those symbols and points at inconsistencies in their usage, coming to the conclusion that the introduction of such symbols "before the new vowel attains the status of the phoneme seems premature" (Wełna 1997a: 99) since this sets a precedent in the usage of subphonemic variants in transcription.

Apart from vowels, Wełna reviews the status of English diphthongs. He strongly advocates the monomorphemic interpretation of diphthongs, providing phonological arguments (1980b, 1990a) in the form of various rules whose operation proves that diphthongs behave like single units. Yet another contribution to the history of vocalics is that presenting the geographical distribution of the monophthongization of /ei/ before /ç/ and /ou/ before /x/ (2009a). The investigation is one of many illustrating Wełna's fascination in minor contexts of common rules – here the rules discussed produce an input for the well-described Great Vowel Shift. The data are indeed very scant, suggesting only that monophthongization is attested more often in the East Midland than in other dialects. The analysis of peripheral contexts of phonological processes is continued in the publications on Homorganic Cluster Lengthening. Contrary to standard historical publications, which typically mention the main contexts and repeat the most characteristic examples, Wełna analyses the changes in vowels in the nonprimary contexts, i.e. of the velar cluster <ng> (1999a) and the combinations with initial *-r*, i.e. <rd, rl, m, rþ, rs> (2000a). In all those contexts vowels show a considerable variation in length. In his investigation, Wełna employs various tools: the accounts of early grammarians, the relationship between phonological rules (especially Old English voicing and Homorganic Cluster Lengthening)

and evidence from spelling, mostly that of Orm, who employed a system of marking the length of vowels. He also faces a hypothesis concerning frequency, which he considers as partly responsible for changes in unstressed syllables (2002c), but in this case, he admits, the hypothesis has drawbacks and the process is better explained in terms of phonological conditioning. Among the texts devoted to the changes affecting consonants are those discussing metathesis (2002a), devoicing (2009b) and (de)spirantization (2005f). None of those processes, Wełna concludes, is possible to date with any real precision. Both metathesis and the post-sonorant devoicing of /d/ in past forms are believed to have followed the route of lexical diffusion. The rules of spirantization and despirantization affected consonants in several different periods, each of which had its own characteristics.

2.6 Insertion or a loss of a sound

The texts from the third group address the insertion or loss of a sound. These five articles all focus on consonants and discuss the labial *b*, dental *d, t*, liquid *l*, and semivowel *w*. The studies concerning stops (2005de, 2014b) examine both the process of their loss and that of their insertion, and attempt at their dating. It is noteworthy that the loss of *b* in homorganic clusters, Wełna argues, was initiated in the Old English Southwestern area, again proving the importance of that dialect region for peripheral phonological changes in English. Wełna also demonstrates that the loss/insertion of *t* did not exhibit any dialectal bias, whereas the loss of *d* began much earlier than previously assumed and, contrary to the traditional statements, was not initiated in the North. Both the study on the loss of *l* (2007b) and that on the elimination of *w* (2006b) reveal the pattern of lexical diffusion. The author gives lists of the most common words showing how the changes spread from one item to another, beginning with *every* (for the liquid) and *so* (for the semivowel) as the initiators. Characteristically, the elimination of dark *l* proves to have commenced in the western areas.

2.7 Relation between spelling and pronunciation

Although in historical studies in general, and phonological in particular, it is difficult to escape spelling usage as fundamental to arguments, though some studies rely on orthography more than others. As regards Wełna's

publications, spelling is of special importance to nine articles and one monograph. The book entitled *English Spelling and Pronunciation* was published in 1982 as Wełna's second major work. The publication, designed for students of English, discusses the relation between English spelling and English pronunciation – beginning with vocalics and consonantals, moving on to the problem of prefixes and suffixes, and then finishing with a separate chapter devoted specifically to American English. The author introduces the various patterns in pronunciation: with respect to vocalics, he makes a distinction between the contexts in which the vocalic is followed by (1) a single consonantal (e.g. <a> in *agent*) and (2) at least two consonantals or a single final consonantal (e.g. <a> in *anger*). Further, each of those situations is split into two depending on whether or not the consonant following is <r>. The system takes some getting used to, but once the reader becomes familiar with it, it proves quite effective. The presentation of consonantals is different: each grapheme is accompanied by a list of possible pronunciations which are illustrated with examples, and, of course, special cases are noted in detail. Prefixes and suffixes are specified as stressed or unstressed, and the appropriate pronunciation(s) are followed by examples. Due to such a structure, all forms of a certain prefix/suffix as well as words containing them are put together, which is of great value to people learning the pronunciation. Although the book deals with Modern English pronunciation, unsurprisingly, it also contains a diachronic element in the form of an appendix, which is an overview of spelling and pronunciation in the history of English.

Spelling is an important factor in several other studies by Wełna. Two of them are texts discussing ways of transcribing Chaucer's (1988b) and Shakespeare's (1990b) language. They are overviews of the essential differences in pronunciation postulated by various scholars. These analyses end with illustrations of two types of transcriptions of certain passages – the more conservative and the more progressive. Hence, those contrastive studies are very beneficial for students and others interested in the relevant periods of the history of English. The studies (2011a) and (2014c) treat the spread of new spellings in English: the former concentrates on the pseudo-learned spellings making English words resemble Latin or Greek ones, which, although typically believed to have emerged during Renaissance times, as shown by Wełna, appeared as early as c. 1300, and the latter examines the replacement of <u> by <o>, a novelty which seems to have lacked a consistent orthographic rule. The next paper (2013a) examines how spelling mirrored the loss of word-final velar fricatives - the new spellings

<-ow, -u, -f> replacing the traditional ones with <-h> or, later, <-gh>. In the remaining three investigations, spelling is essential to the phonological analyses. The basis for the identification of whether the initial <h> was pronounced in native and foreign words is the form of the preceding article or pronoun (2021) – in the case of forms such as *a* or *my*, it is assumed that the initial <h> is pronounced (cf. *a house*) if the form is *an* or *mine*, the fricative is presumably silent (cf. *an house*). The main conclusion of this study is that the first signs of the contemporary distribution, i.e. *a* before consonants and *an* before vowels, belong to the 13th century. One additional publication uses spelling as evidence for phonological change, and it highlights the cluster /ln/ (2005a), which underwent assimilation and degemination (/ln/ > /ll/ > /l/, as in e.g. *miller* or *elbow*). The operation of the rule finds reflection in orthography in the presence/absence of the nasal, allowing the author to establish the dating of the new forms for the words under scrutiny. The rules seem to have been active for several centuries, between the 9th century and the beginning of the 15th century.

2.8 Rhymes and stress in poetry

The fifth group of phonological publications consists of articles whose main subject is the examination of rhymes or stress in poetry. Two such publications are oriented by the works of particular poets. Yet again, these are Chaucer (2000b) and Shakespeare (2016), representatives of Middle and Early Modern English, respectively. The former study (2000b) discusses different stress patterns of native and foreign words employed in Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales.* The data adduced are instances of the same word, which in different places in the work demand different stress patterns (e.g. *man'ere* vs. *'manere*). Here, Wełna concluded that the assignment of stress has to be preceded by a careful analysis of a given metrical foot and versification rules in general. The study devoted to Shakespeare analyzes rhymes in *Venus and Adonis* and attempts to assess them as pure or impure. Obviously, the value of the rhyme is dependent on the assumed pronunciation, which, Wełna remarks, often differs according to the source (cf. also his publication on transcribing Shakespeare (1990b)). The final article exploiting the notion of rhymes is on the loss of the /ei/ - /ai/ opposition (2007a). Here, Wełna notes the immense value of the rhymes of words containing <ei/ey> and <ai/ay> spellings because they suggest a levelling in pronunciation. The analysis of poetry from the *Literature Online Corpus* shows that the change [ei > ai],

initiated in the North, was not finished by c. 1300, as claimed by e.g. Luick, but was still very much in progress then.

2.9 Morphology

The number of Wełna's publications devoted to morphology is much smaller than that focusing on phonology, but this does not diminish the importance of his work in this area. Especially since one of those publications is the monograph *English Historical Morphology*, which, at the time of its publication in 1996, was one of only two such books on the market (the first being that by Bammesberger (1984), which focused mostly on Old English). It remained so for the next 25 years until the appearance of Ringe's *A Historical Morphology of English* (2021), a work, in fact, much less exhaustive.

English Historical Morphology was intended to be the second instalment (after *A Diachronic Grammar of English: Part One, Phonology*) in the planned multivolume series *A Diachronic Grammar of English*, but ultimately it was published under a new name. The two monographs, however, do complement each other and form a complete survey of the phonological and morphological changes which affected English and contributed to its present shape. The book, which Voss in his review calls an "admirable" work which "should certainly be applauded" (Voss 1997: 278), discusses all the major morphological processes in the language since c.700 with profuse illustration. Since the Proto-Germanic portion is missing from the treatment, the reader may find the structure of presentation somewhat surprising, especially with respect to the nouns evidenced, which are grouped according to the type of root rather than, as usual, according to the declension (strong, weak, and minor). But again, as in the case of the monograph on phonology, the list of words provided at the end makes searching for relevant sections simple. The sections consist of an introduction to the grammatical category under discussion, a brief description of a given group of words (e.g. strong verbs) at the particular diachronic stage, and then lists of examples illustrating each class. The (sub)sections end with sets of notes explaining all types of irregularities. Quite contrary to the author's assumption in the preface that the book is "primarily designed for the students from the departments of English Philology" (Wełna 1996: 8), the abundance of material and numerous references to theoretical literature make it not just a student handbook, but in fact a genuine resource for scholars of English historical morphology (note that the book is cited by such eminent scholars as

Dance, Minkova, and Fisiak). Admittedly, the scope of the book is limited to inflectional morphology, and does not cover word-formation processes. The discussion includes dialectal features but mostly those that had an impact on the shaping of present-day English, whereas other variants, due to their abundance, are disregarded. Still, the book remains the only thorough study of English historical morphology published to date.

One of the morphological issues that has definitely attracted Wełna's attention is the shift between the two major classes of verbs: strong and weak. His article from 1991 discusses the general historical pattern, i.e. strong verbs developing weak forms. Although the topic seems a well-exploited one, Wełna manages to pinpoint some correlations between the root-structure of the verb and its likeliness to shift that other scholars missed. He notes, for instance, that in Classes 3 and 7 all verbs with a root-final cluster beginning with a liquid (i.e. lC or rC) attached weak endings (Wełna 1991: 133). He also stresses the importance of the levelling of root vowels in the present and past forms of strong verbs, which resulted in the need to find a new marker for the past, which, in turn, led strong verbs to take *-ed*. The other paper on the shift of verbs focuses on the reverse direction, presenting weak verbs that developed strong forms (1997b). Interestingly, apart from listing originally weak verbs that began to be conjugated as strong ones, the study also mentions foreign items which, surprisingly, most often exhibited features of strong verbs. The author concludes that this change cannot be referred to as a "shift", a term reserved for more regular developments that lead to the new contrasts, since it is too rare and its driving force is analogy, the process that leads to a closer resemblance between items. However, Wełna surmises that "a kind of a shift may have occurred in Scottish English, where the ending *-en*, characteristic of strong verbs, came to be very frequently attached to the stems of weak verbs" (1997b: 226-227), this process being the result of the elimination of the prefix *ge-* that used to serve as a distinguishing marker between past and past participle forms. Hence, present-day English forms such as *driven* or *given* illustrate the Northern influence.

It is worth noting that Wełna's works contain but a single examination of word-formation processes, one which addresses the suffix *-ling* as used in Middle English (2013b). The author comments on the small productivity of the element, which was mostly encountered in words that are now obsolete. Like in many articles on phonology, also here the problem is discussed from the dialectal perspective. Such an approach is also adapted in the two remaining texts on peripheral problems: the replacement of *ēode* by *went* (2001) and the distribution of the variants of the numeral *two* (2012b).

Interestingly, the reasons Wełna postulates for the changes discussed are not morphological. For *ēode* replacing *went*, he seeks functional reasons: since the number of variants of *ēode* was very high (more than 30 forms), its substitution by *wente* was a matter of economy and an attempt to avoid confusion. As regards the numeral *two*, the difference between *tway/twain* and *two* no longer denoted a contrast in gender and "began to symbolise a lexical contrast (conservative TWAIN/TWAY vs. standardised TWO)" (Wełna 2012b: 127).

Although the actual number of publications in historical morphology is not great, the quality of those works, and the recognition that they have received, leaves no doubt that Wełna is widely regarded as an expert in that field. This is best confirmed by the fact that he was invited to contribute to the two-volume comprehensive overview of all major aspects of the history of English, published by De Gruyter (ed. Bergs and Brinton 2012a), as an author of the section on Middle English morphology. The main focus of the chapter is post-Conquest inflectional morphology, especially the decay of inflections and the generalizations of markers still employed today (e.g. plural *-s*). Characteristically, the changes are presented against the background of dialectal variation.

3. Other works

As stated above, in the early stages of his scholarly career, Wełna concentrated on contrasts between Polish and English. This interest resulted in two lexical studies: "Some Polish agent substantives and their equivalents in English" (1976a) and "Deceptive words. A study in the contrastive lexicon of Polish and English" (1977a).

The first article is an important contribution to the early studies of word-formation processes in Polish. At the time of the publication of the paper, as Wełna points out, apart from a few general reviews of word-formation, there was "no full structural description" (Wełna 1976a: 83) of this process in Polish. In his investigation, Wełna thoroughly examines the structural differences between Polish agent suffixes (*-ista/-ysta*, *-ik/-yk*, *-ant/-ent*, *-ator*) and their English equivalents. In English there are many examples of equivalent agent nouns with similar suffixes (cf. P *antagonista* – E *antagonist*, P *katolik* – E *catholic*, P *emigrant* – E *emigrant*), but numerous forms have different (non-related) agent suffixes (e.g. P *planista* – E *planner*, P *kryminalista* – E *criminal*). The study emphasizes that grapho-phonemic

similarity between Polish and English agent noun suffixes, especially in forms with common etymological stems, may result in potentially incorrect translations. For instance, a Polish learner might form the following incorrect English agent nouns: P *futbolista* > E **footballist* (for *footballer*), or P *botanik* > E **botanic* (for *botanist*).

The problem of misleading similarity between Polish and English words is continued in Wełna's study of false cognates, or, as he calls them, *deceptive words*. The text deals with the "lexico-semantic interference" resulting from "the grapho-phonemic similarity of the stems" found in pairs of words of the two languages (Wełna 1977a: 75). Earlier literature proposed a number of labels for such examples, e.g. *heteronyms* (Schach 1951), *synonymous diamorphs* (Haugen 1956), *deceptive cognates* (Lado 1957), *false friends* or *misleading words*. However, Wełna introduces the term *deceptive word,* which he defines as "a word in the lexicon of some language which exhibits easily identifiable grapho-phonemic similarity to a word (words) in another language. The resemblance is accompanied by either partial correlation in the meaning or by the absence of any direct semantic correspondence" (Wełna 1977a: 76). Contrary to Lado's (1957) *deceptive cognates,* i.e. "words that are similar in form but mean different things", Wełna's term has a wider scope, as it includes (i) words characterized by no semantic correspondence (cf. Lado's *deceptive cognates*), e.g. E *fatigue* 'weariness' : P *fatyga* 'trouble', (ii) lexical items with some degree of semantic overlap, e.g. E *platform* : P *platforma* (and P *peron*), and (iii) words whose meanings correlate only partially, i.e. "can be rendered by its partner but the reverse is confined only to part of the meanings" (1977a: 74), e.g. P *fikcja* : E *fiction*, but E *fiction* : P *fikcja* (and P *beletrystyka*). The study reveals that in the first two groups of *deceptive* words examined, i.e. groups (i) and (ii), lexico-semantic interference is always present and, obviously, may disturb communication between speakers of Polish and English. As for the third group, the degree of lexico-semantic interference depends on the directionality of the translation. Thus, if we take a pair of words (e.g. E *fiction* > P *fikcja*) in which the source item has a wider range of meaning than the target item (E *fiction* 'sth. imagined, invented' and 'type of literature' and P *fikcja* 'sth. imaginary, invented'), then the possibility of interference is much higher than in the reversed situation, i.e. P *fikcja* > E *fiction*.

The second important group of Wełna's articles concentrates on gender assignment to loanwords. Particular attention is put on the cases of loanwords from languages with gender systems other than that of the target language. In the first of his studies, "Gender determiners in American English" (1976b), which examines loanwords from American and Canadian

English in languages of immigrants from Europe, Wełna introduces a method of structural description of the reasons for gender assignment. The decisive role in the process, he believes, is played by *gender determiners* (a term found in Haugen (1969) but not defined there), that is semantic or formal features of "an L_1 noun undergoing the importation which gives rise in the mind of the speaker of L_2 to associations indicating some concrete gender, masculine, feminine, or neuter" (Wełna 1976b: 96). Semantic determiners are based on associations concerning meaning: e.g. natural gender of L_1 is continued in L_2 as a grammatical category (cf. AmE *daddy* (male) > Ger. *der daddy* (masculine)). Formal determiners rely on structural similarities, e.g. AmE *army* upon entering German is feminine because of its similarity to Ger. *die Armee* (feminine), which is structurally similar to but not synonymous with the English term.

The structural method for explaining the process of gender assignment is also used in two other of Wełna's publications (1978a and 1980a). The former reveals the reasons for the assignment of complex gender to loanwords from Latin and Old Icelandic on their entering Old English, whereas the latter explains, among other things, the tendency to simplify grammatical gender in Old English loanwords. Wełna's works on gender assignment are often cited as important contributions to gender (assignment) studies, cf. the works by Jones (1988), Kilarski (2013), Corbett (1991), Thornton (2009) and Ringe (2021).

Years later Wełna turned his attention to the investigation of the rivalry between selected lexical items in Middle English. Three publications (2009c, 2011b, 2014d) concentrate on the competition between the adjective *bad* and its Middle English synonyms *evil* and *ill.* The analysis, based on an examination of the chronological and regional distribution of the terms, allows for the formulation of important conclusions. By the end of Middle English (c. 1500) the adjective *bad*, which was prevailingly used in contrastive phrases like *good and/or bad,* was not as frequently used as the other two lexical items. Thus, the replacement of *evil* and *ill* by *bad*, and the creation of a new opposition GOOD vs. BAD, must have taken place in Early New English. The scrutiny of the three adjectives also reveals that the increasing popularity of *bad* may have influenced the change of meaning of *ill*, from 'bad' to 'unhealthy'. In addition, Wełna demonstrates that, disputing claims made in earlier studies on *ill,* the adjective did not change its meaning in the mid-15th century but around 75 years later.

His next lexical contribution (2005c) deals with two high frequency verbs of Middle English: OE *nim* and ON *take*. The examination, based on

a thorough analysis of the distribution of the competing verbs in Old and Middle English dialects, reveals that the native form, contrary to *take*, had numerous variant forms and eventually went obsolete in the 15th century, though some records are found in non-standard varieties of English down to the 17th century. Wełna also manages to identify the approximate date (i.e. 1330) when the Scandinavian form began to dominate.

Another important paper (2011c) discusses the process of the replacement of Norman French loanwords by those from Parisian French in Middle English. As Wełna points out, little attention had been devoted to this change and the previous studies did not provide satisfactory explanations of the fates of the examined Romance forms. Therefore, Wełna offers a more detailed discussion of the factors responsible for the replacement of Norman French forms. The study examines the following pairs of words: *leal/loyal*, *real/royal* and *viage/voyage*, where the first form in each pair comes from Norman French. And, as in his earlier works, Wełna thoroughly examines the temporal and geographical distribution of the two types of forms. Although not stated explicitly, the list of variant forms of the six forms examined (Wełna 2011c: 305) reveals that one of the conditioning factors for the prevalence of Parisian French items was that they did not have as many variant forms as their Norman French equivalents. In addition, as Wełna's statistical account shows, the displacement of Norman forms was more advanced in London, whereas in the North older forms (i.e. Norman French) are retained. Thus, the study demonstrates (confirming Diensberg's (1985) hypothesis) that the replacement of the examined forms must have been dialectically conditioned.

The rivalry between native forms and Romance loanwords is also discussed in the paper (2017d) concentrating on two intensifiers: *full* and *very*. Originally (i.e. in medieval English), both items functioned as adjectives ('full' vs. 'true') but soon they underwent the process of grammaticalization and developed intensifier functions. Yet, of the two only *very* retained this function. The establishment of *very* as an intensifier had already been discussed by Mustanoja (1960), who concluded that the competition between *very* and *full* took place at the turn of the Early New English period. In order to verify this finding, Wełna conducts a regional and temporal analysis of the use and distribution of the two items in Middle English texts. His statistical data confirm and support Mustanoja's conclusions.

Apart from producing his own research publications, Wełna reviewed fifteen important works on historical linguistics. He evaluated, among others, Strang's (1970, reviewed in 1974a) book on the history of the English

language. He was also a reviewer of publications on Old and Middle English grammar by Reszkiewicz (1973, reviewed 1974b), Jordan (1974, reviewed 1977b) and Elmer (1981, reviewed 1983)) as well as monographs on English historical phonetics and phonology by Prins (1974, reviewed 1976c) and Steponavičius (1987, reviewed 1989). Together with Barbara Kowalik, he wrote a review of Pugh's (2013, reviewed 2014e) introduction to the life and works of Geoffrey Chaucer.

4. Beyond scholarly pursuits

The material for this introduction is so abundant that it is hardly possible to do credit to Wełna and all of his publications. The above, we hope, is a worthy summary of the most important contributions he has made to linguistic research. His activity has always been very intense, and he remains a true institution in the area of English historical linguistics in Poland and beyond.

As Professor Wełna's former students and, we would like to believe, present colleagues, we must add a personal note to this piece. We are truly grateful for his constant encouragement and professional advice. We have always been amazed by his profound knowledge of the history of English as well as other areas - apart from being a linguist, Professor Wełna is also an eager reader of classics (including crime stories), an ardent football fan, and a walking encyclopedia of Polish history and Warsaw monuments. Good Professor, we will ever be thankful for your inspiration, and will ever wish you well in your quests.

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For Jerzy Wełna, a hard-working farmer in the field of English linguistics

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ABSTRACT

This article dedicated to Professor Jerzy Wełna is about his first name, a Polish version of George, which developed dissimilar variants in the European languages. We look at the etymology and the phonetic processes responsible for these differences. Special attention is paid to the appearance of the name in medieval Polish and English. We also refer to some historical, literary and cultural associations connected with the name George.

Keywords: Jerzy, George, name, palatalization, compounding.

It is a great honour for me to have been invited to take part in marking the eightieth birthday of Professor Jerzy Wełna, an eminent Polish diachronic linguist and Anglicist. As his friend and colleague, I have decided to dedicate to him some linguistic, literary and historical observations concerning his Christian name.

Jerzy is the Polish equivalent of George. The etymology of the name is clear: it is a Greek word that denotes a farmer, created through compounding, the morphological process discussed in some works of Jerzy Wełna, e.g. Wełna (1996, 2012). The Greek name *Γεώργιος* (*Geōrgios*) comes from the noun *γεωργός* (*georgós*), literally 'earth-worker', i.e. 'farmer, husbandman', and is made up of two morphemes *γῆ* (*ge*) 'earth' and *ἔργον* (*érgon*) 'work'. In Greek mythology it was one of the epithets of Zeus (cf. Nilsson 1992), so our

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Jerzy may have acquired some divine properties owing to his theophoric first name.

George is an old Christian name whose divergent phonetic developments in many languages have led to forms that do not look or sound similar at all, e.g. Armenian *Kevork*, Russian *Юрий* (*Yuriy*) and *Егор* (*Yegor*), Ukrainian *Юр* (*Yur*), Croatian *Đuro* and *Juraj*, Czech *Jiří*, Lithuanian *Jurgis*, German *Georg* and *Jürgen*, Swedish *Göran*, Norwegian *Jørn*, Hungarian *György*, Welsh *Siôr*, Irish *Seoirse*, Scottish Gaelic *Deòrsa*, Spanish *Jorge* and Finnish *Yrjö*. The phonetic transcription of these cognate names would show even greater discrepancies. Jerzy Wełna also discussed the sources of differences between spelling and pronunciation in some of his works devoted to the history of English spelling, e.g. Wełna (1982, 2010).

The process that is responsible for these differences in most cases is the tendency to palatalize velar consonants (here the original phoneme /g/) in the neighbourhood of front vowels (/e/, /i/), cf. e.g. Reszkiewicz (1973), Wełna (1978) and Laker (2007) for English, and Malec (1994) for Polish. As for the various interpretations of how the original Old English diphthong /eo/ developed in the different dialects of medieval English, see another book by hard-working Professor Jerzy Wełna (1987: 85-89).

In Polish the most popular forms of the name are the official *Jerzy*, now pronounced /jeʐɨ/, and the diminutive *Jurek*: the former is believed to have been copied from Czech *Jiří* while the latter is based on the East Slavonic *Jur* (from Old Church Slavonic *Гюргu* (*Giurgi*)). Also, in medieval Czech the forms *Jiří* and *Juří* competed with each other, so it is likely that they both are responsible for the Polish *Jerzy/Jurek* variation.

In the Old Russian medieval chronicles known as *letopis(es)*, one can find numerous variants of this name often borne by noblemen (after Litvina – Uspenskiy 2006): *Гергии, Горьги, Гюрги, Гюргий, Гюрий, Дюрга, Дюргий, Дюрди, Дюрдий, Юрий, Юрьи, Юрьги, Юрко* and *Юрка*, where one can see the variation in the onset of the first syllable from the original /gʲ/ through the intermediate /dʲ/ probably affricated to /dʒ/ down to the semivowel /j/. Some Slavonic etymologists claim that the *j*-initial form may have become popular due to the phonetic resemblance to the Russian adjective *юркий* (*jurkij*) meaning ‘agile, clever’.

The name is attested in the *Słownik staropolski* citations of some of the oldest medieval Polish texts from the 14th and the 15th centuries in the following forms: *Georgius, Georius, Gerzy, Gierzyk, Hirzyk* (/h/-onset), *Irzyk, Jeorgius, Jeorius, Jerzy, Jerzyk, Jirko, Jirzyk, Jorg, Jura, Jurak, Jurek, Jurg, Jurga, Jurko, Juryj, Juryjasz* and *Jurzyk*. The form *Jerzy* competed with *Jurzy*, but the

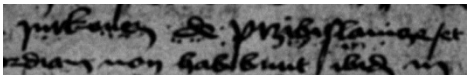
former appears to have become dominant in the 15th century. The name was popular all over Poland, but especially in the East where Saint George was strongly venerated under the influence of the Orthodox tradition (Rymut 1995).

Słownik historyczno-geograficzny ziem polskich w Średniowieczu quotes numerous early instances of the various forms of the name in the texts written in Latin, e.g.:

(1) in 1376 the owners of the village of Terpiczów were three noble brothers Jaczko, **Jurko** i Iwanko

(2) in 1400 a widow named Małgorzata (Margaret) of Nieszkowice sued **Jurek** of Biernaszowice for stealing her a peasant and two oxen [Margaretha relicta Iliconis de Neschcouicz cum **Jurkone** de Bernaschouicze …pro recepcione violenta kmethonis…et…duorum boum]

(3) in 1443 Maciej, the parish priest at Korzkiew was asked to specify from what point the meadow through which **Jurek** of Przybysławice passed belonged to his church:



Jurkonem *de Przibislawicze* (*Acta castrensia cracoviensia* 8, p. 517)

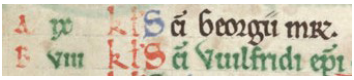
(4) in 1486 **Irzyk** of Filipowice guaranteed the refund of 10 grzywnas against Kuba's inn.

From the mid-16th century description of the district of Pinsk (now in Belarus) one can learn that some Jurzy owned a small forest shrine of Komarówka:

(5) Na pierwszem miesczu uroczysscze Komarowka, kthory trzymał **Jurzy**. *(*after Woyna 1874: 312*)*

In Poland the name Jerzy became very popular at the turn of the 20th century (cf. Rymut 1995). Nowadays it seems to be seldom chosen by parents for their newborn boys.

The first mention of Saint George in Britain was in Adamnan of Iona's 7th century writings. The name George is attested in texts written in Latin and in English in England in the Anglo-Saxon period, e.g. in the Venerable Bede's calendar where Saint George the Martyr's day (birthday) falls on the 9th day before the calends of May, i.e. on 23 April:



[https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/library/files/special/images/psalter/H229_0002vwf2.jpg]

In Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* the name has the Old English form Georius, where the initial sound represented by <g> was most likely palatalized to /j/ while the other must have merged with the following vowel /i/:

(6) **ÆLS (George)**1: *UIIII. KALENDAS MAI. NATALE SANCTI GEORGII MARTYRIS …* 5 Se halga **georius** wæs on hæþenum dagum rice ealdorman under ðam reþan casere þe wæs Datianus geciged, on ðære scire Cappadocia. 'In heathen times Saint George was a noble ealdorman under the severe emperor called Datianus in the district of Cappadocia'.

(7) **ÆLS (George)**28: **Georius** ic eom gehaten, and ic hæbbe ealdordom on minum earde, ðe is gehaten Cappadocia. 'I am called George and I have sovereignty of my land which is called Cappadocia'.

In the 9th century Old High German *Georgslied*, an adaptation of Saint George's legend, the form of the name is Gorio, which shows that the initial sound reflected in <g> had not become a palatalized semivowel, as in:

(8) dhazs zheiken uhorta dhare **Gorio** ce uhare. 'George really made this sign there himself'.

The Middle English form and pronunciation of the name George, which continues to be used, was derived from French and/or Anglo-Norman. According to Recasens (2014: 17), Latin /g/ became palatalized to [gʲ] in Late Latin and then affricated to [dʒ]. An early Anglo-Norman example from the *Anglo-Norman Dictionary* is this:

(9) (s.xii^{ex}; MS: s.xiii^{2}) **Georges** sure fu liez E tut mort e demiez. 'George was bound and killed and cut to pieces'. S Geo 515

Some Middle English examples referring to Saint George from the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* are:

(10) c1300 *The Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester* 8412: Sein **George** þe verste was & oþer martir þer to. 'Saint George was the first and the second martyr there'.

(11) c1300 *The early South-English legendary*; or, Lives of saints. I. Ms. Laud, 108, in the Bodleian library, 1:

SEint **George** þe holie man : ase we findez i-write,
In þe londe of Cappadoce : he was i-bore and bi-ʒite.
þe false godes he for-sok : and tornede to cristine-dom,
And louede Iesu crist swiþe wel : and holi man bi-com.

'Saint George, the holy man, as we find it written, was born and begotten in the land of Cappadocia. He forsook false gods and turned to Christianity and loved Jesus Christ very much and became a holy man'.

(12) c1300 *The early South-English legendary*, 24: "**George**, ich hote", þis oþur seide : "and cristine man ich am, And out of þe lond of cappadoce :

hidere to eov ich cam.". 'My name is George and I am a Christian man and I came to you here from the land of Cappadocia.'

Saint George had a number of followers, who were named Georgians after him:

(13) ?a1425(c1400) Mandev.(1) (Tit C.16)80/32 : Þere ben oþere þat men clepen **Georgyenes** þat seynt **George** conuerted & him þei worschipen more þan ony other seynt. 'There are some other people called Georgians, whom Saint George converted and they worship him more than any other saint'.

Saint George came from Cappadocia, and he was a member of the Praetorian Guard (*cohortes praetoriae*) for the emperor and a devout early Christian. When he refused to renounce Christianity, he was sentenced to death and decapitated on 23 April 303 thus becoming a martyr. The saint became very popular among crusaders who brought to the West the golden legend of Saint George and the dragon. English soldiers were called to wear "a signe of Saint George" on chest and back.

Saint George was known in England in Anglo-Saxon times – the earliest dedication of an English church to Saint George is at Fordington in Dorset, where one can see the image of the saint slaying the dragon carved in stone over the south door. The 23rd day of April was officially recognized as Saint George's Day by the Council of Oxford in 1222. However, it was not until the 14th century that he became the patron saint of England. The founding of the Order of the Garter in the mid-14th century by King Edward III was connected with putting this most senior English order of knighthood under Saint George's patronage. In his speech after the battle of Agincourt in 1415 King Henry V referred to the saint, who was believed to have been fighting on the victorious English side.

The name became extremely popular in England from 1500 onwards, when more and more boys were christened George (cf. Hanks *et al.* 2006, headword *George*). Four successive Hanoverian Georges on the British throne gave their name to the whole Georgian era (1714-1830), the time of great social changes, the beginning of the Industrial Revolution and associated technological, scientific and cultural transformations. In more recent times,

Saint George's Day of 1924 witnessed the first-ever radio broadcast by a British monarch: it was given by King George V.

Saint George's red cross on a white background is the national flag of England. Saint George is also the patron of Catalonia and of Georgia, which also has red crosses on its flag though the international name of the country has Persian etymology and has nothing to do with George. By extension, the US state of Georgia was named after George II, the king of Great Britain and Ireland.

Saint George's Day is also associated with the greatest English writer, William Shakespeare, who is believed to have been born on 23 April 1564 and died on 23 April 1616. In his *Hamlet* (Act 5, Scene 1) a gravedigger exhumes the skull of the dead court jester Yorick, whose name is another version of George. Another great English poet was George Byron, one of the founders of Romanticism. Two great English writers Mary Ann Evans and Eric Arthur Blair picked the first name George in their respective pen names of George Eliot and George Orwell.

It is no wonder that with such a first name, Jerzy Wełna has been greatly predisposed to becoming an expert in English studies. His outstanding contributions to research in English sounds, spelling, inflections and word-formation as they were changing over time are significant and known globally. Jerzy, a fantastic teacher and 'academic life organizer', set up the distinguished school of diachronic English linguistics at the University of Warsaw, a school made up of his numerous disciples who continue to follow his lead.

Ad multos annos, dear Jerzy!

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A brief memoir of the littera and its far-reaching consequences

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ABSTRACT

The most persistent misinterpretation of linguistic structure is embodied in the employment of the concept 'littera', which has been widespread for many centuries, particularly among language historians – though carefully avoided by Wełna (1978, 1987), for instance. A comparably influential misconception has waited till recently for the introduction of the *–eme*, followed by the more drastic 'transformation' and 'systematic phoneme' and their consequences; and their adoptions were comparatively short-lived. However, (positive and negative) concern with the latter concepts has obscured for many researchers the persistence of the earlier prominence of the littera, which has recently been maintained, often with no acknowledgment (or awareness?), only among a traditionalist body of philologists, such as Ringe (2006) or Lass – Laing (2012) (if we ignore, as is usually advisable as concerns language, some recently fashionable French 'philosophers/littérateurs'). Here I offer some possible remedies for the phonological aberrations that this history has encouraged, directly or indirectly.[1*]

Keywords: littera, componentiality, contrast, neutralization, prosody.

It seems that from a very early time in the study of language in Europe, the status of the sounds of language were conceived of as secondary to the graphs of written language. This reverses the priority implied by the modern usage of associating the primary expression of 'language' with 'sounds' vs. secondary use of 'written language' in the form of 'graphs': the contrastive sound has ontological priority in language. But the earlier

1 * I am very grateful to Fran Colman in providing access to her superior scholarship in the material that is addressed here, and for her comments on the present paper.

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reversed priority is unsurprising, given that expression, transmission, and preservation of any explicitly formulated study of language, particularly in the absence of sound recording or a standard oral tradition, presupposes a written language as its vehicle. Etymologically, 'grammar' (γραμματική (τέχνη)) is the study of one's letters (γράμματα), generalized to include written language as a whole. Indeed, as Robins (1951: 39), for instance, recounts, the Alexandrian grammarian Dionysius Thrax regarded grammar as not a τέχνη ('art', 'discipline', even 'science') but an εμπειρία ('practical accomplishment', 'experience (in)'), associated with basic education in literacy and with the preservation of literature as a model. His grammar thus begins with the study of the (in modern linguistic usage) strange bed-fellows 'letters' and 'syllables'.

Latin grammarians distinguished the components, or 'accidents', of the letter, *littera*, as *figura* ('written shape'), *potestas* ('spoken value'), and *nomen* ('name' – e.g. in describing Greek *alpha*, *beta*, etc.), equivalent to the Stoics' χαρακτήρ τοῦ στοιχείου, στοιχεῖον, and *όνομα* as the three aspects of the *γράμμα*. The equivalent of littera for syllables was taken to be a three-part syllaba, with again figura, potestas, nomen. But the set of these would largely duplicate the contents of sets of litterae, particularly the values. Nevertheless, the bed-fellows have for centuries lain undisturbed, despite the recognition of syllabaries, not to mention the misleadingly named ideograms. For a more extensive discussion of this history and further references see Munzi (2016).

From the perpetuation of the above Latin terminology there arises the ambiguity concerning whether 'letter' and its equivalents in other languages denote this collection of components or just the figura, the distinctive letter-shape, or the potestas, the sound. The ambiguity is illustrated by Lass' (2014: Appendix, p. 57) citation of Donatus' view of the *littera*, in his own brief defence of the *littera* as a member of a 'universal phonetic alphabet': 'Donatus (*Opus minor*, I) defines *littera* as "pars minimis [sic Lass, sc. "minima"] vocis articulatae" (the minimal unit of articulate sound), and then assigns the three accidents above to a *littera; ...*' However, the *littera* cannot be characterized in both ways – the minimal part of a spoken word and an entity combining sound and writing – without introducing ambiguity (see further Anderson 2014: §1). In classical grammars, only sporadic attempts over time were made to acknowledge the ambiguity and remove it. As Abercrombie (1965: 78) points out, 'Priscian was one of those who distinguished *literae* and *elementa* ("minimal units of a word's sound"), though Priscian draws attention to confusion in their use (and was by no means consistent himself)'.

It is, I confess, less than satisfactory on my part to isolate the *littera* from the rest of the Greco-Roman tradition of studying language, wherein *figura* is also applied to other linguistic units; and *vox* ('voice') appears as either *vox articulata/significata* 'sound with meaning' (roughly 'phonetic form of a word') or *vox inarticulata* (sound alone). Padley (1976: 33) comments on the *vox articulata*: '<i>n Priscian's system ... it is only in construction with other *voces* in an utterance that a *vox articulata* achieves the status of a *dictio* ('sign'), which attains its full meaning only by virtue of its relationship to other *dictiones* in a linguistic structure'. The *dictio* is a *pars minima orationis constructae*. But I judge and hope that this focusing of mine does not undermine understanding of the pervasive tradition of *littera*, particularly of the ambiguity that arises in (Lass' [2014] gloss to) Donatus' definition.

An alphabet of *litterae* may be developed into a 'universal phonetic alphabet' (as Lass [2014] envisages), as indeed with the modern IPA symbols, rather than simply an alphabet of each *pars minima vocis articulatae* of a particular language: an alphabet that is freed from any concern with the sign (dictio) as differentiating contrasts of a particular language. But an 'alphabet' in this sense remains a transcription: it provides (in an interpretation allowed by its etymology) the written equivalents of sound-types, but it is not a characterization of speech sounds, either universal or language-particular. Nor, given the usual alphabet-based orthographic commitment to non-compositionality and monosystemicity – a figura has only one potestas and vice versa – does it constitute a description of the phonological system of a language. Adoption of an alphabetic writing-system does not provide a reconstruction of the phonology of a language, whether, at the period concerned, the language is written or unwritten. A writing system and its conventions, particularly if applied to various languages, may be one source of potential evidence in reconstructing languages of the past, but that is all. And it does not express the phonological structure of a current language.

Unfortunately, after the above classical developments, inertia sets in in this area for centuries. 'Universal phonetic alphabets' were slow to develop, though awareness of phonetic distinctions and classes has ancient roots. Rather, the Latin alphabet came to be applied, with adaptations, to the vernaculars of Europe, and eventually to 'more exotic' languages. And even the renaissance humanists consistently maintained the ambiguous *littera*, however much they simplified (not always helpfully) other medieval conceptions based on the Greco-Latin tradition. An attempt to revive the *elementum/lit(t)era* distinction was made by the humanist Despautarius

(Padley 1976: 31): *litera scribitur; elementum profertur* ['a/the letter is written; a/the element is pronounced']. But this had little effect.

In the 16th century there began to develop a serious interest in describing the sounds of speech and in spelling reform, and this came to full fruition in the centuries that followed. However, even in this tradition, (to coin a phrase) 'old habits die hard'. Thus, such a leading figure in these developments as Wallis begins his 'Introductory Treatise on Speech' (included and translated in Kemp's [1972: 129] edition) with the subtitle 'Of the Formation and True Sound of all the Letters', and begins the text with the traditional formulation: 'It is common knowledge that words joined together make sentences, syllables joined together make words, and letters joined together make syllables'.

Kemp comments on Wallis's usage as concerns *lit(t)era* as follows (1972: 63):

> Wallis recognizes the ambiguity of meaning of *litera* as either 'sound' or 'symbol', and for the most part succeeds in avoiding the pitfalls into which confusion of these two meanings had led many of his contemporaries. On the whole he seems to use *litera* to signify one of the phonemes of a language having a distinctive symbol associated with it; phonetically similar phonemes in different languages, although their symbols may differ, e.g. *P* and Greek Π, are the same *litera*. In describing vowels he seems to avoid using *litera*, perhaps because particular symbols, such as A E I O U, are more ambiguous in their realization as sounds than are the consonant symbols. In some instances he is certainly using *litera* to mean written syllables. However, … where the discussion is specifically concerned with the confusion of symbols, he uses *characterem literae z* (the symbol for letter z).

There is enough ambiguity and uncertainty here not to deter philologists from maintaining the different Latin and medieval traditions concerning the letter.

There was widespread exploitation in the 19th century of the intersecting 'series' of litterae that were associated with the 'shifts' that were identified as having differentiated various (sets of) Indo-European languages, such as 'Rask-Grimm's Law', or 'Verner's Law'. These concerns did not serve to dislodge the littera from its basic status. There was, however, the renewed explicit recognition that litterae were grouped in classes, 'series'. It was a

series whose members underwent 'shifts'. Such a 'series' might be labelled as 'voiceless fricatives', described by their common mode of production. Its members are in an associative, 'paradigmatic' relation, and potentially contrastive.

But there was no recognition that there are more basic elements whose presence in different sequential units, unexpressed in the figurae, is fundamental to the phonological expression of the 'series', and thus the formulation of such 'shifts'. The labels for the 'series' are more fundamental than the members, which are each simply a bundle of such phonic properties as mode or place of articulation. There is a need for the introduction of sub-segmental components that define a 'series' and other dimensions that are associated with the phonology of litterae.

However, the formulation of 'shifts', which differentiate (groups of) languages which otherwise show similarities suggestive of relatedness went some way towards the identification of the likely contrastive sounds of unwritten 'parent' languages, such as, ultimately, Proto-Indo-European (for a succinct and lucid account of the traditional view of major developments, see Lass 1994: Part 1). The identification and formulation of relatedness, language families, and their 'parents' are, of course, well known as a major contribution of the 19th century study of languages – though there has been a renewal of interest in the Indo-European area since the late 20th century. But it is in the representation of these 'traditional' reconstructions of unwritten 'parents' that the crucial ambiguity of the littera becomes salient.

Reconstructed representations of these unwritten languages have employed the same litterae as were applied to written, or historical, languages. But the former representations are surely not a reconstruction of the litterae of unwritten languages! Then they are simply the nomina of elementa only; they serve to identify elementa. The attempts to differentiate the pre-historic representations by (non-)italicization or by preceding them with an asterisk constitute an admission that they are not composed of littera but are names for suggested different phonological segmental units. But often in philological work there has been no notational distinction made between the representations of 'written' and 'reconstructed' littera. For example, in talking about the phonology of Old English, Wright & Wright (1923) give emboldened graphs for the letters (plus diacritics) used to write both a standardized Old English and for 'the primitive Germanic equivalents of the Indo-Germanic vowel system' (title of ch. II, p.12); glosses in modern English are in italics. This suggests we should differentiate more saliently

the littera from the reconstructed phonological unit – and, for that matter, when dealing with written languages also.

At the same time, we need to recognize the secondary status of the segment as a phonological unit by the introduction of potentially contrast-bearing components of the segment, elementa proper, i.e. features of some sort, whose domain is not necessarily limited to the segment. However, componentiality and the possible extension of 'features' to non-minimal domains (i.e. prosodic status in the sense of Firth and his colleagues) was slow to enter even the 'mainstream' of the structuralism that developed in the 20th century. This necessarily brings us back to concerns with the influence of the 'segmental' littera, our main object of interest.

The major development in the first half of that century, in terms of attention-demanding, was the introduction of the phoneme. This appeared to recognize the independence of phonology, by introducing a notation distinct from any written alphabet that might have been devised for a language. But it still provides only a transcription, and so still carries some of the baggage associated with an alphabetic orthography (see again Anderson 2014: §2). He points out that this is evident from the influential 'Phonemic Principle' of Swadesh (1934/1958), in particular the assumption of monosystemicity, carried over from the littera-based requirement that the relation between figura and potestas is bi-unique.

One of Swadesh's 'criteria' for establishing the phonemes of a language, no. 4, 'complementary distribution', stipulates that '<i>f the distribution of one type of sound is complementary to that of more than one other, it is to be identified with one rather than the other if there is a more definite phonetic similarity in that direction' (Swadesh [1934/1958: 3])). He goes on: 'an example is the p of English *speech* whose distribution is complementary to that of the voiced labial b as well as to that of the voiceless labial stop sounds of *peak*, *keep*, *happen*, but goes with the latter rather than the former because of 'the phonetic similarity'. In the first place, the claimed 'phonetic similarity' is not at all evident (to ears unprejudiced by the spelling), and is certainly not confirmed by subsequent instrumental work. And this indecisiveness is often the case in such situations; but we have neutralization of a contrast whichever of these implementations is involved: voiced versus aspirated.

There are problems in applying this 'criterion' of Swadesh's, then. Even more importantly, making such a choice disguises the phonological status of the plosives following the initial sibilant in words like *speech*. We return to the observation that such a plosive is not in contrast with either of the pair of plosives with the same 'place' value that we find elsewhere.

There is a different system operative at this position, following the sibilant spelled <s>, as in *speech* and *asp*, and in foot-medial *aspect*, where the first plosive is ambisyllabic.

In the sometimes cited 'counter-example' of the phonology of the *sb* sequence in *asbestos* there is variable voicing of the sibilant. But, crucially, the foot division comes between the first sibilant and the following plosive; here the plosive is foot-initial, whereas the neutralization of plosives occurs after the sibilant that shares its syllable, in onset or coda, as in the second sibilant+plosive sequence in *asbestos*, again with ambisyllabic plosive. The sequence traditionally transcribed as [zb], as in *asbestos* or *frisbee*, can serve as neither an onset or a coda in English: a phonological boundary comes between the segments, and the sequence itself occurs neither word-initially nor word-finally.

The sibilant that precedes these neutralized plosives in such an example as *speech* is also a neutralized segment, indeed an even more striking one: in this position it contrasts only with its absence, even though it is very similar in implementation to other, but more generally contrastive, occurrences of such a voiceless fricative. And in the phonology of the form *asp* the sibilant participates in other neutralizations: cf. *alp, harp* (if rhotic).

'The criterion of complementary distribution' makes it impossible to give recognition to this evidence of polysystemicity: a choice of plosive must be made if the criterion is to be satisfied. This derives from assumed bi-uniqueness of the relation between phone and phoneme, parallel to the relation between potestas and figura: the phone that does not contrast with either of the two phones found elsewhere must be grouped with one of them; in the orthography, a particular potestas has to be grouped with one of two potestates and associated with its figura in order to ensure bi-uniqueness, as in the spelling of English *spit* etc. This conceals a lack of contrast, a neutralization.

The similarity between phoneme and figura is not surprising. Swadesh (1934/ 1958: 35) declares (page references to the Joos version, here and elsewhere if relevant): '<a> phonemic orthography provides the most adequate, economical, and effective method of writing'; and again '<i>f the writing is entirely in keeping with the phonemics of the language, a mechanical substitution of values of the signs will reproduce the recorded forms correctly and economically'. So that: '<e>ven in the problem of phonemics itself, orthography is a valuable technique.'

On the other hand, Twaddell (1935/1958: 76), in (correctly) predicting the negative reaction to his essentially polysystemic concept of the 'phoneme',

admits: 'The relatively large number of such phonemes in a given language will doubtless appear unfortunate to some linguists.' But he contrasts his own view that 'the phoneme is a unit defined for a convenient description of phonological relations' with the then standard view of the phoneme:

> For many linguists, it appears, the phoneme functions as a unit to be represented by a symbol in so-called phonetic transcriptions. It appears that the unit these linguists require cannot sufficiently take into account either phonological or phonetic facts: it would clarify the issue if these units might be called "graphemes", "transcribemes", or even "letters". For I know of no earlier phoneme-definition which does not achieve transcriptional sanctions by violence to essential phonological relations and palpable phonetic fact.

The appeal to symbol economy by Swadesh and others betrays the orthographic principles that are attributed to the transcription of the phonemes they propose. So it is again not at all surprising that Pike should subtitle his book on *Phonemics* (1943) with the oft-quoted *A Technique for Reducing Languages to Writing*.

Bizarrely, Hockett (1942/1958: §7) dismisses even Twaddell's position on such phenomena as are illustrated by the distribution in English of the segments in [#sp] etc. commented on above; and Hockett declares (p. 101) that 'The simple statement of distribution' [in conventional phonemic terms] 'gives the facts without any complications; any talk of neutralization or cancellation or archiphonemes confuses the facts without adding anything'. But 'neutralization' is in such terms a 'fact', one obscured by the 'complications' resulting from the imposition of conventional phonemic requirements.

On the contrary, what is missing from Twaddell's account is recognition of phonological componentiality, 'features', which not only allows explicit formulation of the neutralizations he describes, but also resolves the 'economy' problem (for what it's worth): the distinctive components/features associated with a phonology are more economical than Swadeshian phonemes. And diachronic 'sound shifts' are optimally formulated in terms of them. Such components also provide for the explicit formulation of relations between the participants in appropriate 'allophony', or 'polysystemic contrasts'. Consider *pit* and *tip*, where the plosives belong to two different sets of contrasts associated with either the onset or coda positions.

Despite early rejections (particularly in North America) and the lack of componentiality, Twaddell's position was quite widely adopted instead of or along with the developments in ideas of the littera, the latter of which I shall look at below. Some of this pattern is illustrated by contributions to Rissanen, Matti – Ossi Ihalainen – Terttu Nevalainen – Irma Taavitsainen (eds.) (1992). And Davidsen-Nielsen (1978) documents the development of interest in neutralization and archiphonemes.

Unfortunately, when the componentiality, or compositionality, of European structuralists was adopted in 'generative phonology', the framework (as in the key work of Chomsky – Halle [1968]) had lost any interest in phonological contrast proper in favour of 'morphophonological contrast' (involving the so-called 'systematic phoneme'), which renders it, in its various manifestations, unsuitable for pre-present-day phonological reconstruction, as well as for characterizing synchronic phonology (see Anderson 2014: §3).

If the goal of phonological representation is to identify those elements of sound at particular positions that differentiate between lexical-items/signs (while allowing for some homonymy), and are thus contrastive, this is lost in the 'generative' tradition. This goal requires that we recognize the possibility of neutralization of a contrast in particular positions, and of contrastive prosodic elements (again in the sense of Firth [e.g. 1948]) which are associated not with a particular segment (or minimal sequential unit) but with a higher unit in representation, phonological or morphological or with a word-form or base (as in some so-called 'vowel-harmonies').

A rather different tradition concerning the littera from those we have looked at developed around the turn of the millennium. In various publications, including Benskin (1990, 1997, 2001) and Lass – Laing (2012), a tradition that ignores the problems concerning the littera identified in preceding centuries in favour of a differently obscure alternative. The last of the above publications, for instance, provides a rather different account of 'littera' in the description of their terminology (Lass – Laing 2012: 76, n.7).

> We use the terminology of the medieval theory of *littera* [why 'medieval'? and which 'theory'? – JMA]. The conventions (established by Michael Benskin 1997: 91, n.1 and 2001:194, n.4), are as follows. *Littera* is the abstract or superordinate [=? – JMA] notion of the letter, and (when referred to independently of manuscript citation), *littera* are enclosed in single inverted commas. *Figura* is the shape of a *littera.* Manuscript *figurae* are here enclosed in angle brackets or are italicised

> when combined as single words or longer. *Potestates* are sound values and represented by IPA symbols in phonetic brackets [=? so-called 'broad transcription' – JMA]. As an additional convention, glosses and names of lexical categories are in small capitals. Etymological categories [=? – JMA] and citations are in italics.

Unfortunately, the characterization of the 'Littera' here remains obscure [as well as of doubtful inflected number, apparently – JMA]: '*Littera* is the ABSTRACT or SUPERORDINATE NOTION of the letter' [the capitals are mine – JMA]. What does this 'definition' of the littera mean???] Things don't improve as this account progresses in pp.76-7: '...the label ('label' [= ? – JMA] "æ͞²" attached [=? – JMA]) to a form does not make a hard claim [=? – JMA] to the effect that it had nuclear [æ͞] in West Saxon or [e:] in non-West-Saxon dialects of Old English....It is rather a class identifier indicating a certain configuration [? – JMA] traceable in the discourse [=? – JMA] of English etymological history [??? – JMA]. Why is there little attempt to justify and clarify the 'sound values', whatever their status? And if they do not express contrasts, why not? More generally, this reader would welcome a translation of the suggested 'terminologies' into the familiar terms and conventions available to contemporary students of language – though I suspect that that would not render the resulting analyses any less tedious and their status any less doubtful.

Benskin's (1990: 164, n. 5) short 'explication' is more transparent, but appeal to the littera is not well motivated: 'Angle brackets < > enclose written symbols, regardless of whether current theory would count them as graphemes: they are the figurae of classical and medieval tradition, in – to borrow a term from the phoneticians – broad transcription. Inverted commas enclose *literae*'. Avoidance of the use of 'grapheme' is highlighted: O.K., but, as the 20th century at least revealed, appeal to any -eme is generally undesirable in the description of language (though familiar in another vague sense to social-media enthusiasts). An appeal to 'broad transcription' – 'borrowed' from 'the phoneticians' – remains as obscure and arbitrary as in phonetics. And this is not clarified by Benskin (1997: 91, n.1), which gives a brief account of a familiar understanding of the littera and its 'accidents' and an obscure explanation of his own use of angle brackets.

This recent tradition throws very little light on the main traditions, favourable or critical, concerning the linguistic status of the littera, or, indeed, of these writers' own 'terminology'. It is not clear, for instance, why we need the 'abstract or superordinate notion of the letter' rather than simply 'littera/

letter'. It bears very little in common with the recent work of etymologists such as Durkin (2009). But it reverts to the classical primacy of the graphic accident of the littera, and adopts the recognition of the gradualness of adoption of words and their sound and spelling, familiar from Weinreich – Labov – Herzog (1968), Toon (1983), and others. The character of phonology and its ontological priority is neither clarified nor even acknowledged, nor is componentiality, contrastivity, neutralization, or prosodic status, and their relation to the proposed 'terminology', whatever its status might be.

As one recent example of componentiality within a framework that assumes phonological (as well as morphophonological) contrast as basic (though such ideas have some history), we can consider the **C** and V components/features/elements of 'dependency phonology' (an illustration selected at random, of course); for recent presentations and references, see e.g. Anderson (2011: vol. III, and 2022: particularly chs. 1–2, 6, 11–13, 27–8, and 42). **C** identifies a perceptual property that is associated with all consonants; different major kinds of consonant involve different kinds of combination (including non-combination and asymmetric combinations) with the element **V**, which, when not in any combination, identifies the perceptual property characterizing vowels. These elements are names, nomina, of a 'potestas' that is subsegmental or suprasegmental; they are not part of an orthographic alphabet, but part of an onomasticon of metalinguistic names for properties of our perception of speech sounds. These properties are often described indirectly, in terms of the articulations that have the acoustic effects that can also be used to describe these perceptions, since the major evidence for the perceptual properties is their role in (morpho)phonological structures and the implementation of these in articulation and recognition.

Combinations of **C** and **V** provide the necessary cross-classificatory capacity lacking with litterae; and different ways of viewing the combinations that characterize various hierarchies, including relative sonority; combinations can also indicate degree of intrinsic (rather than positional) markedness by their relative complexity so that voiceless stops (**C** alone), being the least marked consonants, are maximally different from vowels (no **C**); and the prototypical syllable is {C} + {V}, where {C} and {V} within braces are units composed of, respectively, only **C** and only V. Any {V} is the prototypical exposed peak of the syllable pulse on whose margins consonants are formed. Fricative and sonorant consonants show combination with **V**, but in different proportions. With the former, represented {C;V}, **C** is predominant; with the latter, {V;C}, **V** is dominant over **C**. {C}, {C;V}, {V;C} are progressively more {V}-like, more sonorant. With voiced units/

segments {v} is present: this is a secondary feature that is prototypically redundant with {V} and {V;C}, but representable (redundantly) as {V{v}} and {V;C{v}}; and the secondary features have a lesser role than the primary in determining the sequencing of segments within the syllable. 'Place of articulation' differences belong here, as articulatory implementations of secondary features, also. As well as componentiality, there is thus a componential hierarchy, based on phonological salience, e.g. in contribution to sonority ranking and syllable structure.

In the (by now familiar, I would have thought) case of *spin*, *bin*, and *pin*, the plosives in the latter two are in contrast. If we ignore their shared 'place', in *bin* the (bilabial) plosive can be represented as {C{v}}, voiced, in *pin* as {C{c;v}}, aspirated. The plosive in *spin* does not participate in this contrast; but is characterized only as the bilabial plosive that follows, in the present case, initial [s]. Generalizing again over the plosives occurring in this environment, we might represent this, roughly, as in #<[s]>{C<v>}, where the two entities within angle brackets are incompatible; unbracketed **v** includes both voice and aspiration as absent in this context. This distinction is absent from the subsystem associated with this particular environment (and at other initial non-foot boundaries as well as from the word-initial #); by occurring instead of the major system that we find elsewhere, where there is a voice contrast and other (sometimes more salient) differences between the two plosives, its presence illustrates polysystemicity. In principle, the realization of the neutralized plosive in this environment could be implemented in the same way as one of the initial plosives in *bin*/*pin*, or alternating between the two or, as in this case, unlike either.

We should note too that what we have represented, in transcription, as [s] also realizes a neutralization in this environment; here it is in contrast with no other consonant. We might represent this phonologically as #<**C**>\{C<v>}, where, as we've indicated above, (unbraced) **v** lacks voicing or aspiration, and here the unbraced **C** at the beginning characterizes presence of any consonant; and the backwards slanted line indicates that the first segment is dependent on the following. (I assume that in consonant clusters the more sonorant is dependent, as argued in the sources cited above.) Again, of course, the contents of the pairs of angle brackets are incompatible. We have another minor subsystem, contrasting this consonant with its absence. It is not relevant to phonological contrast that the phonetic realization/implementation of the **C** here coincides with or is very like that of other consonants (typically spelled *s* or *ss* or *ce* or *sc*) found in other subsystems of English. Such a voiceless sibilant can be said to be polysystemic; it appears

in more than one subsystem, unlike the plosives following such a syllable-initial.

The representations I have suggested here are, obviously, incomplete and merely illustrative (but I hope not misleading), in the absence of a full treatment of a phonological system. And there may well be other particular frameworks of phonological representation that satisfy the requirements I've invoked here concerning contrast, componentiality, neutralization, and prosodic scope. But I confess that what I have just outlined may not, as such, accommodate the phonological contribution to whatever it is that Benskin and Lass and Laing have in mind, whatever it might be, particularly the role of the littera therein.

A number of modern languages have preserved the semantic distinction between what becomes *letter* in English and the descendant of the Latin collective *littera* we find in *letters* (='literature') and in analogues to other collections of paper things, such as 'documents'. Wallis Chapter XIV (edited by Kemp) includes an exemplification of *Etymologia*, another much borrowed 'technical term', examples of which, in the 5th edition of the grammar, are divided into two well-filled sections. In his translation Chapter [28] Kemp provides examples in English divided into the two sections:

> Section *I*. Regular word formation
> Section *II*. Remoter derivations
>
> Examples include:
> *I: you/your, they/they're, joy/joyful, top/tip, swallow/swill, -wick/bailywick …*
> *II. beat/bat/battle/batter, twig/twitch/twinge/, sniff/snuffle/snarl …*

Kemp comments on such as these last that Wallis 'tries to find common meanings in consonant clusters', such that the last set reproduced here are associated with 'nose'. And it not inappropriate that the treatment of etymology should lead on to poetry (translated on p. [29]).

Not unusually, too, the focus in all of these derivations is not on history, as such, but on one-off derivations: a temporal sequence of such is 'historical etymology'. Perhaps use of *littera*, unlike later *littera* expansions, should have followed this example, with recognition and introduction of 'phrasal littera'. However, though sometimes it is acknowledged that traditionally

etymology is only secondarily historical, how could anyone sufficiently apologize for the modern obscurantist mutilations of the littera?

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On etymology and Old English personal names[1]

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ABSTRACT

An evaluation of competing etyma for the common word base of the prototheme of an Old English dithematic personal name exploits the truism that the data on which we base reconstructions of Old English language and culture are, oxymoronically, not 'given', but are themselves open to (re-)interpretation. Illustrated here is recourse to theories of names and name formation, to orthography, and to theories invoking common word lexical semantic fields, in a minor experiment in *Imagining the Anglo-Saxon Past* and its language(s).

Keywords: etymology, lexical semantic fields, name, Old English, onomasticon, orthography.

1. Intent and assumptions

The formation of many Old English personal names from elements based on common words contributes to the assumption that spelling forms of a name provide evidence for language, notably phonology. This, of course, assumes a transparent etymology for that name, and a transparent relationship between orthography and phonology.

The single *token* which is the (ultimate) focus here is an Old English personal name represented as **Seolhwine** in Smart (1981: 65), and Colman

[1] Generous communications, telephonic and electronic, of Veronica Smart, have contributed to the delights of *seal*. Two Johns, Anderson and Newman, contribute to humour induced sanity.

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(1992: 112). The *type* of which this is a token is the grammatical category of name. An evaluation of two competing etymologies for the common word base of the prototheme of the name cited, may be regarded as a minor exercise in reconstructing an earlier language and culture, or, perhaps as well as, in imagining the unknowable.

The evaluation relies on the theoretical assumptions baldly presented here with supporting references: assumptions about the category of name, about Old English personal name formation, the purpose(s) of recording names, and about putative relationships between orthography and the grammar.

2. On the category of name

That names are categorically distinct from common words is a concomitant of their notional characterisation as lacking sense as defined below, which determines their syntactic distribution. Members of the category of name are stored in an onomasticon, equivalent in grammatical status to a lexicon, the repository for common words, but distinct from the latter in terms of content.

An onomasticon contains information about name(elements) corresponding to lexical information for common words: such as word structure, phonological shape (in the accent of the speaker), declension class, gender (if distinctive), and the person versus place distinction (the latter associated with the feature {loc(ative)}). Unlike a common word, however, a name has neither sense nor range of denotation. Unlike a noun, a name cannot denote a type; it cannot enter into hyponymic relations. The name **Jerzy**, for instance, represents a token-of-a-type, human male. It belongs to a subtype, but does not denote a subtype (Anderson 2007: 159, 112; see Colman 2014: chapter 2: §2.3.2).

The basic function of a name is primary identification (Smith-Bannister 1997: 15; also Colman 2015: §2; Duke 2005: 139; Stüber – Zehnder – Remmer 2009: 36). 'Nouns denote types of entity, pronouns identify entities classified as to speech act participation, and names identify individual entities' (Anderson 2011 [I]: 104), even though this function of names may fail in particular instances. In the words of Clark (2002 [1995]: 115), '[n]ames are in practice often duplicated; but such accidents in no way impugn the principle that each instance is necessarily intended to specify one, and only one, individual'.

A name taken from an onomasticon by nomination and placed in the lexicon is available for language use, its form potentially manifesting representations of morphosyntactic secondary categories in the shape of inflectional morphology. Although a name may accrue culturally or personally determined encyclopaedic associations, these are extra-linguistic. But by such associations names may be converted to common words by metaphor or metonymy: 'He's a proper Nero'; 'Aimez-vous Brahms?'. And names are subject to puns, by means of resuscitating the etymologies of common word bases: 'Æthelræd Unræd', or by mis-etymology, irresistibly illustrated here by that with which the dedicatee of this offering has been known to introduce himself: 'Woolly Jersey'.

3. Old English personal name formation

Most early Germanic personal names are based on common words, converted to name elements. As discussed at length in Colman (2014: chapter 5), principles of name formation from such elements include the selection of items, typically regarded as associated with the vocabulary of heroic verse (Clark 1992: 457-8; Redin 1919: xxxvii-viii). This association is reflected in the combination of items into dithematic names, determined by alliteration of the prototheme with that of names of family members (Woolf 1939: 246-7). Names of family members showing end variation, where the whole prototheme recurs but with a different deuterotheme, show alliteration by default, each having the same prototheme, as illustrated by **Eadgar** and his descendants **Eadweard**, **Eadmund**, **Eadgyth** (von Feilitzen 1937: 31). For early Old English, at least, personal names could thus have a secondary function as markers of kinship; until the combinations of some dithematic names appear to have become over common, or routine, as the late OE **Godwine** (Colman 2014: 203, 275).

Hypocoristic shortening of a dithematic name is one source of monothematic names, e.g., **Goda** for **Godwine**, with an inflectional suffix <a> on the form <Goda> reflecting its transference to the weak declension class. So too are lall names, originating in child language, particularly associated with onomatopoeia and reduplication and gemination of consonants, e.g. **Lulla**. Both types of monothematic names are illustrated by, for instance, kings' names in early Anglo-Saxon England (**Anna**, **Beonna**, **Offa**).

Also monothematic are many bynames: names added to or substituted for a given name, that is, either supplementary or suppletive, e.g. **Leofwine**

accompanied or replaced by **Horn**, **Wulfgar** by **Leofa**, *Æ***lfwine** by **Mus**. The adoption of bynames appears to be of non-native influence. The instance cited here are etymologically Old English, but correspond to 'the original byname formation which is so productive in Old Norse namegiving [sic]' (Smart 1981: xv). Bynames gained popularity in the late Anglo-Saxon period, possibly to aid distinction between people with overcommon names. A byname, however, is not a surname. A byname is one creation labelled 'name', yet to which, at least in its original application, might be attributed sense. But the various speculations as to why **Leofwine** was labelled 'horn', or whether or not **Wulfgar** was regarded as 'beloved', and what attributes of a 'mouse' (or their opposites) might be attributed to *Æ***lfwine**, remind us that people are named by people, who, apart from following societal norms, may invoke humour or extra-linguistic associations not readily recoverable (discussion in Colman 2014: chapter 5: §5.4.3); and that, once converted to a byname, the original common word acquires the primary identification function of a name, losing sense and denotation.

Whether the form <SEOLCA> of §6 below represents hypocoristic shortening of a dithematic name, or a suppletive byname is not formally distinguished by the inflectional suffix <a>.

In Colman (2014: chapter 5 §5.4) I classify hypocoristic names, lall names and bynames as types of nicknames, with discussions of interpretations of the concepts invoked and recognition of the uncertainties of classification disguised by the preceding ruthless summary. What precedes at least intimates that characteristics of hypocoristic and lall names, such as non-etymological consonant gemination and the role of sound symbolism, confound analyses based solely on Neogrammarian concepts of regularity of sound change (see also 'Heaha' in §6 below).

That some products of these types of name formation may have been more or less etymologically transparent to contemporaries, and may be to latter day commentators, does not contradict the previous claim that names lack sense and denotation: a common word converted to a name(element) loses the sense of the base. 'Once semantically emptied, names draw partly aloof from the language at large. Although the phonological tendencies that affect them cannot be alien to those bearing on common vocabulary, the loss of denotation allows development to be freer, with compounds obscured and elements blurred and merged earlier and more thoroughly than in analogous "meaningful" forms' (Clark 1992: 453).

4. Why etymologise Old English personal names?

The purpose of etymologising Old English name(element)s is thus not to attribute meaning (sense and denotation) to a member of the category of name. But given the typical formation of Old English names from common word bases, etymology becomes a starting point for analysing the spellings of name elements as potential evidence for reconstructing Old English. Spelling variants are open to analysis in comparison with those representing the common words on which the name elements are based, while acknowledging the loss of lexical semantic content concomitant with conversion to a name element.

Proposed etymologies of the bases of personal names and of place names inform reconstructions of cultures and their histories. Records of non-Old English names in Anglo-Saxon England reflect, for instance, contact with Celtic speakers, invasions by the Danes, and the importation of Frankish moneyers under the Danish occupation of East Anglia (Smart 1986; 2009; Colman 1996: §4). But the assessment of name forms as representing Old English or other Germanic names, itself relies on etymology as well as reconstructing the external history.

The quest for etymology involves identifying one or more orthographic forms (including abbreviations) as representing a particular name, identified by a head form, or citation form, illustrated here by an example from Smart (1992: 44). The name labelled '**Beorhtnoth**' (prototheme based on *beorht* 'bright', deuterotheme on *n*ōð 'temerity') is distinguished from forms of this personal name on late Anglo-Saxon coins, all from the Winchester mint: <BEORHTNOÐ>, <BERHTNAÐ>, <BREHTNOÐ>, <BRIHTNOÐ>, <BYRHTNOD>. Colman (1996) assesses differing motivations both for assigning head forms, and for the choice of a particular form. The choice of head form is responsible for the reliability of analysis of the spellings as (potential) evidence for Old English and the culture(s) that produced it.

I illustrate this with familiar interpretations of the name form <Hunferð>, which appears four times in *Beowulf*, identifying a *þyle* at the Danish court (on which, below).

For Klaeber (1950: 148), the name is '*Unfer*ð, i.e., more properly, *Unfrið*, "mar-peace"'. So, also, Wrenn (1958: 316), 'unpeace', suggesting that 'he was a literary creation rather than a historical person' (1958: 47). The 'erroneous' inital <H> is 'apparently suggested by the *Hūn-* compounds' (Klaeber 1950: 148 fn. 8, e.g., *Hūnlāfing* l. 1143). The initial <h> is typically editorially omitted in conformity with the alliterative pattern (Robinson 1993 [1970]: 221: fn. 2;

Fulk et al. 2008: 150). This points to <Hun> as a purely orthographic variant of <Un> in the representation of *Unfrið*.

This in turn recalls the invocation of Schönfeld (1911: xxii) of classical influence on 'Prosthese von *h*', as purely orthographic; an interpretation supported by Scragg (1970: 185-186), citing the possibility that 'all Anglo-Saxon scribes were influenced to some extent by the attitude to the graph *h* shown by scribes copying Latin'. That is, because of phonological developments in Latin, 'the symbol *h* became even more erratically used in Late Latin, being frequently omitted and also frequently inserted unhistorically' (also the discussion of the name form <HEBECA> on ninth-century coins in Colman 2004: §6). Robinson (1993 [1970]: 221, fn.2) suggests the 'inorganic *h*' as a 'scribal habit borrowed from the Celts, who indicate that a *u* has vocalic rather than consonantal function by prefixing a merely graphic *h*'.

Fulk et al. (2008: 150), however, cite *Ūn- as* 'a variant of *Hūn-*, probably "high"'. Whether the 'variant' is phonological or purely orthographic is not specified. The claim must, however implicitly, be phonological. The MS form <Hun> is etymologically appropriate for *Hūn-*. But initial [h] is incompatible with the alliteration. Therefore the form <Hun> represents a phonological 'variant' of *Hūn-* with no initial [h]. The MS form <Hun>, representing this phonological variant, is editorially emended to <Un>.

Whereas for (Klaeber 1950: 148 fn. 8: above), the prototheme of *Unfrið* is spelled <Hun> by analogy with the spelling of the etymologically different *Hūn-*, for Fulk et al. it is spelled <Hun> because it is etymologically *Hūn-*. I assume that when Fulk et al. (2008: 150) suggest that the 'first constituent of the name apparently was altered in the course of recopying because *Ūn-* was not a normal OE name element, at least in the later period', they refer not to the name element, but to the orthographic form of that name element. In the context of the alliterative pattern, the MS form <Hun> is interpretable as evidence for loss of initial [h] in Old English.

In sum so far, the MS form <Hunferð> represents either the name labelled **Unfrith** (prototheme based on 'negative' *un*, deuterotheme based on *frið* 'peace'), or the name labelled **Hūnfrith** (prototheme based on *hūn* probably 'high', deuterotheme based on *frið* 'peace').

For these names is proposed the same etymology for the deuterotheme. Under either interpretation, the vowel graph of the MS form <ferð>, compared with that of the common word base spelled <frið> suggests loss of stress in the name element. For some, this informs reconstructions of the behaviour in metrical patterns of names as opposed to common word compounds. Pascual (2020: 262), for instance, sees the form as evidence

for 'the prosodic weakness of names as compared to compounds, since its second element shows the effects of two processes associated with very low levels of stress (metathesis and reduction of *i* to *e*)', whereas in common word compounds, the base remains as *frið*. That metathesis is not associated with low, or no, stress (OE *brid* > *bird*; *acsian* > *ask*) does not invalidate this illustration of the application of etymological reconstruction.

Robinson (1993 [1970]: 222) interprets the MS form <Hunferð> as follows. Agreeing that <Hun> represents 'the negative prefix *un-*', he retains the <e> of the deuterotheme, which thus represents '*ferth* (also spelled *ferhth*)': 'mind, intellect'. The role of *þyle* is as 'scurrilous jester' or 'entertainer'. The name of this comic is **Unferth**. The spelling of the deuterotheme gives no evidence of loss of stress.

Specifying a head form and claiming its etymological base(s) distinguishes a name from the orthographic form(s) of a name, thus open to interpretation as evidence (or not) of something phonological. Depending on the identification of the name as **Unfrith**, **Hunfrith**, or **Unferth**, the MS form <Hunferð> may be interpreted as evidence (or not) of loss of initial [h], and as evidence (or not) of loss of stress on the deuterotheme.

And as in the interpretations of Klaeber, Wrenn, and Robinson, postulating a name and its etymological base(s) contributes to the pleasure of interpreting a story and its protagonists. Indeed, the juxtaposition of alternative suggestions thus formalised, rather than imposing a three-way either/or decision – a 'correct answer' as it were, allows for simultaneous echoes in the reader/hearer's mind; echoes that may reverberate differently at different points in the story.

Names lack meaning in terms of sense and denotation; but they may be associated with what Robinson (1993 [1968]: 179) calls 'latent etymological senses which could be shown to be appropriate to the characters who bear them'. With reference to the works of Robinson and of mediaeval scholars, Colman (2014: 120) invokes 'a widespread scholarly practice of associating name elements with common words – perhaps not even etymologically appropriate ones – for the sake of paronomasia. Onomastic puns often deliberately mis-etymologize names ...'.

Fulk et al. (2008: 150) argue that since both *Hūn-* and *-friþ* are well attested as Germanic name elements, the assumption of 'literary artifice in the construction of the name ... is at least unnecessary', and that the 'mar-peace' interpretation conflicts with, for instance, the character's trusted place at the Danish court. This seems simply to spoil the fun. But more, it appears to ignore the literary onomastics 'particularly congenial in an age

when etymology was not a minor philological interest, but rather a dominant mode of thought' (Robinson 1993 [1968]: 179).

The following discussion acknowledges that reconstructing 'the Anglo-Saxon world view' (§7 below) is itself influenced by the culture in which it is reconstructed: reflecting the inspiration of Eric Stanley's (2000) *Imagining the Anglo-Saxon Past*.

5. Semantic classes of name bases

As anticipated in the preceding section, etymological arguments for associating an Old English name(element) with a particular common word base consider the orthographic forms of names, as well as reconstructed unwritten ones, compared with those for the posited base (§6 below). The same orthographic sequence may, however, represent more than one common word. Therefore, etymological arguments also consider the types of lexical semantic classes attested as bases for name elements. But identification of the latter may be influenced by subsequent assumptions of suitability of the lexical semantics of the proposed base for its conversion to a name identifying a human being.

Lexical semantic class is invoked by, for instance, von Feilitzen (1937: 227), for the etymology of the name given the head form **Dunna**. Here the choice is between Irish *dunn* 'a dark colour', and Irish *dun* 'a fortified hill'. Von Feilitzen prefers the former, given the frequent use of colour words as bases for Old English name-elements ('cf. the frequent occurrence of *Blæc-*, *Brún-*, *Hwít-* etc.').

The question of perceived suitability of a proposed base is illustrated by the deuterotheme of the name **Beadugils**. This is supposedly based on a common word *gisl*, typically glossed 'hostage', not regarded by latter-day interpreters as an appropriate personal name-element base. This judgement could, of course, reflect societal differences in naming; but Germanic societies were not apparently among those who give a child an opprobrious name in the hope of warding off evil (cf. those cited in Ogden – Richards 1956: 28). In this instance, however, as suggested by Kaufmann (1968: 148), the earlier semantics of the common word involving shoots of a plant were extended by metaphor to a scion, or offshoot, of a noble family: appropriate as a name-element base. Subsequent to the name formation, the semantics of the common word metonymised to 'hostage'.

The prototheme of the late Anglo-Saxon moneyer's name given the head-form **Seolhwine** cited in §1 above is represented as <SEOLC> and <SELC> (§6 below). Two competing etyma have been suggested: OE *seoloc*, *seolc* 'silk', and OE *seolh* 'seal'. Redin (1919: 158) dismisses the former as 'certainly not to be thought of as an etymon'. The latter is supported by Smart (1973: 116), since it 'fits neatly into an onomasticon which chose Wolf, Raven and Hawk in the formation of its names' (to which may be added 'eagle': OE *earn*, name element **Earn-**: Colman 1992: 94). There is an apparent discrepancy between interpretations of the orthography and of the appropriate semantic class (§6 below).

Not relevant here is the Old English prototheme in names such as **Selethryth**, **Seleweald**, based on OE *sele* m. 'hall, dwelling' (e.g., von Feilitzen 1937: 354, on <Seleuuinus>), noted by Whitelock ed. (1967: 369) as rarely recorded outside verse, and itself forming several compounds restricted to verse.

I turn now to the orthography of the prototheme of the name cited as **Seolhwine**, before appealing to lexical semantic classes.

6. 'Seal' or 'silk': Orthography

The head form **Seolhwine** in Smart (1981: 65) and Colman (1992: 112) cited in §1 above subsumes forms of this name on two coins of Edward the Confessor (AD 1042-66) from the Gloucester mint: <SEOLCꝑINE> and <SELCꝑINE>. These represent the prototheme as <SEOLC> and <SELC>, not <SEOLH>: that is, with <C>, usually interpreted as representing [k], rather than <H>, representing [x]. Smart (1992: 96), however, cites the name (for the same moneyer) as **Seolcwine**; and the form <SEOLCA>, for a moneyer or moneyers for Æthelred II (AD 978-1016) at Southampton and Winchester is given the head-form **Seolca** in Smart (1981: 65). The <A> here represents the inflectional suffix cited in §3 above.

Representation of the vowel as <EO> is appropriate for either etymon. *Seolh* 'seal' reflects breaking before [lx] (e.g., Campbell 1959: §146). *Seoloc* 'silk' reflects back mutation, and *seolc* the loss of the conditioning unstressed vowel (Campbell 1959: §205, 390). The form <SELC> reflects late Old English monophthongisation of the short diphthong (or simplification of the digraph, according to one's view of Old English 'short diphthongs'). For *seolh*, it may alternatively reflect Anglian 'smoothing'.

It is the graph <C> that may suggest the *seolc* etymon. From the point of view of orthography alone, support for the *seolh* etymon considers <C>, rather than <H>, as a possible representation of (a reflex of) OE [x]. The distribution of [x] is determined by lexical-item stress, in turn determined by lexical-item structure. Its reflex [h] is limited to foot-initial position (*healdan* 'hold', *behealdan* 'behold'). [x] appears foot-finally (*seolh* 'seal', both elements of the compound *heahburh* 'chief town', cited by Campbell 1959: §461).

The structure of a dithematic name is analogous to that of a commonword compound consisting of a root plus another root. Since in Old English, word stress is associated with the root (e.g., Strang 1970: 411), each element of a dithematic name is lexically associated with an ictus, or foot head (whatever may be postulated about its function in metrical patterns). The prototheme-final consonant is thus foot final. That is, if the orthography indeed represents an unreduced compound. If <SEOLCƿINE> represents **Seolhwine**, <C> represents foot-final [x], or a reflex thereof.

And if so, and if <C> represents [k], this suggests strengthening of the voiceless velar fricative [x] (represented by <H> / <h>) to the voiceless velar stop [k] (represented by <C> / <c>): phonetically natural in certain contexts, if not "regular" in a Neogrammarian sense. This is otherwise attested in common word forms when the fricative is followed by [s], as in, e.g., the second element of the compound *weocsteall* 'altar place', cf. **weoh* + *steall* (Campbell 1959: §416; also Brunner 1965: §209; Bülbring 1902: §482), but is cited by von Feilitzen (1937: 121) as occurring before other consonants in personal name-forms (see also Colman 1992: 205).

In an inflected form of a monothematic name, such as that represented by <SEOLCA>, the root element is associated with a foot, the inflectional syllable is not. The final consonant of the single name element is thus foot medial. In foot-medial intersonorant position in pre-Old English, the fricative [x] typically lenites to the point of loss (Campbell 1959: §461). This is reflected in forms of *seolh* 'seal' with an inflectional suffix, e.g., gen. sg. <seoles>. Compare *seoloc* 'silk', gen. sg. <seolces> (Campbell 1959: §§574 (2), (4)).

A form such as <heahra> comparative 'high', alongside forms without the medial <h> is attributed by Campbell (1959: §463) to 'the analogy of *hēah*': it is not clear from the notation of Campbell whether the analogy is to be regarded as phonological or purely orthographic. Stenton (1989 [1913]: 17 fn. 1) says of the attestation of a document by one 'Hæha', in or before AD 709: '[t]he name Hæaha is a weak formation from the stem Heah, frequently compounded in O.E. personal names, such as Heahmund

and Heahbeorht. It is possible that the name Heaha, although it has never been identified, may exist in local nomenclature. Under such conditions the name would be indistinguishable from the O.E. adjective heah = "high"'. Again, an <h> is present in the spelling in a context conducive to loss of medial [x]. Amos (1980: 41 fn.6), however, perceptively suggests that as the name may be a nickname (a hypocorostic formation: §3 above, as supported by the dithematic names just cited), the retention of <h> may reflect a geminated consonant in '**Heahha*'.

Retention of foot-medial intersonorant geminated [x] represented by <hh> is illustrated by *crohha* 'pot, crock', in Campbell (1959: §464) and Brunner (1965: §220). The latter cites the alternative forms with <cc>, *crocca*, weak masc., and *crocce*, weak fem. (§220, Anm. 2). For geminated [x], Sievers (1903: n. 1) notes the not infrequent manuscript use of 'simple **h** instead of **hh**' (recalling 'Heaha' above), and 'even at times **ch**' (the last adopted from Old Irish as representing a fricative in early Old English: see, e.g., Campbell 1959: §§55-57).

According to Pheifer (1998 [1974]: lxxxiii), however, <ch> and <c> in <crocha> 'crock' (Épinal l.171), <chroca> (Erfurt l.171) represent the ungeminated fricative, 'where it was normally lost between voiced sounds', but preserved in the Épinal-Erfurt glossaries in certain instances, notably between vowels, and between a voiced consonant and a vowel.

From this discrepancy between interpretations of the medial consonant in 'crock' may be extrapolated at least the following. Foot-medial intersonorant [x] is retained only if geminate, or if not, only in very early texts. If the late Old English form <SEOLCA> is to be based on *seolh*, and not *seoloc*, *seolc*, a literal interpretation of the <C>, as representing [k], would suggest strengthening of [x] to [k] in exactly the foot-medial intersonorant context conducive to its lenition and loss.

The co-existence in late Old English of the dithematic <SEOLCƿINE> and <SELCƿINE> with <SEOLCA> (albeit at different mints and different dates) may suggest that the monothematic name is hypocoristic: a reduction of the dithematic one in which the strong noun base of the prototheme (either *seolh* or *seoloc*) is converted to a name by transference to the weak declension class with nominative singular expounded by the <A> suffix. Alternatively, <SEOLCA> may represent, by the same conversion, a byname, a supplementary nickname, without the accompanying given name (discussion in Colman 2014: chapter 8: §8.4).

In neither case do I regard the <C> as evidence against the *seolh* etymon. The conversion of this common word to a name element is long

after the early period of loss of [x] in the relevant contexts. Moreover, the loss does not occur in all varieties of English. Whether <C> represents [x] or [k], it may be seen as mirrored in some varieties of present-day Scots where not only final [x] is retained, but has been retained in intersonorant position as [x] or [k]: *selchy* [sɛlxɪ], [sɛlkɪ], as well as *selch* [sɛlx], 'seal' (Robinson 1985: 599). I return to this in §7 below.

Perhaps more significant is the function of the form: to identify a name element, which functions to identify a moneyer, a person in an official capacity, identified on legal coinage. Considering this function may prevail over an urge to invoke supposedly regular 'sound change'. If <C> represents a reflex of [x] strengthened to [k] (§6 above), the retention of a reflex of [x] in <SEOLCA> reflects a defiance of foot-medial [x]-loss in favour of its function in identifying the name. Or, does <C> here represent a geminate consonant in a hypocoristic formation (cf. '**Heahha*', above)?

The next section reconsiders characterisations of the lexical-semantic fields into which the common words *seoloc*, *seolc* and *seolh* might fall.

7. 'Seal' or 'silk': Lexical semantic fields

The invocation of semantic classes of name-element bases in §5 rests implicitly on lexical semantic field theory. Identification and classification of lexical semantic fields is controversial enough for a living language (relevant discussions are in, for instance, Lyons 1977: §9; Magnusson – Persson 1986: esp. 6-7; Persson 1990 passim). The issue involves concepts such as hyponymy, and is inextricable from the perceptions of a society at large, or of individuals, and can depend on particular contexts (linguistic or linguistically external). The difficulties in coming to grips with the perceptions of speakers of a language known only from written texts are illustrated in Strite's (1989) work on the various semantic fields indicated by extant Old English vocabulary. Biggam (1991: 118) exemplifies such difficulties as follows: '... "Colour" can be taken to include studies on pigments, dyes, fabrics, manuscript illumination, gemstones, etc.' (on 'colour', see, in particular, Berlin – Kay 1999).

Although the arrangement of their *Thesaurus of Old English* (TOE) is based largely on Dutch's 1962 edition of Roget, Roberts and Kay (1995: xxxiv) explain that '[a]s far as possible, we tried to be guided by what we knew of the Anglo-Saxon world view rather than by modern taxonomies (although our knowledge is obviously limited and this is another area in which we hope that the TOE will stimulate further research). Thus, the

major headings in **02.06 Animal** might not impress a modern zoologist, but seem to us to indicate the priorities reflected in the vocabulary'.

This attempt to re-create an Anglo-Saxon 'world view', in place of a present-day one, may be taken as an invitation to re-examine the types of contexts in which the items glossed as 'silk' and 'seal' occur in an Anglo-Saxon world. *Seolc* 'silk' is classified in TOE under '4. Material Needs', specifically under '04.04 Weaving' as either the fibre or thread (04.04.04), or as woven material or fabric, specifically 'fine woven material from silk, cotton or linen' (04.04.05.05). But given the physical sources of the commodity, and in the light of references to its use, a reassessment of its classification as mere 'material needs' is not uninvited.

Even today, silk can be excused as constituting a luxury item in Britain (except, perhaps, for those who regard Prada shoes and Veuve Clicquot as 'material needs'); but how much more so would have been the silk from Byzantium, purchased by merchants travelling to the continent to bring it for sale in Anglo-Saxon England (for instance, to Pavia, capital of the Lombard kingdom, and 'a convenient stopping place ... for merchants wanting to purchase Byzantine silks, often adorned with peacocks': Gannon 2003: 122 n.105). 'Silks commanded fabulous prices in western Europe' in the ninth century (Harris 2015: 102). Among references to the use of silk, the following well illustrates its luxurious status. 'Among the pilgrims who came [to the shrine of Cuthbert then near Durham] in the tenth century was King Athelstan, who donated the elaborate vestments he wore when his body was excavated in 1827, including silk garments embroidered in gold thread' (Taylor 2001: 180-181).

If 'silk' is to be regarded not simply as one of various fabrics for clothes and furnishings, but as a luxury commodity, the word denoting it would fall in with other words denoting wealth: words certainly attested as bases for Germanic name-elements, such as OE *ead* 'wealth' (**Ead-**, Colman 1992: 81), *gold* 'gold' (**Gold-**, Colman 1992: 100). Roberts and Kay (1995) cite *ead* in the field of 'Happiness, blessedness' (08.01.01.03.03), as well as in the field of 'Treasure, riches, wealth' (15.01.03), along with *gold*, and *feoh*, *sinc*, *wela*, *hord*.

A source of unease, of course, and as incidentally illustrated by the preceding, is that silk was not a Germanic commodity. The Chinese formula for its fabrication was apparently acquired by the Byzantine Justinian. The word *seoloc* is sparsely recorded in Old English, and not (as far as surviving texts allow) recorded in heroic verse, unlike terms for other treasurable objects, which, in the terms of Clark (1992: 457-8) and Redin (1919: xxxvii-viii) quoted in §3 above, were available for conversion to Old English personal

name elements. A bale of silk does not come to mind as companion to the bling of a Germanic dragon-guarded treasure hoard.

On the other hand, although *seolh* is apparently unattested in verse, it figures metonymically in compounds such as *seolba*þ, as does 'whale' in *hwælweg*, 'sea' (Colman – Anderson 2004: 559).

Roberts and Kay (1995) place *seolh* in the benign-seeming field of 'Marine Animal', along with *dolphin*, *walrus*, *whale* (02.06.05.01). It would not immediately suggest one to which war-like or otherwise ominous characteristics are known to be attributed, such as wolf, raven, hawk or eagle (Smart 1973: 116, quoted above). Here literature may provide an insight into 'the Anglo-Saxon world': <nalles hearpan swēġ wīġend weċċean, ac se wonna hrefn fūs ofer fæġum fela reordian, earne secgan, hū him æt æte speow þenden hē wið wulf wæl rēafode> (*Beowulf* : Fulk et al. 2008: ll. 3023-3028); 'no sound of harp shall wake the warriors, but the dark raven, eager after doomed men, shall recount many things, and tell the eagle how it sped him at the feast, when he, contending with the wolf, laid bare the slain' (translation by Clark Hall 1950).

Although a 'vitullus marini' may have been a source of fear for some more than others, it could seem that seals had rather more to fear from men: witness the ship-ropes made of hides of whales and seals referred to in the account of the voyages of Ohthere (Whitelock 1967: IV ll. 54 & 58). And in some varieties of present-day English *seal* denotes a fat, clumsy person. Perhaps the word *seolh* does not rest entirely easy in the same lexical field as *wulf*, *hrefn*, *hafoc*, *earn*.

Perhaps, again, speculations on ultimately untestable mental associations might be chastened by a reminder of the influence of fashions of thought offered, for instance, by a history of interpretations of OE *wyrd* in discussions of the supposed surviving paganism, and attributions of Germanic so-called fatalism and melancholy, in Anglo-Saxon literature, documented and evaluated in Stanley (2000 [1975]: chapter 11).

The 'seal' word appears in a tenth-century moneyer's name at York. Smart (1982: 106), discussing Norse names on the coinages of York, describes 'the compounds such as *Selecol* ... where the first part of the name was not originally a name-forming element but descriptive or attributive, qualifying the name. This is typically Norse, and is frequently met in the sagas in such names as *Skalla-grim*, *Viga-glum*. Thus *Selecol* (ON *Sela-kollr*) is "Kollr of the seals"'; see also von Feilitzen (1937: 357) on the *Domesday Book* form <Selecolf> as "ON ***Selakollr**"; 'the first el. is the gen. plur. of ON *selr* "seal"'. *Selecol* was presumably coined in England, as Smart (1982: 112) notes

that the complete name *Selecol* 'is not known in Scandinavia although *Kollr* is common there'.

The single coin form <SELECOL> to which Smart (1982: 112) refers does not unambiguously represent a genitive suffix on the prototheme. The function of the medial <E> may have become that of connecting vowel, or composition joint (Colman 2014: 154), and the attributive function supposed for the theme in the name's original composition obscured. The common word *seal*, with sense and denotation, may have become a base for, and been converted to, a name element, which lacks these.

Dr. Veronica Smart (personal communication) reminds me that seals have a particular relationship with humans in Scottish – and Scandinavian – mythology, as shape changers, male and female: 'I am a man upon the land/and I am a silkie in the sea'. This engenders a fear of killing a seal, for fear of killing a human; perhaps the Ohthere reference to ropes of seal hide intimates that for the audience of the account, this was at least unusual. This, and the very benignity of a seal, might encourage a view of *seal* as a base for a personal name element.

The coin forms <SEOLC>, <SELC>, for Edward the Confessor (AD 1042-66) from the Gloucester mint, and for Æthelred II (AD 978-1016) at Southampton and Winchester, a long way from the York of Scandinavian rulers and their successors, and the combination of the prototheme with the OE name element **wine**, argue against a Norse bearer of the name element in these instances (see the discussion in Colman 1992: 115, invoking again the views of Smart). Plausible interpretations of the orthography allow that they may rather suggest conversion of the common word *seal* to an Old English name element.

Agreement with the views of Redin (1919: 158) and Smart (1973: 116), cited in §5 above, may be expressed by subsuming the forms <SEOLCþINE>, <SELCþINE> and <SEOLCA> under the head forms: **Seolhwine**, **Seolha**.

8. Conclusion

Old English data are not 'given', but susceptible to (re-)interpretation. Jerzy Wełna's writings on early English present the student with, not facts, but possibilities to be theoretically and empirically assessed. May this birthday bagatelle indicate that this student is not (wilfully) deaf to his teaching.

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Assessing the validity of the mid-nineteenth-century literary portrayal of Southern American English in *Fisher's River (North Carolina) Scenes and Characters by "Skitt, who was raised thar"*: A case of past tense *be* forms

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ABSTRACT

The depiction of the vernacular of the Antebellum South in literature raises doubts regarding its faithfulness, and questions whether it may be used as a source of scientific data. This question stems from the fact that there is no certainty as to the extent authors wanted to replicate the actual vernacular of the time and the extent to which this replication was a result of literary creativity. This research investigates the literary dialect representation in Hardin E. Taliaferro's 1859 work *Fisher's River (North Carolina) Scenes and Characters by "Skitt, who was raised thar"*. More specifically, we examine his usage of past tense *be* forms. Instances of *was* and *were* found in the book are verified against real written records extracted from an online database *Private Voices: The Corpus of American Civil War Letters*. The research concludes that while in *Fisher's River* we might observe a pattern where the allomorph *were* dominates in the singular and most plausibly in the plural, the data from letters selected from *Private Voices* present a different picture. In the authentic correspondence, leveling to *was* is by far the dominant variant form. Based on these findings we draw cautious conclusions and call for further studies based on works of other local colorist and authentic documents from the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Keywords: literary dialect portrayal, 19th-century Southern American English, *was-were* variation.

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1. Introduction

The vernacular style frowned upon by contemporary American language purists crept vigorously into Southern literature of the first half of the nineteenth century (Newton 1993: 7-8). More specifically, a dramatic increase of literary dialect representation of Southern speech was witnessed between the 1830s and 1860s, especially in works by authors native to the region (Ellis 1994: 13, in Dylewski 2013: 167). Some of these works have been used by students of earlier American regional dialects to glean linguistic information.[1]

Nonetheless, unearthing other, more reliable sources suitable for linguistic scrutiny and, more importantly, the doubtful reliability of written simulation of regional vernacular in literature contributed to the diminishing popularity of portrayals of literary dialect amongst historical dialectologists. Indeed, a good many fundamental reasons suggest local-color fiction be rejected as a primary source for dialectal research. Writers' basic aim in employing dialect in their fiction was stylistic rather than philological (Giner – Montgomery 1997: 168) to give the characters realistic texture. Since in the majority of cases dialect writers were not linguists, they tended to be selective and pick traits "easily understood by the reader and associated with the region and social class presented in a given piece of literature" (Dylewski 2013: 83). These traits would often be vernacular shibboleths rather than region-specific characteristics. Some writers, in turn, tended to employ features simply deemed archaic in order to represent an earlier version of a speech they wanted to portray. It was also a common practice of nineteenth-century writers to borrow literary dialect from earlier works.

Taking all these issues into account, representations of local speech in literature should not be treated as sources of linguistic data *per se*. On the contrary, the faithfulness of rendering local speech by an author might be

[1] For example, "[t]o study the uncultivated usage of the period, Hunter (1925: xvi) examines a substantial number of literary works (sketches, realistic short narratives, and a few novels and plays) of the period which sought to record and reflect popular speech. In the analytical part of the dissertation he elaborates on grammatical patternings, vernacular pronunciation, numerous lexical features, and pragmatic concepts typical of regional speeches he took into account. Impressive though the amount of the material Hunter went through is, the dissertation is characterized by one major handicap: the data Hunter collected are not compared to any other linguistic evidence and, consequently, the forms retrieved from the analysis are taken at face value" (Dylewski 2013: 86).

studied against data gleaned from more reliable materials such as vernacular letters, church and town records, etc.. Accordingly, in this paper the faithfulness of the Southern dialect depicted in *Fisher's River (North Carolina) scenes and characters* (henceforth: *Fisher's River*) by Hardin Edwards Taliaferro is verified against existing linguistic data gathered from mid-nineteenth century vernacular letters written by members of the underprivileged strata of Southern society. For the sake of this paper, we focus on variations in past tense *be* forms, variations whose presence in earlier Southern American English has been attested in literature (for instance, Montgomery 2004; Trüb 2006; Dylewski 2013).

The choice of the vernacular material is by no means accidental. In order to assure maximum accuracy of comparison, the data recorded in Taliaferro's work, a native to North Carolina, and published shortly before the outbreak of the American Civil War are compared to the linguistic data culled from Civil War correspondence written by both less literate Confederates and the members of their families.[2] The counties considered go beyond the Surry County where the plot of *Fisher's River* takes place, the rationale behind this being based on the following premise: we assumed that since Taliaferro traveled during his lifetime (see the section to follow), the local usage he encountered might have influenced his depiction of earlier vernacular dialect. While compiling a corpus of letters from *Private Voices* we therefore included other counties which Taliaferro happened to visit. When faced with a lack of correspondence from a given location, we have considered a circle of adjacent counties whenever applicable.[3]

It is assumed that such an approach, where data drawn from literature are weighed against empirical data retrieved from ego[4] documents written in vernacular, might shed some new light on the usefulness of literary dialect representation for students of earlier Southern American English.

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2 Or letters found in the *Corpus of Civil War Letters* (*Private Voices* available at https://altchive.org) which were penned shortly before the outbreak of the war.

3 For the list of counties, cf. Table 1.

4 Depkat (2019: 262) writes: "The Dutch historian Jacques Presser was the first to speak of ego-documents in 1958, and he eventually defined the term as "those documents in which an ego intentionally or unintentionally discloses, or hides itself" (Dekker 2002, 7; see Presser 1958, 1969). Building on this tradition, a group of Dutch scholars around Rudolf Dekker embarked on a concerted effort to find, collect, edit, and study Dutch 'egodocuments' from 1500 to 1814, which for them were autobiographies, memoirs, diaries, and personal letters".

2. Literary dialect and real representation of dialect

Ives (1950: 137) tells us that literary dialect is "an author's attempt to represent in writing a speech that is restricted regionally, socially or both". Ives opposes a lax approach to dialect depiction in literature, advocating focus on real representation only. He simultaneously acknowledges, however, that literary authors employ dialect as a literary device, but have no scientific expertise to act as authorities in dialect representation (1950: 138) These authors went to great lengths, however, to paint an accurate picture of a given dialect (1950: 140).

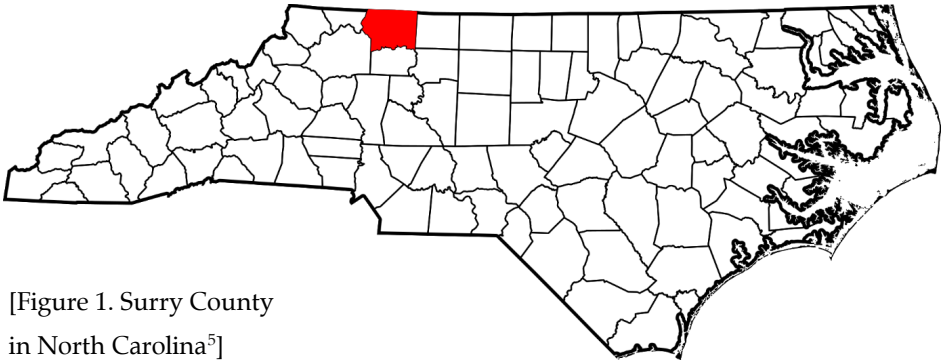
When one examines dialect in local-color fiction, Ives (1950: 150) suggests that the socio-economic and geographical background of the authors themselves is worthy of scrutiny. In such a study the subject of analysis should therefore not only be the text, but also the author's personal history (Ives 1950: 157-158, 169). He further (1950: 173-174) points out two steps crucial to thorough research into literary dialect. Firstly, a literary dialect researcher must be well-acquainted with, for instance, the field of linguistic geography, such as data in linguistic atlases. This may allow for proper recognition of dialectal traits and characteristics and their uniqueness in comparison to one another. Secondly, the data corpus must be sufficiently large to ensure maximum validity and representativeness of the results.

Ellis (1994: 128), like Ives (1950), acknowledges that literary dialect researchers face a problem in distinguishing between a faithful representation of the dialect in literature and an author's own literary invention, since writers may have been prone to exaggeration. Despite such difficulties, he points to the accessibility of the nineteenth-century literature and its use of variants that would otherwise have gone unmarked. What is therefore needed is an approach that acknowledges the potential strengths of such sources, but also takes into account the issue of literary creativity.

Fields (2000: 45, cited in Stockwell 2020: 362) suggests two approaches to investigating literary dialect. The first assumes the literary works are real sociolinguistic data to be analyzed as historical works. The second investigates literary dialect for its stylistic features, looking into the balance between fictional and historical linguistic characteristics. Stockwell (2020: 362-363) posits that in order to give the research the greatest possible credibility both approaches should be utilized. There is a need for both a sociolinguistic and an ethnographic approach, as well as for acknowledging the author's creativity.

3. Hardin Edwards Taliaferro and *Fisher's River*

In the mid-nineteenth century, storytelling was an artform (Ginther 1953: 13). Hardin E. Taliaferro was a humorist who told tales of life in the Antebellum South in his 1859 book, *Fisher's River (North Carolina), Scenes and Characters*, a vivid example of a literary work of the kind. Craig (1988: 422) describes it as a collection of picturesque stories that accurately reflect the inhabitants of Surry County, North Carolina. Figure 1 below shows the geographical location of Surry County:



[Figure 1. Surry County in North Carolina[5]]

Characters in the stories are based on actual residents of Surry County, some of whom are named in *Fisher's River.* Topics touched upon in the book range from the illiterate bumpkin visiting a large city to religious conversions.

Before the discussion proper devoted to forms of past tense *be* unfolds, we should address Taliaferro's biography and the history of *Fisher's River*. Hardin E. Taliaferro was born in 1811 in Surry County, North Carolina, into a "prosperous, well-read, prominent" family,[6] which runs contrary to the picture of the grass root Southern society he depicted in *Fisher's River* (Walser 1978: 377). Taliaferro's accounts of his boyhood in *Fisher's River* have him spending many carefree days in the area working as a mill-boy (Taliaferro 1857: 139). At eighteen he moved to Roane County in Tennessee to join his two older brothers, where he experienced a religious revelation and was baptized at the age of 20. He became a preacher there, but eventually settled on a farm (Walser 1978: 378). In Madisonville, where he joined the academy

5 Map of North Carolina highlighting Surry County in North Carolina - *Wikipedia*, accessed December 2021.

6 However, there is no official information about the level of formal education that he received (Ginther 1953: 13).

to improve his education, he met Elizabeth Henderson and in 1834 they married. The same year he was ordained.

A year later[7] he moved to Talladega County, Alabama, with his family to continue preaching. In the mid-1840s his literary talent was discovered when he began writing for *The Virginia Baptist Preacher*. He later moved to Tuskegee to became a senior editor for *The South Western Baptist.* It is there that he published his first work: *The Grace of God Magnified: An Experimental Tract*, in which he described his experience of spiritual crisis (Walser 1978: 383). The book was a success, but his work in Tuskegee exhausted him and, as a result, in 1857 he returned to Surry County, where he found the inspiration for *Fisher's River.*

According to his preface to the book, he had not initially intended to publish the stories,[8] but he agreed to do so on the suggestion of his friends (Taliaferro 1859: v). The book was published in 1859, while Taliaferro was back in Alabama. In 1860 *The Southern Literary Messenger* began to publish other humorous stories by Taliaferro, written under the *nom de plume* Skitt, and its readership became acquainted with such stories as "Duck Town", "Hardshell Baptist Sermon", and "Some Chapters in the Eventful Life of Captain Robert Exquisite, by Skitt, Who Knew Him" (Walser 1978: 388-389). When the Civil War began, he was a keen secessionist who advocated for the separation of North Carolina from the United States (Walser 1978: 389). Taliaferro moved back to Roane County, Tennessee, in 1872 (Walser 1978: 390).[9] He died in Surry County in 1875. Five years after his death his authorship to the *Fisher's River* was publicly acknowledged (Walser 1978: 393).

In 1905, a printer from Eona village, Virginia, some ten miles north from the Little Fisher River, published the second edition of Taliaferro's book completely omitting the author's name (Walser 1978: 393). Not only did the printer omit some of the stories, but he also changed the text *per se*. Capitalization, for instance, differed from the original and such changes as *were* becoming *war* or *ev'ry* to *uv'ry* were introduced. The third edition, published in 1958, was based on the altered version and also omitted the name of the author. The fourth edition, however, commissioned in 1977, was based on the original, 1859 version (Walser 1978: 393).

For nearly one hundred years the value of Taliaferro's work as a humorist was forgotten (Walser 1978: 394). Neither was his contribution given sufficient credit in 1925 *Selected Bibliography of Southern Humor and*

7 According to Gunther (1953: 13), this happened in 1837.

8 These stories had been told between 1820 and 1829.

9 Where he continued to preach and work for the *South Western Baptist* (Walser 1978: 388).

Satire, nor in *The First Century of American Literature* (1937). Today, however, Taliaferro is considered among America's earliest realists, insofar as his writing technique is concerned. His work as a literary dialect writer and humorist is greatly valued, and Taliaferro is recognized for his anecdotes on religious subjects, which he recorded more than any other coeval frontier humorist.[10]

Regarding Taliaferro's rendering of dialect, Walser (1978: 385) writes: "Taliaferro's anecdotes were narrated by the Surry County storytellers in an authentic oral style". Critics maintain that his contribution to Southern humorist literature is unique due to the supposedly accurate depiction of dialect that managed to create a faithful image of not only the picturesque characters, but also the culture in which these individuals lived.

4. *Was* and *were* in earlier American English

Pablé, Dylewski, and Urbańska (2009: 63-64) write the following in respect to the past tense of *be* in dialect literature of the nineteenth century:

> In numerous frontier tales written by nineteenth century humorists, which depict life in such states as North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, and Arkansas, nonstandard *were(n't)* is a typical feature to mark the language of the common folk; notably, however, the writers represent the grammatical constraints determining its occurrence and its status as a variant quite differently and even a single author may vary from one text to the other: as a matter of fact, in those writings nonstandard *were* may be either a categorical form (both positive and negative), subject to the polarity factor (positive *was* vs. negative *warn't*), or variable in positive and/or negative constructions.[11]

Previous research on *was/were* variation in the dialect of the southern states, in turn, points to four general patterns of use (Montgomery 2004,

[10] See Gale (1988).

[11] They further go on to say that, for example, "Mark Twain uses negative *warn't* and positive *was* in all person-number combinations as part of Huck Finn's Missouri dialect. Other examples of nonstandard *were(n't)* can be attested in the following authors (text excerpts can be found in Blair and McDavid (1983): The Crockett Almanack Stories (42-47), Henry Clay Lewis (60-68), Johnson Jones Hooper (69-78), John S. Robb (83-89), William C. Hall (99-105), Harden E. Taliaferro (110-114), and George Washington Harris (115-124)" (Pablé, Dylewski, Urbańska 2009: 64, footnote 10)

pages unnumbered). In his analysis of letters written by three white Southerners born in the course of the eighteenth century, Montgomery (2004) concludes that between roughly 1750 and 1850 there might have been four distinct paradigms of past tense *be*. All of these coexisted, but the first three competed with the last and, as Montomery (2004) suggests, most probably with each other:

> Pattern 1: *was* appeared in the singular, and *were* in the plural in the 1st and 2nd persons. The form used with the 3rd person plural varied: pronominal subjects attracted *were,* whereas noun phrases were followed by *was*;
>
> Pattern 2: both *was* and *were* were in use, but this pattern favored *were* in the singular, and probably[12] also in the plural;
>
> Pattern 3: the levelling to *was*, both singular and plural subjects attracted *was*;
>
> Pattern 4: *was* in 1st and 3rd person singular, *were* in plural and 2nd person singular (the actual pattern used in mainstream English today), attested in the speech of cultivated speakers.

The hypothesis of four *was/were* distribution patterns put forth by Montgomery (2004) is tested by Dylewski (2013) in his analysis of Civil War letters from selected counties of South Carolina: Greenville, Pickens, and York. He lists 190 instances of plural past form *be*, in which the discrepancy between the use of *was* and *were* may be observed (Dylewski 2013: 237). Of 190 instances, 140 cases of *was* were found. In the case of pronominal subjects, in an overwhelming majority of cases the authors of the Civil War letters use *was* for 1st and 3rd person singular (Dylewski 2013: 238). The situation is much more diverse in the case of other pronouns, *you, we,* and *they*, where *was* is used extensively, but *were* is still used in between approximately 35 and 45% of the cases, with *you* showing the lowest percentage of variability (Dylewski 2013: 239-340).

As for the nominal subject-type, the authors would use *was,* again, in an overwhelming number of cases (Dylewski 2013: 341). One of the variables

[12] Montgomery (2004) points here to a lack of sufficient data. For more elaboration, see the discussion in the analytical part of this paper.

is the distance between the subject and the verb. The larger the distance, the more probable it is that *was* will be used. Dylewski (2013: 342) summarizes the findings by stating that the most probable linguistic environment for the occurrence of *was* for plural subjects is a plural noun phrase, followed by, in the ascending order, pleonastic *there* with plural subjects, *we, they,* and finally *you.* This conclusion, as he further elaborates, stands in opposition to Feagin's (1979) implicational scale, in which the most favorable context for the occurrence of *was* is pleonastic *there*, followed by, in the descending order, *you*, *we*, noun phrase, and *they*.

However, the results do coincide with the "Northern Subject Rule". The rule imposes that the indicative ending of a verb may be singular in plural subjects if they are noun phrases or an item is put between the two elements. Such a relation is visible in the data gathered by Dylewski (2013: 341-342).

Similar conclusions were reached by Levey and DeRooy (2021). In their analysis of the Civil War letters from both the South and the North, specifically Massachusetts and Alabama, found in *Private Voices*, "nonstandard *was* was found in 70% of affirmative contexts of standard *were* (excluding existential-*there*) [in the Massachusetts letters], compared to 94% in the Alabama letters" (Levey – DeRooy 2021: 309). This result shows the prevalence of the nonstandard *was* in Southern English, confirming Dylewski's (2013) findings.

When the authors combined the letters from other Southern states (North and South Carolina) and compared the data with two more Northern states (Pennsylvania and Ohio), the results were consistent – in the letters of Southern correspondents, the frequency of nonstandard *was* is significantly greater than in the Northern letters (Levey – DeRooy 2021: 318). The researchers noted that in both Carolinas nonstandard *were* was also observed. However, *was*-levelling was still notably greater (2021: 319). They conclude that the findings point to noticeable grammatical differences between Southern and Northern states in nineteenth-century United States and suggest that the variation may stem from the diverse social and geographical factors (Levey – DeRooy 2021: 322-323). This research further supports the claims put forth by Dylewski (2013) that the Southern English from the Civil War era was characterized by a significant *was*-leveling and this vernacular pattern was widespread at the time.

5. Corpus and methodology

For the purpose of this paper we have compiled two corpora: one consisting of narratives of Taliaffero's protagonists; the other of letters penned by soldiers or members of their families resident in counties where Hardin Edwards Taliaferro was either born and raised or moved to for an extended period prior to his writing *Fisher's River*.

The letters were taken from "Private Voices: The Corpus of American Civil War Letters", an online database of transcribed letters penned by American Union and Confederate soldiers and their families during the American Civil War (1861-65) (see Ellis and Montgomery 2011, 2012; Ellis 2016). The authors of these letters were mostly farmers or craftsmen with limited formal education,[13] scarce knowledge of textbook orthographic and grammatical conventions, so their epistolary efforts most likely represent a transcription of everyday spoken language which for the most part means regional dialect. The corpus may therefore be regarded as a reliable source of regional vernaculars, variant forms, and archaic vocabulary (Ellis 2016: 3).

As indicated above, in our search for relevant letters, before the publication of *Fisher's River* in 1859, Taliaferro resided mostly in three counties: Surry County, North Carolina, where he was born and spent his childhood; Roane County, Tennessee, where he moved in his youth; and Talladega County, Alabama, where he worked as a preacher and editor for 20 years.[14] Under the assumption that the vernacular spoken in these three areas influenced his perception and therefore his representation of the Southern dialect and its characteristics, we have compiled a sub-corpus of letters penned by soldiers and their families who hailed from those counties.[15] If the number of letters from a given county proved inadequate, we resorted to garnering the material from adjacent counties. We did limit, however, our search to two circles of adjacent counties, which, in the case of Roane TN, still proved inadequate (see: Table 1).

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13 https://altchive.org/about/common-soldiers-plain-folks/, accessed January 2022.

14 He spent some time in Madisonville, Monroe County TN (no precise data, but probably two or three years before moving to Talladega AL), and Tuskegee, Macon County AL (two years before moving back to Surry NC, where he was inspired to write *Fisher's River*), but we assume that the language absorbed during his time in these three counties (childhood, early adulthood, and 20 years as a preacher and editor) contributed most to his ideas on Southern vernacular.

15 More specifically, those counties were registered as their counties of residence in 1860 census.

Table 1. Counties from which the letters were drawn

COUNTY	ADJACENT COUNTIES	NO OF LETTERS	NO OF WORDS
Surry NC and the 1st circle of adjacent counties	Surry NC	0	0
	Stokes NC	0	0
	Forsyth NC	4	1229
	Yadkin NC	43	17400
	Wilkes NC	9	2151
	Alleghany NC	1	396
	Patrick VA	5	1557
	Carroll VA	0	0
	Grayson VA	0	0
Talladega AL and the 1st circle of adjacent counties	Talladega AL	13	4544
	Calhoun AL	0	0
	Cleburne AL	0	0
	Clay AL	0	0
	Coosa AL	0	0
	Shelby AL	8	3875
	St. Clair AL	0	0
the 2nd circle of adjacent counties	Chilton AL	0	0
	Bibb AL	0	0
	Jefferson AL	4	1693
	Blount AL	0	0
	Etowah AL	0	0
	Cherokee AL	23	9357
	Haralson GA	0	0
	Carrol GA	0	0
	Randolph AL	36	17804
	Tallapoosa AL	19	10028
	Elmore AL	0	0

Roane TN and the 1st circle of adjacent counties	Roane TN	0	0
	Morgan TN	0	0
	Anderson TN	0	0
	Knox TN	0	0
	Loudon TN	0	0
	McMinn TN	0	0
	Meigs TN	0	0
	Rhea TN	0	0
	Cumberland TN	0	0
the 2nd circle of adjacent counties	Scott TN	0	0
	Campbell TN	0	0
	Union TN	0	0
	Grainger TN	0	0
	Jefferson TN	0	0
	Sevier TN	0	0
	Bradley TN	0	0
	Hamilton TN	0	0
	Sequatchie TN	0	0
	Bledsoe TN	0	0
	Van Buren TN	0	0
	White TN	0	0
	Putnam TN	0	0
	Fentress TN	0	0
TOTAL		165	70034

Having compiled both corpora, we searched for *was* and *were* alongside their spelling variants (*wes*, *wos*, *wase*, *wasent*, *wer*, *war*, *werent*, *warent*, *worent*) by means of LancsBox;[16] the results were later fed into an Excel file and tagged appropriately which allowed for data analysis.

In this paper we have adopted Dylewski's (2013) approach, which is based on the inclusion of the negative contexts in the analysis and subsequent discussion. We therefore sought *was* and *were* in negative constructions. This approach is discrepant with those of Schneider and Montgomery (2001) and

[16] Available at: http://corpora.lancs.ac.uk/lancsbox/.

Trüb (2006). More specifically, "[…] Montgomery and Schneider (2001) focus only on statements because of the rarity of negations in their corpus (only one case, to be exact)" (Dylewski 2013: 235). Trüb (2006), in turn, discounts negative sentences on the following grounds: "a) their structure differs markedly from affirmative structures, and b) certain varieties of English exhibit so-called polarity constraint, where *was* appears in affirmative and *weren't* in negative clauses" (Dylewski 2013: 235). Negative contexts in the corpora we scrutinized, although less frequent than the affirmative, ought not to be excluded, since the polarity constraint mentioned by Trüb (2006) might have been in operation in the case of Taliaferro's dialect depiction (see the discussion below).

In the discussion to follow, we focus on both pronominal and nominal subjects, with *there* excluded since this pleonastic subject is biased toward attracting singular verb in colloquial English.

6. Analysis

6.1 Past tense *be* in *Fisher's River*

6.1.1 Affirmative contexts

A close inspection of *Fisher's River* allowed for a retrieval of 132 cases of *was* and 120 cases of *were*, thus the rivalry between the two is clearly observable. The results split by number and person are presented in Table 2 and Figure 2

Table 2. Past-tense *was* and *were* by number and person in *Fisher's River* (affirmative context).

subject type	singular		plural	
	was	were	was	were
1st person	22	36	2	0
2nd person	3	0	0	0
3rd person	70	80	35	4
(3rd person_NP)	(42)	(30)	(23)	(4)
(3rd person_PP)	(28)	(50)	(12)	(0)
TOTAL	95 (45.02%)	116 (54.98%)	37 (90.24%)	4 (9.76%)

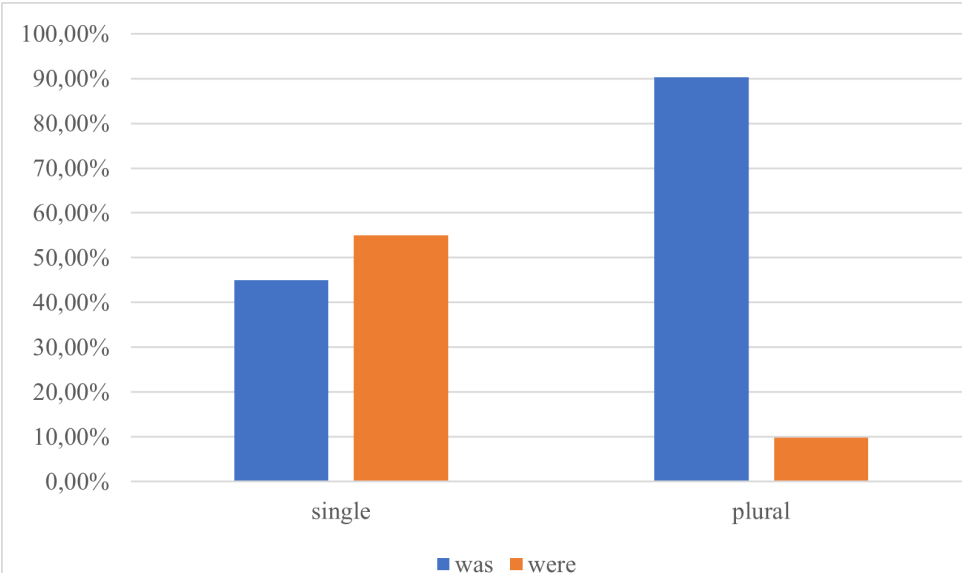

Figure 2. *Was* and *were* in *Fisher's River* (affirmative context).

This is interesting, since in the singular the *were* allomorph is the dominant variant form, but the domination is not clear-cut (approximately 55% of cases of *were* vs 45% of *was*), whereas in the plural the situation is reversed at the expense of *were*. This paradigm partly corresponds to Montgomery's (2004) Pattern 2 of the *was/were* distribution. We say that it agrees partly deliberately, since Montgomery claims that *were* was most probably also the majority form not only in the singular, but also in the plural. A closer inspection of Montgomery's 2004 data shows, however, that he based his conclusions on very scant data, to say the least. In fact, he retrieved just one isolated case for subjects in the plural, see: Table 3. He reached his conclusions having analyzed a single document from an apparently illiterate 84-year-old woman, Katherine McCormick Smith, hailing from Horry Country in South Carolina. This illiterate individual relied on the help of her amanuensis, Mrs. Maklin, to whom she dictated her testament (for more details, see Montgomery – Mishoe 1999). The paradigm for the past tense of *be* attested in this source is tabulated below:

Table 3. Past-tense *was* and *were* by number and person in *Smith Testament* (Montgomery 2004).

subject type	singular		plural	
	was	*were*	*was*	*were*
1st person	2	5	0	1
2nd person	0	0	0	0
3rd person	2	12	0	0
(3rd person_NP)	(1)	(6)	(0)	(0)
(3rd person_PP)	(1)	(6)	(0)	(0)
TOTAL	4 (18.2%)	17 (77.3%)	0 (0%)	1 (4.5%)

Table 3 shows that not much may be said about the paradigm for the past tense of *be* in the plural, hence Montgomery's cautious claim that most probably *were*, and not *was*, was the majority variant. Nonetheless, *was* might have been said to be the dominant form here, had more material been at this Montgomery's disposal.

6.1.2 Negative contexts

As indicated earlier, negative contexts have been neglected in linguistic studies of earlier Southern American English, but they are not ignored in this discussion. The results obtained are given in Table 4:

Table 4. Past-tense *was* and *were* by number and person in *Fisher's River* (negative context)

subject type	singular		plural	
	was	*were*	*was*	*were*
1st person	2	1	0	0
2nd person	0	0	0	0
3rd person	2	8	0	0
(3rd person_NP)	(1)	(1)	(0)	(0)
(3rd person_PP)	(1)	(7)	(0)	(0)
TOTAL	4 (30.8%)	9 (69.2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Altogether 13 cases of the past tense *be* have been instanced in Taliaferro's book, out of which nine cases (69.2%) are instances of *weren't* in the singular (see exemplary sentences 1-3 below):

(1) 1st person singular: I detarmined in less nur no time that I *warn't* a-gwine to stay thar (*Fisher's River*; Oliver Stanley, page 128);

(2) 3rd person singular_NP: the runnin' from the coachwhip *warn't* a primin' to it (*Fisher's River*; Davy Lane, page 61);

(3) 3rd person singular_PP: So I pulled up my stakes, which it *warn't* hard to do, and piked off to a higher latitude (*Fisher's River*; Oliver Stanley, page 134).

There are also four cases of singular *was* in Table 4 (exemplified under 4-5):

(4) 1st person singular: I *wasn't* more'n out'n my broke up (*Fisher's River*; Davy Snow, page 61);

(5) 3rd person singular_NP: Come, stranger, the world *wasn't* made in a day—took six, I think—come go wi' me (*Fisher's River*; Ham Rachel, page 268).

In the case of negative contexts, we have seen that one might not talk about any categorical use, but rather about an inclination toward the use of *were* in the singular. Were it not for the more or less even distribution between w*as* and *were* in the affirmative, one could talk here about the paradigm leaning toward polarity constraint, where *was* is preferred in the affirmative and *were* in the negative.

6.1.3 Individual variation in *Fisher's River*

We have also decided to ascertain whether Taliaferro was consistent in the use of the past tense forms of *be* in his fictional characters. We have arbitrarily decided to include in the study those characters who used the forms under discussion more than ten times. This approach allowed us to select the following characters from the novel whose usage of *was/were* has

further been subject of analysis: Bob Snipes[17] (23[18] cases of *was* and *were*), Davy Lane[19] (101 cases), Dick Snow[20] (16 cases), Josh Jones[21] (14 cases), Larkin Snow[22] (24 cases), and Oliver Stanley[23] (34 cases). The data obtained are tabulated below:

Table 5. Past-tense *was* and *were* by characters in *Fisher's River*

character	singular		plural		
	was (expected)	*were* (unexpected)	*was* (unexpected)	*were* (expected)	N.
Bob Snipes	18	0	4	1	23
Davy Lane	23	61	16	1	101
Dick Snow	13	0	3	0	16
Josh Jones	5	8	1	0	14
Larkin Snow	3	15	5	1	24
Oliver Stanley	5	25	3	1	34
Total:	67 (31.6%)	109 (51.4%)	32 (15.1%)	4 (1.9%)	212

17 "(…) the graphic language of Bob Snipes, who shall tell the story of their wedding. Said Bob Snipes is a plain-spoken fellow, and tells stories in his own way" (Taliaferro 1859: 175).

18 The qualifier *as it were* has been disregarded from the count.

19 "Uncle Davy was a gunsmith (…) He became quite a proverb in the line of big story-telling" (Taliaferro 1859: 49-50).

20 He certainly came from a section where rustic literature had risen to a state of perfection; and he clung to the language of his section and of his youth with great tenacity (Taliaferro 1859: 94-95).

21 "Josh had picked up a few Latin sentences and phrases, and could use them when he chose with great facility and dexterity. The people all hated "'larnin' and college lingo,'" and though Josh's vernacular was no better than his neighbors', his borrowed Latin made him quite a 'larned man'" (Taliaferro 1859: 193).

22 "His ambition consisted in being the best miller in the land, and in being *number one* in big story-telling" (Taliaferro 1859: 141).

23 "But I must not take up too much time in describing an indescribable man, and will hasten to give the reader two of Oliver's stories, giving them in his own language; and, by the way, he was a good hand at coining new words" (Taliaferro 1859: 125).

In the case of Bob Snipes' usage, we see a clear-cut pattern of leveling to *was*:

(6) Hollin and his darter *was* a-fixin' away, sorter like they *was* glad, but uvry now and then John kep' flingin' out some uv his slang at 'um 'fur fixin' so much fur them crippled creeturs, that had 'bout as much business a-marryin' as two 'possums (*Fisher's River*; Bob Snipes, page 179).

Amidst cases of *was*, however, lies one exceptional usage conforming to present-day prescriptive rules (*were* with NP in plural):

(7) The 'squire kep' axin' John questions, to try to git him to spill some words, but his jaws *were* locked, as it were (*Fisher's River*; Bob Snipes, page 179).

A more interesting, albeit rather inconsistent scenario emerges from Davy Lane's data, which are more numerous in comparison to other characters' from the book. When we split the results by number and person, the following picture emerges:

Table 6. Past-tense *was* and *were* by number and person in the language of Davy Lane.

subject type	singular		plural	
	was (expected)	*were* (unexpected)	*was* (unexpected)	*were* (expected)
1st person	4 (21%)	15 (79%)	0	0
2nd person	0	0	0	0
3rd person	19 (29.2%)	46 (70.8%)	16 (94.1%)	1 (5.9%)
(3rd person_NP)	(10)	(13)	(9)	(1)
(3rd person_PP)	(9)	(35)	(7)	(0)
TOTAL	23 (22.8%)	61 (60.4%)	16 (15.8%)	1 (1%)

The rivalry between *was* and *were* in both singular and plural is illustrated by the following examples:

a) singular:

(8) 1st person singular:
But while I *was* moseyin' about, I cum right chug (*Fisher's River*; Davy Lane, page 52);
Fur some time arter I *were* chased by that sassy coachwhip, I *were* desput 'fraid uv snakes (*Fisher's River*; Davy Lane, page 55).

(9) 3rd person_NP:
When I come to the ninth, the sign *was* fresher and fresher (*Fisher's River*; Davy Lane, page: 52);
I could hardly keep from burstin' open laughin' at the odd fix the old critter *were* in (*Fisher's River*; Davy Lane, page 83).

(10) 3rd person_PP:
On I moseyed tell I ondressed eight master bucks in the same way… fur it *was* tolluble hot (*Fisher's River*; Davy Lane, page 75);
I blazed away at him, but he *were* goin' so fast round (*Fisher's River*; Davy Lane, page 63).

b) plural:

(11) 3rd person_NP: ten thousand Injuns *were* arter 'um andskelpin' on 'um, and me so sick I couldn't say a word (*Fisher's River*; Davy Lane, page 61);
all the leaves *was* wilted like a fire had gone through its branches (*Fisher's River*; Davy Lane, page 57).

As visible in Table 6, in the singular there are 23 cases of *was* versus 61 cases of *were*, which points to the domination of the *were* allomorph.
Not much can be said about negation since only two cases of negated past tense *be* were found in the analyzed source, where variation between *was* and *were* is observable:

(12) for I know'd it *warn't* wuth while to shoot him any whar else (*Fisher's River*; Davy Lane, page 63);

(13) *'Twasn't* long afore I run out'n my shot-bag (*Fisher's River*; Davy Lane, page 53).

In the case of other characters in *Fisher's River*, in the idiolect of Dick Snow, as well as 13 cases of *was* in the singular there are three cases of *was* in the plural, with no instances of *were*. The idiolects of Josh Jones, Larkin Snow, and Oliver Stanley exhibit vacillation between *was* and *were*, with the domination of the latter in the singular and the former in the plural.

6.2 Past tense *be* in *Private Voices letters*

6.2.1 Affirmative contexts

A search of both *was* (together with its spelling variants *wos*, *wase*, *wasent*, etc.) and *were* (*wer*, *war*, *ware*, *werent*, *warent*, etc.) yielded the following results:

Table 7. Past-tense *was* and *were* by number and person in *Private Voices Letters* (affirmative context).

subject type	singular		plural	
	was	*were*	*was*	*were*
1st person	170	0	32	2
2nd person	0	0	72	1
3rd person	156	2	24	2
(3rd person_NP)	(82)	(1)	(19)	(1)
(3rd person_PP)	(74)	(1)	(5)	(1)
TOTAL	326 (99.4%)	2 (0.6%)	128 (96.2%)	5 (3.8%)

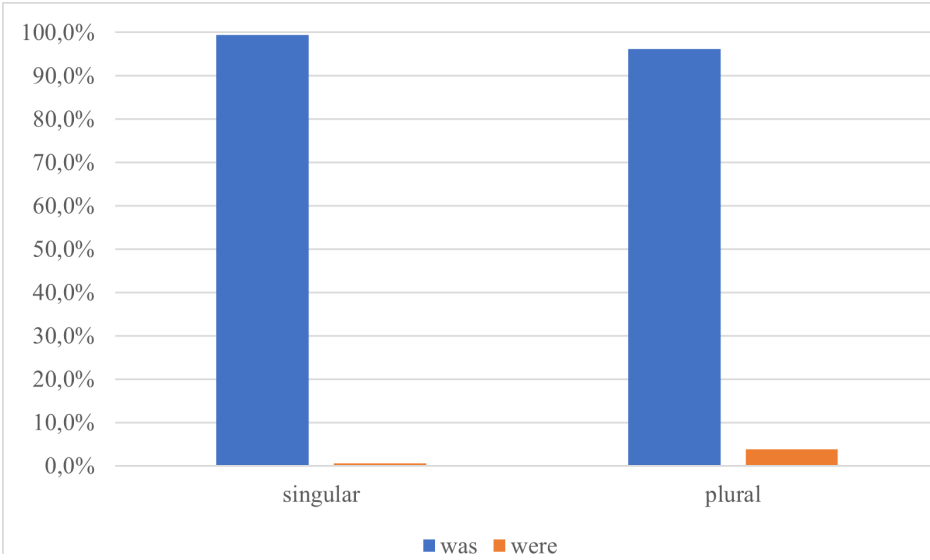

Figure 3. *Was* and *were* in the *Private Voices Letters* (affirmative contexts).

The picture revealed by scrutiny of selected letters drawn from *Private Voices* displays a clear pattern of leveling to *was* for every person in both numbers. This paradigm corresponds to Montgomery's (2004) Pattern 3 and the results obtained by both Dylewski (2013) and Levey and DeRooy (2021). There are also individual cases where nonstandard use of *were* lags behind the minority paradigm, see Examples 14 and 15:

(14) i red a letter from brother marien afeu days ago he sed he *wer* in sixteen miles ov cousi samuel hunter (April 30, 1858; Sarah A. Taylor to Martha Hunter);

(15) brother normon *were* married last fawl to mis Sarah Farley (April 30, 1858; Sarah A. Taylor to Martha Hunter).

Much as leveling to *was* in both numbers is evident here, in the idiolect of one letter writer, Sarah A. Taylor, the wife of a farmer from Randolph County, Alabama, leveling to *were* is in evidence. The on-line corpus of Civil War Letter (= *Private Voices*), unfortunately, offers only two letters from this author, so not much may be said about her usage of *be* in the past tense. Both letters penned by her are, however, replete with idiosyncratic, pseudo-

phonetic spellings and grammatical forms today deemed erroneous. The following excerpt illustrates the fact that Sarah A. Taylor was an unskilled writer who adhered to no prescriptive norms of the time:

> we hant had no rane here in most seven weekes crops is very sorry except whete is very good I have nothing inter esting to right to you you must excuse me fer not riting no sooner I rote you too letters an hav never received nary one from you yet I want you to right to me as soon as you can right all a bout the connection an the country mister talor ses he wont stay here ef he can sel his lan he intens to go south or west i wan to no how lan can be had an whether the county has impruved mutch or no aunt I wish icould see you I hav six childre fore boys an to girls hav bin maried eight year ever since the eighteenth of Jenurary
>
> (July 17, 1857; Sarah A. Taylor to Martha Hunter)

The presence of the allomorph *were* in the singular resembles the pattern displayed in Taliaferro's novel, where *were* dominates over *was* in the singular. It is worthy of mention that Sarah Ann Taylor also had *was* in her linguistic repertoire, see Example 16:

(16) mi baby *was* bornd the 8 (July 17, 1857; Sarah A. Taylor to Martha Hunter).

This vacillation between *were* and *was*, the former dominating by a slender margin, corresponds more precisely to Taliaferro's use. As mentioned earlier, however, with such scant data to hand one needs to be cautious with any far-reaching conclusions.

Finally, isolated cases of *were* used in present-day standard contexts have also been attested;

(17) we hav mooved on the othe place that his brother An him *were* in snuks (April 30, 1858; Sarah A. Taylor to Martha Hunter);

(18) We received your kind letter to day the 18 and was more than glad to hear from you and to hear that you *were* well dose us a heape of good (February 18, 1864; Molly Mock Tesh to William Addison Tesh).

6.2.2 Negative contexts

In order to (a) ascertain parallelism with the discussion of *was* and *were* in *Fisher's River* and (b) check whether *was* and *were* succumbed to polarity constraint in the case of letters drawn from *Private Voices,* we have included the negative contexts and we have treated them separately here. Similarly to the representation of the literary dialect, *was* and *were* in negative contexts are less frequent than those in the affirmative. Again, the data found in the letters are given in tabulated from:

Table 8. Past-tense *was* and *were* by number and person in *Private Voices Letters* (negative context).

subject type	singular		plural	
	was	*were*	*was*	*were*
1st person	10	0	0	1
2nd person	0	0	3	0
3rd person	8	0	0	0
(3rd person_NP)	(3)	(0)	(0)	(0)
(3rd person_PP)	(5)	(0)	(0)	(0)
TOTAL	18 (81.8%)	0 (0%)	3 (13.6%)	1 (4.5%)

Again, leveling to *was* is in operation here, although little may be inferred on the basis of 4 cases of *be* in the past tense plural; clearly *you* attracted *was not.*

7. Conclusions

As was mentioned above, Montgomery (2004) maintains that at the beginning of the nineteenth century in spoken Southern American English three paradigms most frequently competed with each other, setting aside a fourth, that is deemed "standard" by present-day normative grammars. In the course of the nineteenth century the situation changed, which is shown by data drawn from ego documents, be they letters written prior to or during the American Civil War or by plantation overseers.[24] When it comes to scrutiny of the latter, Montgomery (2004: pages unnumbered) concludes that Pattern 2 quickly receded and gave way to Pattern 3, i.e. leveling to *was* in both numbers. As for the former, the data culled for this paper also point to leveling to *was*, which was additionally attested by earlier studies of the Civil War material penned by the semiliterate strata of American society. Isolated cases of *were* in the singular used by Sarah A. Taylor might, however, be vestiges of Montgomery's Pattern 3, which apparently fell into obsolescence in the mid-nineteenth century.

The focus of the paper, nonetheless, was a verification of the reliability of Southern dialect depiction is Taliaferro's local-color fiction. The results obtained from this source are disparate from those retrieved from private correspondence. Hardin E. Taliaferro's records of the past tense *be* in *Fisher's River* partially lean toward Montgomery's (2004) Pattern 2, where *was* and *were* are in use, but the latter is favored in the singular and probably in the plural contexts. Disappointingly, however, as indicated above, the scarcity of Montgomery's data hinders an equivocal confirmation of an inclination toward *were* in the plural.

This pattern[25] may be traced in idiolects of selected *Fisher's River* characters: Davy Lane, Josh Jones, Larkin Snow, and Oliver Stanley, but not Davy Snow, whose usage displays leveling to *was*. Two plausible explanations may be offered here. On the one hand, it is tempting to acknowledge the reliability of local dialect depiction in *Fishers' River*. Assuming that Montgomery's three vernacular paradigms were in competition between 1750 and 1850 and Taliaferro's childhood years fell in the second and third

[24] "What happened to them in ensuing decades is reasonably clear from evidence in the *Southern Plantation Overseer Corpus* (*SPOC*), a compilation of 536 letters from 50 white plantation overseers, documents written mainly from the 1830s to the 1850s from various parts of the South, but mainly North Carolina (Schneider – Montgomery 2001)" (Montgomery 2004, pages unnumbered).

[25] With *was* dominating in the plural.

decades of the nineteenth century, he might have codified the use of *were* in the singular as a trait typical of natives to Surry Country. Leveling to *was* must also have been present in the linguistic repertoires of residents of North Carolina, hence Davy Snow's paradigm.

On the other hand, even if in the idiolects of the four characters we have studied *were* in the singular is the prevalent form, there are many inconsistencies, or a vacillation in usage, in exactly the same environment. One might venture a claim here that to assure regional dialect credibility of stories told by the Surry Country residents, Taliaferro equipped them with grammatical traits disparate from the cultivated use of the time, in the case of past tense of *be* Montgomery's Pattern 4. The usage of *were* in the singular in the stories might have been a literary device put in the mouths of the characters to emphasize their belonging to lower stations of Surry Country of the time.

Both above claims, however, require further verification against data retrieved from (a) other local colorists from the South and (b) authentic sources representing the first decades of the nineteenth century. It ought to be mentioned at this point that Civil War correspondence displays a certain bias. Dylewski (2013: 167) writes the following: "[w]hen the Civil War commenced, the majority of soldiers were relatively young. As Hess (1997: 3) posits, the war was mainly the business of the young; the young who were born in the last decades of the first half of the nineteenth century and whose linguistic formative years fell during the said time frame". Nelson and Sheriff (2007: 74-75) do confirm that assumption and maintain that both armies engaged in the war were composed typically of rural white men, of whom nearly 40 % "serving between 1861 and 1865 were twenty-one years old or younger". Bearing in mind that Taliaferro was born some thirty years earlier (in 1811), this time gap might have played a vital role in his choice of variant forms, especially with the presupposed dynamics of change described by Montgomery (2004).

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English phonology between Old and Middle English

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1. Introduction

In the textual record of English there is an apparent break between Old and Middle English. This is due to two factors. The first is that the West Saxon koiné of Old English was no longer written after the Norman invasion in the mid-eleventh century and the second is that the return of documents in Middle English did not set in until the latter half of the thirteenth century. Thus to trace the development of English seamlessly from the Old to the Middle English period (Smith 2007: 107-126) is not possible and it can only be assumed that on a vernacular level the language continued to change gradually in the transition period at the beginning of Middle English, an assumption which is supported by such detailed investigations of what we know of late Old English and early Middle English phonology as that in Wełna (1978: 34-159).

The great social and political upheavals caused by the Norman conquest and the subsequent introduction of a feudal system of land ownership in England, while reflected in language, are confined to the open class of the lexicon. Whether the gradual decay of grammatical inflections was furthered by the contact of certain sections of English society with French-speaking Normans is a matter of debate. What is certain is that this process was not triggered by this contact. The West Saxon koiné (Campbell 1959; Lass 1994) definitely camouflaged the blurring of inflectional endings which can be glimpsed on occasions in the Old English textual record and which was most advanced in the north of the country. Factors such as the language shift of Brythonic-speaking Celts to Old English (Hickey 1995, 2012) and the adstratal mixture of Anglian and Old Norse in the North and

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North-East of England (Lutz 2012) can be safely assumed to have contributed to the decreasing clarity of grammatical endings.

The appearance of diverse documents with different regional origins in the Middle English period makes global references to language more difficult than this might appear to be the case for the late Old English period. But assuming a continuity of vernaculars then there must be an unbroken link between the forms of language in both periods, irrespective of the textual attestations (Ritt – Schendl 2005).

2. Change in medieval English phonology

Leaving aside the difficulty of determining the nature and extent of the transition from late Old English to early Middle English one can nonetheless ascertain that certain changes took place in the language in the few centuries which this transition encompassed. The focus in this article is on phonology and hence on the changes in the English sound system at this time. These changes can be grouped as a set of losses and a set of innovations. The first group is shown in the following table.

Table 1: *Losses from Old to Middle English*

1. Consonantal length
2. Regular quantity of syllable codas
3. Umlaut and umlaut-similar effects
4. Front rounded vowels
5. Four-way distinction with low vowels
6. Velar fricatives

2.1 Loss of consonantal length

A number of these developments are linked to each other. For consonants, the loss of systemically distinctive length was the most far-reaching change. Words such as *pyffan* 'puff', *cyssan* 'kiss', *settan* 'set', *siþþan* 'since', *freoðuwebbe* 'peaceweaver' showed an internal geminate in Old English but this was simplified in later Middle English (Kurath 1956; Britton 2012). Originally, there was a complementary distribution of long and short vowels and consonants in stressed syllable rhymes such that the latter either consisted of a long vowel and a short consonant or a short vowel and a long consonant

(essentially the quantity distribution rule which still applies in Swedish, cf. *vit* [vi:t] 'white' and *vitt* [vitt] 'knows').

The coda quantity rule was disturbed in the late Old English period due to phonetic lengthening of short vowels before a cluster consisting of a nasal and homorganic stop, e.g. *blind* /blind/ > /bli:nd/, *mind* /mind/ > /mi:nd/ (Wełna, 1978: 34-39), leading to so-called 'superheavy' syllables. The lengthening applies to monosyllables as demonstrated by word pairs such as *cild* 'child' with /i:/ but *cildru* 'children', a polysyllabic form with /i/ (Lahiri – Fikkert 1999).

This development happened in the tenth century (Strang 1970: 341) or perhaps already in the ninth century (Lass 1987: 125). It meant that later generations of language learners no longer concluded that there was a complementary distribution of length for vowels and consonants and the rule was removed from English phonology.

(1) Rise of superheavy syllables in late Old English

V(CC)	>	VV(CC)
blind / blind /	>	*blīnd* / bli:nd /
mind / mind /	>	*mīnd* / mi:nd /
climb / klimb /	>	*clīmb* / kli:mb /
milde / mild /	>	*mīlde* / mi:ld /

2.2 Symmetry in the vowel system

The vowel system of late Old Saxon is taken to have been symmetrical with long and short vowels existing in pairs, see Table 2. This symmetry requires a number of assumptions which can be contested and which may not have been valid across the different dialects of Old English. For instance, the long front high rounded vowel /y:/ is, if at all, a feature of late West Saxon known as 'unstable *i*' (Quirk – Wrenn 1957: 140-141) because it appears in different spellings, i.e. as *ie, i* and *y*, as in *gelīefan* > *gelīfan* > *gelȳfan* 'believe'.

Table 2: *Vowel system of Old English (late West Saxon, Lass 2006: 53)*

	Long vowels				*Short vowels*			
	[ɑː] / [yː]	[eː]	[æː]	[uː] [oː] [ɑː]	[i]/[y]	[e]	[æ]	[u] [o] [ɑ]
iː- i	*īs*		'ice'		*is*		'is'	
yː- y	*bȳre*		'cowshed'		*byre*		'child'	
eː- e	*bēn*		'plea'		*ben(n)*		'wound'	
æː- æ	*dǣl*		'part'		*dæl*		'valley'	
ɑː- ɑ	*hām*		'home'		*ham(m)*		'ham'	
oː- o	*hōf*		'hoof'		*hof*		'enclosure'	
uː- u	*hūs*		'house'		*sum*		'some'	

2.3 Front rounded vowels

The front vowels of Old English do not show the type of regularity which one has in a language like German where /y(ː)/ and /ø(ː)/ are central to the phonology and morphology of the language. It is true that the mid rounded front vowel was initially characteristic of plurals which exhibited umlaut (Bennett 1969) such as *fōt* /foːt/ 'foot'. But by Old English the original plural **føt* had been unrounded to *fēt* /feːt/ 'feet' and so the only front rounded vowel was /y/. This vowel is nonetheless amply attested, cf. /y/: *cyrice* 'church', *cynelic*, 'kingly'. The /y/ vowel had arisen through umlaut, originally the fronting of a back rounded vowel when followed by a high front vowel or /j/ in a following syllable. This was a morphological process in the West and North Germanic languages and remnants are found in these languages today, with some still visible in English today, cf. *man : men, mouse : mice* (these are now opaque, i.e. the umlaut cannot be recognised as a regular

sound change). With the unrounding of /y/ in Middle English (latest in the West Midlands) English lost all front rounded vowels.

2.4 Low vowels in Old and Middle English

The consistent use of <*æ*> versus <*a*> in late West Saxon manuscripts for vowels which have both long and short reflexes in Modern English would suggest that latterly there were two low back vowels and two low front vowels in Old English (much as there are in present-day Finnish, for instance).

(2)	æː - æ	*dǣl*	'part'	*dæl*	'valley'
	ɑː - ɑ	*hām*	'home'	*ham(m)*	'ham'

This pattern did not continue into Middle English as the long /æː/ vowel was raised to [eː], as in [deːl] 'deal', with later raising as part of the Great Vowel Shift. The short *ash* vowel was frequently retracted to [a] as in *dale* where the vowel was also lengthened and thus affected by the long vowel shift of the late Middle English and Early Modern English periods (Great Vowel Shift).

The retracted vowels /ɑː - ɑ/ split with the short one centralising to [a], thus generally coalescing with the short /æ/ vowel (Lass 1976). Similarly to the long front vowel /æː/, the long low back vowel /ɑː/ was raised (in West Saxon and southern forms of Anglian, though not in varieties in the far north which formed the input to later Scots). This raising of /ɑː/ continued throughout the Middle English period and was one of the inputs to the long vowel shift. Examples of words showing the original long low back vowel, which was later raised, are: *stān* /stɑːn/ 'stone', *hām* /hɑːm/ 'home'.

2.5 Velar fricatives

Old English had four systemic segments at the velar point of articulation, two stops and two fricatives.

(3)	velar stops		velar fricatives	
	k	g	x	ɣ

The symmetry which this might imply only refers to the simple existence of these segments. On a systemic level their relative status varied considerably. The two stops were part of the lexical structure of words and are to this day.

The voiceless velar fricative was inherited from earlier stages of Germanic and was represented by <h>. However, in syllable-initial position this sound no longer existed, or if it did, then only as a realisational option for [h] as in *hnutu* 'nut', *hlaf* 'loaf', etc. In medial and final position the voiceless sound was more stable, e.g. *hlahhan* 'laugh' when a geminate can be posited: /hlɑxxan/ at least for early Old English. In medial position the sound was to disappear in Middle English unless it shifted its point of articulation to the front of the mouth as in *laugh* /lɑːf/ (Hickey 1984). In word final position /-x/ also disappeared, often involving other processes such as the metathesis attested in the form *þurh* [θurx] 'through'; an instance of word-final /-x/ subject to velar to labial shift is *ruh* [ruːx] > [rʊx] > [rʊf] > [rʌf] 'rough'. Elsewhere, where /x/ was a non-final element of a syllable coda, it was deleted but its quantity was transferred to the nucleus of the same syllable, this then leading to a long vowel as in *niht* /nixt/ > [niːt] 'night' or *riht* /rixt/ > [riːt] 'right' (Horobin – Smith 2002: 49; Lass 1987: 31; Minkova 2013: 132). This vocalisation of the voiceless velar fricative came to apply to all varieties of English with the exception of conservative Scots where it is still found in a word like *enough* [ɪˈnʌx] or in the Scottish Gaelic loanword *loch* /lɒx/ 'lake'.

The voiced velar fricative was allophonic in nature, representing /g/ in positions of high sonority, chiefly between vowels as in *fugol* [fuɣol] 'bird'. Like its voiceless counterpart, this sound was also vocalised during the Middle English period, cf. the word *fowl* which is the present-day reflex of Old English *fugol* (the Middle English word *bridde* 'young bird' later adopted the general sense of 'bird').

3. Innovations in medieval English phonology

By innovations are meant here the appearance of phonological features/ segments in Middle English which were not present in Old English or which at least did not have the same status.

Table 2: *Innovations from Old to Middle English*

1. Systemically contrasting voice with fricatives (f ≠ v, θ ≠ ð, s ≠ z)
2. Phonemic affricates /ʧ/ and /ʤ/
3. Contrastive word stress
4. Open syllable lengthening
5. Rise of schwa for short unstressed vowels

3.1 The voice contrast among fricatives

The standard case of status change in Middle English phonology involves the parameter 'voice' with fricatives (see the comprehensive treatment in Minkova 2011 with references therein). In Old English voiced fricatives (Lass 2006: 54) occurred in positions of high sonority, typically between two vowels, thus a word like *wif* [wiːf] 'woman' was *wifas* [wiːvas] with a voiced [v] in the plural. This led to a morphophonemic alternation of voiceless and voiced fricatives which still exists in English, cf. word pairs such as *roof : rooves, knife : knives* (Lass 1984: 57).

The status of [v, z, ð] changed in Middle English when grammatical endings were lost and unmotivated contrast arose with these fricatives, cf. the voiced fricatives in final position such as *baþian* /baːðian/ > /baːð/ > /baːð/. This led to a contrast between noun and verb arising, cf. *bath* versus *bathe* in present-day English. This held for other fricatives as well, cf. *belȳfan / belēfan* > *believe* with the noun *belief* retaining the voiceless fricative from Old English.

An additional source of the voice contrast with fricatives is formed by many loanwords from French which had voiced fricatives in initial or final position, e.g. *zeal, seize*. Old French verbs which entered English in the Middle English period also showed voices fricatives in intervocalic position, e.g. *abuser* [abyzer], later [əˈbjuːz]. Here the voiced fricative also appeared in word final position with the loss of the original final syllable from the Old French verb.

It is unlikely that French loanwords alone were responsible for the establishment of phonemic voiced fricatives. This has not happened with many other languages, which also borrowed French words, but did not import the sounds they included into their phonologies. For instance, the Scandinavian languages, such as Swedish, have words like *journal, etage*

from French but the voiced sibilants are consistently voiceless ones. So both inherited English words and borrowed French words 'conspired' to increase the tokens of final voiced fricatives through suffix loss and hence to establish the voice ≠ voiceless contrast for fricatives and for obstruents in general in word-final position in English, a feature which the language has to this day.

3.2 Phonemic affricates

In Old English, the affricate /ʧ/ and the palatal approximant /j/ were the result of palatalisation in words like *cinn* /ʧɪnn/ 'chin', *cidan* /ʧiːdan/ 'chide'; *gieldan* /jiːldan/ 'yield', *geard* /jɑrd/ 'yard'. The chronology of this palatalisation is complicated, especially in relation to umlaut which, going on words such as *cyning* /kynɪŋ/ 'king', would appear to have come later as palatalisation did not affect it (Lass 1994: 53-56). Parallel to these developments was the affrication of /g/ in post-nasal, pre-front vowel position, e.g. *sengean* /senʤan/ 'singe' (Lass 1994: 58; Stenbrenden 2019).

Given the above situation, the affricates of Old English can be seen as contextually determined: their occurrence dependent on a front phonotactic environment. It was not until the Middle English period with the appearance of /ʧ/ and /ʤ/ before low and back vowels, in French loanwords like *chastise* /ʧastʌɪz/ and *join* /ʤɔɪn/ respectively, that affricates as systemic units, what Minkova (2019: 160) calls contour affricates, became established. Another development which fed into the phonemicisation of affricates is the retraction of stressed vowels from front to back vowels in words like *ceosan* /ʧeosan/ > *choose* /ʧuːz/; *ciowan* /ʧiowan/ > *chew* /ʧuː/.

3.3 Contrastive word stress

Primary stress in Old English rested on the lexical root of a word (Minkova 2013: 294). At this stage the language had long since developed the type of stress accent – stressed syllables are longer and louder than unstressed ones – which is still typical of English and other Germanic languages. Prefixes with nouns could also take stress as in *ˈandswaru* (*answer*) but verbs had root stress as in *forˈgiefan* (*forgive*).

With the influx of Romance words in the Middle English period alternative stress patterns arose. By and large a system for foreign words begins to emerge in late Middle English which demands stress on the first

heavy syllable starting from the penultimate syllable of a word and moving leftwards, i.e. towards the beginning of the word.

From the late Middle English period it is known that functional stress shift arose, which resulted in the modern pattern seen in word pairs like the following.

(4) a. ˈ*convert* (noun) : *conˈvert* (verb)
b. ˈ*perfect* (adj) : *perˈfect* (verb)

The later stress in the verbs may have been due to the penultimate stress rule applying to the verbs when they still had a final ending, e.g. *converter* would have been *conˈverter* which on loss of the ending retained the stress position which was then final. The penultimate stress rule applied to nouns as well and this led to patterns like ˈ*convert* which again were retained. The net result was a stress pattern contrast in which verbs show later stress.

3.4 Open syllable lengthening

This is a phonological process which started in the north of England in the thirteenth century and affected the high vowels /i/ and /u/ in the following century (Luick 1964: 405) during which it spread to the other dialect areas (Minkova 1982: 29). It is one of the major sound changes of early Middle English and involves lengthening and lowering as seen in the following examples.

(5)

/i/	>	/eː/	
wice		*weke*	‘week’
pise		*pese*	‘peas’
/e/	>	/ɛː/	
melu		*mele*	‘meal’
mete		*mete*	‘food’
/a/	>	/aː/	
bacan		*bake*	‘bake’
gamen		*game*	‘game’
/o/	>	/ɔː/	
hopa		*hope*	‘hope’
nosu		*nose*	‘nose’

/u/	>	/oː/
wudu	*wode*	'wood'
duru	*dore*	'door'

This is known as 'open syllable lengthening' (Brunner 1963: 17; Berndt 1960: 25-27; Dresher – Lahiri 1999; Ritt 1994). However, on closer observation it can be seen that it involves two processes. On the one hand, vowels are lengthened in open syllables and on the other, they are lowered (Jespersen 1909: 114-115). The lengthening has been assumed to be connected with the loss of a final schwa with words which were originally disyllabic. The change can be interpreted as maintaining the quantity of the entire word, i.e. the quantity of the deleted schwa was maintained by lengthening the preceding vowel (Minkova 1982: 44, 1991: 87-90).

3.5 Rise of schwa as an unstressed vowel

The writing of late West Saxon would suggest that short unstressed vowels were still pronounced with their full value. A word like *stanas* 'stones' shows the use of <a> for the short unstressed vowel which in Middle English comes to be represented as <e>. This would imply that schwa had established itself by Middle English as the default realisation of short unstressed vowels. This assumption is supported by the development of many phrasal constructions to single words in which the unstressed word of the original construction was reduced to schwa, cf. *on slæpe* > *asleep*, *on life* > *alive*.

4. Changes in phonotactics

In the history of English an area of its phonology which, in the changes it experienced, contributed substantially to the altered 'look and feel' of the language is phonotactics, the sequences of sounds which are permissible at any one time.

In Old English syllable onsets could contain segments in sequences which became impermissible in Middle English. For instance, /h/ and /w/ could occur before /r/ or /l/ as in *hlaf* /hl-/ 'loaf', *hrad* /hr-/ 'quick, active, ready' or *writan* /wr-/ 'write'; /h/ could also occur before /n/ as in *hnutu* /hn-/ 'nut'

(Lutz 1991: 29). Such clusters were simplified during Middle English and only the second element of each cluster prevailed.

Initial clusters like /fn-/ in *fneosan* 'sneeze' were changed to /sn-/ (Lutz 1991: 75-78). Some combinations, which are no longer possible in standard varieties of English today, were continued into Middle English and (much later in regional dialects), e.g. /gn-/ and /kn-/, as in *gnagan* 'gnaw' and *cnēo* 'knee', respectively.

5. Conclusion

The textual record for late Old English and early Middle English suggests a break in the language. While this probably did not exist in this extreme form in the spoken language there are certain changes in the sound system which justify the classification of the phonology of Old English as typologically different from that of Middle English (Wełna 1978: 34-35; Breivik 1991). The sound system of Old English, much like its grammar, retained its largely Germanic character (Ringe 2006: 213-233). For English, the system gradually changed, partly as a result of contact with Anglo-Norman but also, if not primarily, due to changes already initiated in the Old English period.

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Frequency, selection and random chance in the (ir)regularization of English verbs[1]

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ABSTRACT

This paper offers a few remarks on the role of frequency, selection and random chance in the development of (ir)regular preterite forms in English verbs. It considers the possibility of quantifying the evolutionary dynamics of the process, as proposed in recent large-scale studies. Such studies view language as a dynamical system or a mutating living organism, affected by competing random and natural selective forces. They shed light on stochasticity- and selection-driven aspects of the evolution of the linguistic system, and are thus complementary with respect to frequency-oriented linguistic approaches (such as usage-based/exemplar models).

Keywords: regularization, irregularization, analogical levelling, English preterite, ablaut, linguistic change, linguistic innovation.

1. Introduction

Frequency has long been considered to be a prominent factor in language change. High- and low-frequency words (or even whole expressions) are known not to be equally affected by various diachronic processes. Reductive sound change tends to affect high-frequency words before low-frequency words (as in *have* > *'ve*, *will* > *'ll*, *do not* > *don't*, etc.; e.g. Mańczak 1969 et seq.;

[1] I would like to dedicate this article to Professor Jerzy Wełna in appreciation of his contribution to the field of the history of the English language. Working for many years in the same department, it has been a privilege and a great pleasure to witness his immense knowledge of intricacies and unsolved riddles of historical linguistics, which he has so enthusiastically shared with generations of students. Thank you!

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Hooper 1976); the extremely high frequency of certain constructions may lead to their grammaticalization (as in the case of the English construction *going to*; Bybee 2003, 2006: 719-721); analogical levelling or regularization tend to affect low-frequency words before high-frequency words (e.g. Bybee 2006: 728-729; Lieberman et al. 2007).

One of the best documented cases of analogical levelling is the levelling of English strong verbs to the 'weak' verb pattern, which has occurred throughout the history of English and manifests itself also in the present-day dialectal variability of the language (Campbell 1998: 92). (There have also been numerous studies of strong-verb paradigm levelling in other Germanic languages; see e.g. Nübling 2000; Dammel et al. 2010; Knooihuizen – Strik 2014; De Smet – Van de Velde 2020; Nowak 2020.) However, although many sources point to frequency-driven regularization as the main direction of the evolutionary change, irregularization has also been attested (e.g. Hare – Elman 1995; Lieberman et al. 2007; Anderwald 2013; Newberry et al. 2017). The mechanisms underlying these processes are not fully understood.

In exemplar-based models of language production and perception (e.g. Bybee 2002, 2006), both morphologically regular and irregular words (as well as phrases) are assumed to be stored in the mental lexicon; the strength of mental representations is assumed to vary depending on frequency. Such models predict that the high token frequency of irregular verbs will make them immune to regularization, as frequent usage makes exceptional forms easy to learn, store in memory, and transmit flawlessly from one generation of speakers to another. Conversely, low-frequency irregular verbs are predicted to be more difficult to acquire, more liable to memory decay, and thus more likely to be attracted by the dominating regular (high type frequency) pattern. In short, 'among English irregular verbs the low-frequency verbs are more likely to regularize (*weep*, *weeped*) while the high-frequency verbs maintain their irregularity (*keep*, *kept*)' (Bybee 2006: 715).

However, not only the regular pattern can attract linguistic innovation. Some productivity in irregularization has also been attested, both historically and in psycholinguistic experiments. For instance, in the experiment reported in Bybee and Slobin (1982), both adult and child participants sometimes supplied innovative irregular past tense forms for the verbs they heard, in addition to the elicited regularization. To illustrate, *swum* was the elicited past tense form of *swim* in 25% of adult responses and in 7% of third-graders' responses; *shrunk* appeared as the past tense form of *shrink* in 25% of adult responses and in 60% of the children's responses (see also the summary in Bybee – Moder 1983: 254). The productivity of the *string/*

strung class to which the above verbs were attracted can be seen not only from the synchronic but also from the diachronic perspective. The *string/strung* class has been viewed as the most productive class of strong verbs in the history of English, attracting a large proportion of new members: two thirds of the contemporary members of the class were not strong verbs in Old English (Jespersen 1942; for discussion see Bybee – Moder 1983). Bybee and Moder (1983) investigated why some irregular subclasses become productive and attract new members, while others gradually decay as their members become regularized in the historical process. Their experimental data (nonce words eliciting past tense forms) pointed to some phonological attributes of the *string/strung* class that can be linked to its productivity. Phonological features, such as the final consonants as well as the initial consonants and clusters, and to a minor degree also the base vowel identity, were found to define the class in terms of a family resemblance to a prototypical member of the class. Historical change has also been modelled using connectionist nets, relying on the fact that more frequent patterns or those that share phonological regularities with a number of others are learned more quickly and with lower error (Hare – Elman 1995). Relatedly, the relationship between frequency of occurrence and response accuracy (productivity) has also been observed in first language acquisition studies. In the seminal 'wug-test' study of Berko (1958), the productivity score (i.e. % correct responses) for the regular preterite inflectional pattern differed enormously depending on whether a real word or a synthetic item (nonce word) was the input; cf. *melted*: 72% (preschoolers)/74% (first graders) versus *motted*: 32% (preschoolers)/33% (first graders). While the role of frequency and stochasticity in the productivity of the English morphological pattern has been widely acknowledged, the questions whether analogy- or rule-based mechanisms are at play, and whether regulars and irregulars are acquired and computed using the same mental mechanisms are highly debatable. The acquisition of the English past tense morphology has been modelled, among others, within the connectionist framework, attributing all kinds of generalizations to analogy (Rumelhart – McClelland 1986; Plunkett – Marchman 1993), the dual mechanism model (Prasada – Pinker 1993), in which regular inflection is carried out by a general rule (or rules) while irregular inflection is based on analogy, and the multiple-rule model (Albright – Hayes 2003), where regulars and irregulars are both computed using stochastic rules characterized by various degrees of reliability.

In this paper, I address the role of frequency, selection, and random chance in the process of (ir)regularization of English preterite forms,

focusing on the large-scale quantification of the (ir)regularization process. In §2, I outline the basic differences between Old English and Modern English conjugation of preterite and past participle forms, and sketch out various (ir)regularization paths of English verbs, as known from linguistic studies. In §3, I discuss the results of recent studies based on huge digital corpora, which attempt to quantify the long-term evolutionary dynamics of (ir)regularization or, using rigorous methods from evolutionary biology, test whether the process depends on selective forces or random chance. §4 contains concluding remarks.

2. (Ir)regularization paths: A comparison of Old English and Modern English verbs

Old English possessed an elaborate system of conjugation, with two broad classes of verbs: strong and weak, which differed in how their preterite and past participle were formed (e.g. Mitchell – Robinson 2001). The strong verbs exhibited a change in the root vowel (known as 'ablaut' or 'gradation'), the weak verbs formed their preterite (pret.) and past participle (past ptc.) by adding a dental suffix. Seven classes of Old English strong verbs are distinguished, each exhibiting a different gradation series. In some strong verbs, four different vowels appeared in the so-called 'principal parts' of the verb: infinitive (inf.), preterite singular (pret. sg.), preterite plural (pret. pl.), and past participle (past ptc.); e.g. *crēopan* 'creep' (inf.), *crēap* (pret. sg.), *crupon* (pret.pl.), *cropen* (past ptc.), a class II verb, or *feohtan* 'fight' – *feaht* – *fuhton* – *fohten*, a class III verb. In others, only three or two different vowels can be found; e.g. *faran* 'go' – *fōr* – *fōron* – *faren,* a class VI verb (2001: 36-39). Weak verbs are usually divided into three classes, all of which are characterized by the addition of the dental suffix, as in Modern English. The stem vowel usually remains unaltered across the paradigm, although exceptions also exist, e.g. *sēċan* 'seek' (inf.) – *sōhte* (pret. sg.) – *sōht* (past ptc.), a class 1 verb (2001: 49). In such cases, the opaque vowel alternations had arisen through phonological factors operating in the prehistoric past. One of such factors was *i*-mutation; cf. *sēċan* < **sōkjan* (2001: 49).

Superficially, it seems that the present-day irregular and regular verbs are direct descendants of the Old English strong-weak division. However, a closer comparison of Old English and Modern English conjugations shows that although the correspondence is close, it is certainly not one-to-one.

Modern English has a highly regular conjugation pattern whereby the pret. and past ptc. are expressed by suffixing *-ed* to the stem, as in *love/loved/loved* (with the suffix exhibiting phonologically governed allomorphy: /d/ ~ /t/ ~/ɪd/). It also has a set of irregular verbs, within which certain subpatterns are discernible. Gleason (1955: 102-103) presents a (non-exhaustive) list of 52 irregular subclasses: two with more than ten members each, ten containing at least three verbs each, six with two verbs each and thirty-four containing only a single verb each.

Numerous Modern English irregular verbs are remnants of the Old English strong conjugation. In the case of such verbs, it is immediately apparent that in the course of history stem levelling must have taken place, as the Old English pret. sg. and pret. pl. forms correspond to a single Modern English pret. form. For example, ModE *choose/chose/chosen* descends from the OE *céosan* 'choose' (inf.) – *céas* (pret. sg.) – *curon* (pret. pl) – *coren* (past ptc.). The pret. sg. and the pret. pl. forms are illustrated in (1).

(1) *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) entry: 'choose, *v.*' (c. 893)

*a*1000 *Ps.* (Spelm.) cxviii[i]. 173 Bebodu ðine ic ceas.
OE *Genesis* 1803 Him þa wic curon.

Some other Modern English irregular verbs show the suffixation combined with a special pret. or past ptc. form of the stem, e.g. *seek/sought/sought*. As mentioned above, *sēċan* 'seek' (inf.) – *sōhte* (pret. sg.) – *sōht* (past ptc.) was a weak class 1 verb in Old English and 'had the same irregularity [in the stem vowel] even then' (Mitchell – Robinson 2001: 48). In Chaucer's time, this kind of irregularity was still present not only in *seke(n) – soughte – sought*, but also e.g. in *werke(n) – wroghte – wroght*, which corresponds to the now fully regular *work/worked/worked*; cf. Burnley (1983: 27). (The irregular *wrought* has been lexicalized.)

Throughout the centuries, many English verbs have developed the regular suffixation pattern; e.g. the ModE *help/helped/helped* used to be a strong verb in Old English. In Chaucer's time the regularization process was still incomplete, i.e. both weak and strong variants were attested, as exemplified in (2) (the variable prefix *y-/i-* is omitted in past ptc. forms); see Burnley (1983: 28). For a quantitative study of the shift from the strong to the weak verbal category in the period between Old English and the year 1500, the reader is referenced to Krygier (1994).

(2) Burnley (1983: 28)

crepe(n) (inf.) – *crepte* (pret.) – *crept* ~ *cropen* (past ptc.)
wepe(n) (inf.) – *wepte* ~ *weepe* (pret.) – *wept* ~ *wepe(n), wope(n)* (past ptc.)
helpe(n) (inf.) – *heelpe* (pret.) – *holpe(n)* (past ptc.)
fare(n) (inf.) – *ferde* (pret.) – *fare(n)* (past ptc.)
hange(n) ~ *honge(n)* (inf.) – *he(e)ng* ~ *honged* (pret.) – *hanged* ~ *honged* (past ptc.)

Interestingly, the first two examples in (2), *crepte* (pret.) and *wepte* (pret.), which survive into Modern English as part of the irregular pret./past ptc. subpattern in (3a), can be considered as examples of (temporary) 'regularization' from a diachronic perspective. They not only exhibit suffixation, but are also fully analogous to other examples in which the stem allomorphy was caused through a transparent historical phonological process; e.g. in *keep/kept/kept* the shortening of /e:/ resulted in Late Old English ~ Early Middle English /e/ in the environment of the following consonantal cluster (Wełna 1978: 64-65); the long /e:/ changed later to /i:/ (as part of the Great Vowel Shift starting in the 15th c. (1978: 88-89). The /i:/ ~ /e/ alternation is also characteristic of some Modern English verbs whose stems end in *-t/-d* (3b).

(3) Gleason (1955: 102)

a. Pret. = Past Ptc. = /-t/ suffixation plus /i:/ > /e/ change in the stem
creep; *deal*; *feel*; *keep*; *leap*; *mean*; *sleep*; *sweep*; *weep*

b. Pret. = Past Ptc. = /i:/ > /e/ change in the stem
bleed; *breed*; *feed*; *lead*; *meet*; *plead*; *read*; *speed*

Regularization is not the only possible direction of change. Irregularization has also been attested, although, as often underscored, it tends to be much less common (e.g. Lieberman et al. 2007; Anderwald 2013; Anderson 2015). In the words of Lieberman et al. (2007: 713): "[r]egular verbs become irregular much more rarely: for every 'sneak' that 'snuck' there are many more 'flews' that 'flied' out". Still, there is a number of originally regular verbs (e.g. *dive, plead, sneak*) which have developed irregularity in some Modern English dialects (*dove, pled, snuck*). This happened sometimes through proportional analogy, i.e. after the patterns of other verbs (*drive/drove, lead/led*), and

sometimes, as in *sneak/snuck*, with no obvious relationship to previously existing patterns (Anderwald 2013; Anderson 2015).

Most irregular verbs in Modern English are survivals from Old English; new verbs coined or borrowed today follow the weak conjugation, e.g. *google – googled – googled* (Lieberman et al. 2007: 713). However, sporadic irregularity is also observed in new words. For example, Mitchell and Robinson (2001: 35) note that when *strive* was borrowed from French in the 13th c., it followed the pattern of *drive* because the two rhymed; hence ModE *strive – strove – striven.* At the same time, *jive*, which is a comparably new verb, is conjugated *jived – jived*, not *jive – jove – jiven*. (*OED* traces the origin of the word *jive* to the 1928 title of L. Armstrong's gramophone record *Don't jive me*.). Some variability in the conjugation of *strive* may be observed among native speakers of English; e.g. Campbell (1998: 92) notes that '*strive/strove/striven* for many speakers has changed to *strive/strived/strived*'. (However, according to Google Ngrams, accessed 30-01-2022, the irregular *strove* still prevails.)

Apart from (ir)regularization, there are well-known shifts of irregular verbs, which have not resulted in their regularization. The suppletive form *went* replaced the earlier pret. *ēode*, which had also been a suppletive form with respect to the infinitival *gān.* The intricacies of this 'suppletion for suppletion' process are succinctly described in Wełna (2001). Some English strong verbs exhibit 'partial levelling' – a diachronic shift from one strong pattern to another (Campbell 1998: 92). Bybee and Moder (1983: 252) speak of a historical trend for members of the class with three forms (*sing/sang/sung*) to lose their separate past-tense forms, and thus become members of the *string/strung* class. They point out that many speakers of American English do not use such forms as *sprang*, *shrank*, and *stank*. (In general, ablaut patterns with the same vowel in the pret. and past ptc. forms have been preferred throughout the history of English as well as other Germanic languages, e.g. German and Dutch, but not Swedish; Dammel et al. 2010.)

3. Quantifying the (ir)regularization: Frequency, selection, and random chance

Below I consider two recent large-scale quantitative studies of the evolution of Modern English (ir)regular verbs. Lieberman et al. (2007) treat language as a dynamical system and study how the rate of regularization depends on the frequency of word usage. Newberry et al. (2017) assume that languages

mutate like genes, and using methods from evolutionary biology, study to what extent language evolution depends on natural selection or is governed by random chance.

As is well known, regular and irregular verbs in Modern English are not distributed evenly across the lexicon. Regular verbs are very frequent in terms of total numbers – thus contributing to the high type frequency of the morphological pattern (the infinitival stem plus the *-ed* suffix). Irregular verbs constitute a much smaller set, only less than 3% of modern verbs are irregular. However, they tend to occupy the highest frequency bins in the lexicon: 'the ten most common verbs are all irregular (be, have, do, go, say, can, will, see, take, get)'; Lieberman et al. (2007: 713).

Lieberman et al. (2007) investigated the dynamics of evolution of the regular pret./past ptc. pattern over the past 1,200 years, compiling data from Old English through Middle English to Modern English on the basis of a large collection of grammar textbooks. They created a list of 177 Old English irregular verbs that remain part of the language to this day. 'Of these 177 Old English irregulars, 145 remained irregular in Middle English and 98 are still irregular in Modern English' (p. 713).

For each of the 177 verbs, frequencies were obtained on the basis of the CELEX corpus (containing 17.9 million words). The frequency range was divided into six logarithmically spaced bins (from 10^{-6} to 1). The findings on the spacing of irregular verbs within each bin are summarised in Table I below. The verbs that were identified in Lieberman et al.'s study as those which had regularized are indicated in bold type. It can be readily observed that the lower the frequency bin, the larger the fraction of the verbs that have undergone regularization. There are only irregular verbs in the two highest frequency bins, thus the proportion of regularization is 0% in these bins. In the third frequency bin, 10^{-3} to 10^{-2}, 33 of 37 (90% of) verbs are still irregular in Modern English, which gives the regularization score of 10%. In absolute terms, the largest number of irregular verbs is found in the fourth frequency bin, 10^{-4} to 10^{-3}. According to Lieberman et al., in this bin, 65 irregular Old English verbs have left 57 in Middle English and 37 in Modern English, which in relative terms yields the regularization rate of 43%. The fifth and the sixth frequency bins, 10^{-5} to 10^{-4} and 10^{-6} to 10^{-5}, show still higher overall regularization scores: 72% and 91%, respectively. In terms of raw numbers, Lieberman et al. note that in the fifth frequency bin, 50 irregulars of Old English have left 29 in Middle English and 14 in Modern English, whereas in the sixth frequency bin, 12 irregulars of Old English have left 9 in Middle English and only 1 in Modern English. The quantitative analysis

allows them to conclude that the regularization process applies gradually, at a certain frequency-dependent rate which is stable across time: 'an irregular verb that is 100 times less frequent is regularized 10 times as fast' (p. 714).

Table 1. The frequency bins and regularization percentages within each bin for 177 Old English irregular verbs; see Lieberman et al. (2007: 714)

Frequency	Verbs	Regularization %
$10^{-1}-1$	be, have	0
$10^{-2}-10^{-1}$	come, do, find, get, give, go, know, say, see, take, think	0
$10^{-3}-10^{-2}$	begin, break, bring, buy, choose, draw, drink, drive, eat, fall, fight, forget, grow, hang, **help**, hold, leave, let, lie, lose, **reach**, rise, run, seek, set, shake, sit, sleep, speak, stand, teach, throw, understand, **walk**, win, **work**, write	10
$10^{-4}-10^{-3}$	arise, **bake**, bear, beat, bind, bite, blow, **bow**, burn, burst, **carve**, **chew**, **climb**, cling, creep, **dare**, dig, **drag**, flee, **float**, **flow**, fly, **fold**, freeze, grind, leap, lend, **lock**, **melt**, **reckon**, ride, **rush**, **shape**, shine, shoot, shrink, **sigh**, sing, sink, slide, **slip**, **smoke**, spin, spring, **starve**, steal, **step**, **stretch**, strike, **stroke**, **suck**, **swallow**, swear, sweep, swim, swing, tear, wake, **wash**, weave, weep, **weigh**, wind, **yell**, **yield**	43
$10^{-5}-10^{-4}$	**bark**, **bellow**, bid, **blend**, **braid**, **brew**, **cleave**, **cringe**, **crow**, dive, **drip**, **fare**, **fret**, **glide**, **gnaw**, **grip**, heave, **knead**, **low**, **milk**, **mourn**, **mow**, **prescribe**, **redden**, **reek**, **row**, **scrape**, **seethe**, shear, shed, **shove**, slay, slit, **smite**, sow, **span**, **spurn**, sting, stink, strew, stride, swell, **tread**, **uproot**, **wade**, **warp**, **wax**, **wield**, wring, **writhe**	72
$10^{-6}-10^{-5}$	**bide**, **chide**, **delve**, **flay**, **hew**, **rue**, **shrive**, slink, **snip**, **spew**, **sup**, **wreak**	91

With such an elegant expression of the relationship between the lexical frequency of an irregular verb and its propensity for change, it might be tempting to predict 'the future of the past tense' (Lieberman et al. 2007: 715). Indeed, Lieberman et al. (2007: 715) assert that 'if the current trends continue, only 83 of the 177 verbs studied will be irregular in 2500'. They even speculate that the next verb to undergo regularization is likely to be *wed,* which ranks at the very bottom of irregular verbs in Modern English. They further observe that the form *wed* is already being replaced in many contexts by *wedded*.

However, it seems that the future of individual verbs is more uncertain than the overall long-term decay of irregular forms, and factors other than frequency may be at play. First, we may observe that verbs such as *wed* do not directly compare to the verbs in Table I, which all either descend from the Old English strong conjugation patterns or, like *seek* – from a weak conjugation, but with an irregularity in the stem caused by a prehistoric phonological pattern. Unlike those verbs, *weddian* was a weak verb in Old English. *OED* lists two possible conjugation patterns in Modern English, *wedded* and *wed*, but also notes that 'the form *wed* in the past tense is now only dialectal; in the past participle it is common *dialect* but otherwise rare except in poetry'. Thus, if both *wedded* and *wed* exist as competing pret. forms in some varieties of English, the latter must be an instance of irregularization. An interesting question is then what factors might have contributed to the irregularization process. Some enlightenment seems to be offered by studies in language acquisition. The famous *wug* experiment by Berko (1958) revealed that past tense inflection was particularly difficult for children in the case of nonce stems ending in /-t/ or /-d/. For such stems, which were *mot* and *bod* in that experiment, 'the wrong answers, which were in the majority, were overwhelmingly a repetition of the present stem'. In other words, '[t]o the forms ending in /-t/ or /-d/ the children added nothing to form the past' (p. 166). Similar results were also reported in Bybee and Slobin (1982: 274). Thus, there seems to be a parallel between the patterns in acquisition and the *wedded* > *wed* shifts in adult dialectal speech. We may also observe that the irregular *cut/cut/cut* class to which the verb *wed* seems to be attracted is the most populated class of irregular verbs in Modern English: according to Gleason (1955: 102), it consists of 19 members. (For comparison, the productive *string/strung* class is the second largest irregular class in Gleason's study, and consists of 14 members.)

Another interesting question arises through comparison of the verbs *wed/wedded (~wed*), and *slink/slunk* (*~slinked*). The latter verb also occupies

the bottom frequency bin (as seen in Table I). Unlike *wed*, it was a strong verb in Old English (see Wright – Wright 1914, §498, p. 257). Despite a persistent chance of becoming regular, as judged by its frequency, it has remained an exception, joining the most productive irregular *string/strung* class in the course of history. It seems then that the paths of evolution of individual verbs may stabilize in different ways depending on factors other than frequency alone.

Thus, there are clearly further points of interest, parallel to the question about frequency-driven regularization rates, namely, how fast irregularization proceeds and what mechanisms govern it, as well as what factors may hinder the regularization process in the case of low-frequency verbs. The list of Modern English irregular verbs compiled by Lieberman et al. (and available in their Supplementary Information) contains a substantial number of verbs which used to be weak verbs in Old English – such verbs constitute nearly one third of the list (the total of 249 Modern English irregular verbs – 177 Old English irregular verbs = 72 Old English weak verbs). According to Newberry et al. (2017), irregularization is as common as regularization in Modern English.

Newberry et al. (2017) used numerical methods from population genetics to investigate to what extent the development of (ir)regular verbal forms in American English, e.g. *spilt* > *spilled* was driven by stochasticity or governed by natural selection. They analysed regular versus irregular past-tense variants for 36 verbs (704,081 tokens in total), extracted from the Corpus of Historical American English, comprising over four million words from over 100,000 texts between the years 1810 and 2009. The assumption is that language mutates like genes, and thus both stochasticity (cf. 'genetic drift' in population genetics) and selective forces are expected to be at play. Stochasticity in transmission is a random change in frequency from one generation to another, caused solely by accidents of sampling. Selection entails the influence of various forces (e.g. linguistic, cognitive and social). Although the irregular past-tense forms were expected to 'regularize over time for reasons of economy or cognitive ease' (2017: 224), Newberry et al. report that random chance rather than selective pressures appeared to be the factor underlying most of the system's variability. The overall finding was that rare forms were more prone to replacement than common ones; more common words, regardless of whether selective forces were at play or not, were affected by less stochasticity in transmission. The study reports selection as the driving force in several verbs exhibiting variability in the pret. form. Surprisingly, the irregular variant is favoured in four verbs (*lighted* >

lit, *waked* > *woke*, *sneaked* > *snuck*, *dived* > *dove*), whereas the regular one only in two (*wove* > *weaved, smelt* > *smelled*). As Newberry et al. point out, one possible explanation for the irregularization patterns is the natural propensity for rhyming, as reported in psycholinguistic studies. For example, in Prasada and Pinker's (1993) study, speakers are likely to mimic or invent irregular forms (such as *spling/splung*) which rhyme with existing irregular verbs. Newberry et al. admit that similar selection can also be present in verbs whose dynamics turned out to be dominated by stochastic drift, e.g. *quitted* > *quit*. Notably, the irregularization trend is also inferred for *wedded* > *wed*, contradicting the results of Lieberman et al. (2017) which were based on long-term trends. It can additionally be observed that Lieberman et al. did not take into account the synchronic variability of forms, while Newberry et al.'s study is based exclusively on variable past tense forms, i.e. 'lemmas with two past-tense variants that each occurred at least 50 times in the corpus' (p. 223). Given that language is a system in flux, it is also conceivable that, depending on the method, we can make more accurate short-term or long-term predictions, while these predictions are not necessarily expected to be the same.

The large-scale studies focus on stabilization and selection based on existing forms; however they do not address questions which seem crucial from the point of view of linguistic productivity, i.e. in what mental form morphological patterns are learned and how that affects the emergence of novel forms. According to Bybee and Moder (1983: 255), the innovation in forms such as *spling/splung* must be caused by product-oriented rather than source-oriented generalizations, i.e. generalizations based on relations among the pret. forms of different verbs (e.g. *strung, slung, swung, wrung, hung*), rather than those between the base and the derived forms. Thus, the 'propensity for rhyming', mentioned as a potential factor causing irregularization in Newberry et al.'s study, must refer to the generalization that 'the past form for a verb of the *string/strung* type must end in /ʌ/ followed by a nasal or a velar; but the vowel of the base does not necessarily have to be /ɪ/' (Bybee – Moder 1983: 255). Morphological innovations such as *strike/struck* and *sneak/snuck* crucially depend on the availability of mechanisms other than proportional analogy because there are no analogous present – pret. pairs in the English lexicon that could serve as the model for these novel forms. In contrast, source-oriented generalizations can effectively account for the regular English past-tense suffixation (e.g. *walk/walked*, *google/googled*). Interestingly, Albright and Hayes (2003) argue that irregulars and regulars are not necessarily handled by different mechanisms, but point to

potential advantages of rule- rather than analogy-based mechanisms. Their 'wug test' data on English show that both irregulars and regulars are subject to gradient ratings dependent on the phonological structure of the stem. In their simulations, the analogical model is unable to focus on the relevant fragments of phonological structure, and is also biased towards implausible responses influenced by single exemplars, which bear high resemblance to the test items.

4. Concluding remarks

The (ir)regularization of English verbs taking place over centuries provides an excellent testing ground for theories of language evolution and mechanisms of change. While frequency has long been considered to be a prominent factor in language change (e.g. in exemplar-based linguistic approaches), it has not been fully understood to what extent factors such as natural selection or random chance are in operation. Large-scale studies based on big datasets and the employment of powerful statistical methods, such as those used in evolutionary biology, allow to address quantitative questions concerning the evolutionary dynamics of language. The quantification methods used in these studies make it possible to estimate the rates of change and to empirically verify the claims made earlier by linguists about the relationship between the propensity for (ir)regularization and lexical frequencies (and/or morpheme shapes), emphasising the role of stochasticity in linguistic innovation. As expected, they also reveal differences in predictions depending on long versus short time scales over which these predictions are made. However, focusing merely on stabilization and selection of existing forms, such studies leave unanswered other questions which seem vital from the point of view of understanding linguistic innovation: in what mental form morphological patterns are learned and how that affects potential paths of linguistic creativity.

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Shakespeare's agentive neologisms in *-er*: A functional view

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ABSTRACT

The article is a corpus-based, empirical study into the problem of Shakespearean agentive neologisms in *-er* in the light of a functional approach towards word-formation. Drawing on Kastovsky's (1983) idea of two functions of word-formation, i.e. the lexical and the syntactic one, as well as taking into consideration Strang's (1969) aspectual dichotomy of agentive formations, the collected material is subjected to functionally-oriented analysis. The results of the study demonstrate that the word-formational processes in question are closer to syntactic operations than to lexical ones, which allows to reconsider the status of some Shakespearean lexical innovations and the role they have played in making up the lexicon of contemporary English.

Keywords: agent nouns, neologisms, word-formation, Shakespeare, derivation.

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of Shakespeare's verbal inventiveness has been the subject of numerous scholarly disputes. Most of such studies explore the quantitative aspect of Shakespeare's lexical innovations, and set their sights on estimating the exact number of formations first attested in his works. Hence, many scholars make attempts at evaluating the number of Shakespearean coinages either by presenting antedatings to the first citations provided by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (e.g. Hulme 1995; Schäfer 1980; Russell 1989), or by discussing the problems with the methodology with the estimates stemming from the use of the *OED* (Shea 2014; Brewer

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2012). Other studies (e.g. Nevalainen 2001; Dilorom 2021; Watson 2012) are more oriented towards discussing the word-formational mechanisms that were available in the Early Modern English period and which gave rise to new attestations in the corpus of Shakespeare's plays.

Whatever the case, any study devoted to the problem of the so-called "Shakespearean neologisms" is inherently ridden with the risk of inaccuracy stemming from limitations of research possibilities. It can never be asserted beyond doubt that a given word was either coined or even first used by Shakespeare. With time, fewer and fewer "Shakespearean neologisms" remain, as in many cases earlier attestations were identified. Therefore, the estimates of Shakespearean coinages decrease in number. In 1906, Harold Bayley calculated that the number of words invented by Shakespeare was 9450. The second edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, on the other hand, lists 2,200 alleged Shakespearean neologisms, while in one of the most recent publications on Shakespeare's language, David Crystal (2008) has estimated that a plausible number of true Shakespearean coinages is around 1700.

2. Functions of word-formation in light of Kastovsky (1983) and Strang (1969)

I would like to argue that the afore-mentioned, purely quantitative accounts concerning lexical innovations attributed to Shakespeare do not provide a sufficient insight into our understanding of the dramatist's verbal creativity. Providing raw numbers of Shakespeare's "new words" without taking into consideration their function might result in a misrepresentation of his actual contribution to the English language lexicon. Therefore, not only quantitative, but also the functional aspect of the new attestations identified in the corpus of Shakespeare's plays must be dealt with in order to provide a comprehensive account of the mechanism of word-formational morphemes.

1.1 Two functions of word-formation (Kastovsky 1983)

The concept which provides insight into the mechanics of coining neologisms, and which can be effectively applied in diachronic studies on newly attested formations is Dieter Kastovsky's idea of a double function of word-formation.

According to Kastovsky (1983), the basic function of word-formation is "labelling". This term is used by Kastovsky to refer to a function of word-formation whereby a new lexical unit is coined in order to serve as a designation for some extralinguistic phenomena. A given word-formational process will be activated when a linguistic community is in need of a new word which would function as a name for something newly invented, created, identified, or recognized. The neologism thus derived can be understood in terms of a *lexeme*: it is a lexical unit which becomes an inherent part of the lexicon. In this sense, it corresponds to de Saussurean conception of a word as a *linguistic sign*, composed of the *signifier* and the *signified*. The neologism, therefore, functions as the signifier for a new segment of the extralinguistic reality (i.e. the signified).

However, as Kastovsky (1983) noticed, not all neologisms are meant to act as names, or "labels". In some cases, a new word is derived primarily for the purpose of establishing a kind of deictic relation within a given discourse. Such a neologism does not designate anything new in the extralinguistic world, it is not a "label", but rather acts as an anaphoric device which helps to maintain the cohesion of a passage. This function is illustrated by Kastovsky (1983: 411) with the following examples:

a. *One of them was **faking**. (…) Could the **faker** keep up free association (…)? The **faker**, whichever he was, had practiced or had natural talents.*

b. *A few thought they had noticed someone **resembling** the man in the picture. I waited two days tracking one of the supposed **resemblers**, and found no **resemblance** at all.*

c. *… and whether our own conversation doesn't sound a little **potty**. It's the **pottiness**, you know, that's so awful.*

d. *Once or twice he **chuckled**… It was following one of those **chuckles** that Paul Drake drawled a question.*

e. *Solarians did not bud, they **birthed**; and the female was always the **birther**. She remained female for life, no matter how many times she **birthed**.*

Kastovsky (1983) calls this function "a syntactic function of word-formation". Here, the process of the creation of a new word is more reminiscent of a syntactic transposition than morphological derivation: there is a change of syntactic category without any change of meaning, apart from categorial

one. The syntactic function of word-formation is thus a syntagmatic process, in contradistinction to the afore-mentioned "labelling" function, which operates paradigmatically. In the case of syntactic function of word-formation, the product, i.e. the newly attested word, is frequently an *ad-hoc* formation, heavily dependent semantically on its textual antecedent. Viewed from the diachronic perspective, such formations rarely survive as lexemes – most of them remain *hapax legomena*, i.e. nonce-formations with a single attestation in a given corpus.

It follows, then, that word-formation is by no means a homogeneous phenomenon, and should rather be looked upon as a cline, ranging from purely lexical, paradigmatically-oriented operations to the more syntactic, syntagmatically-oriented ones, in which functional recategorization is basically the only outcome. Such a view allows to reconsider the issue of neologisms and their status in the contemporary lexicon.

1.2 Two types of the suffix *-er* (Strang 1969)

A similar view concerning the suffix *-er* in the diachronic perspective on the English word-formational system has been offered by Barbara Strang (1969). According to Strang (1969), in English word-formation there are two variants of the suffix *–er*, which can be differentiated on syntactic, semantic, and functional grounds. One type represents semantically transparent, actual formations, which merely perform a syntactic function in discourse, while the other type is the "specialized" *–er*, which derives agents functioning as labels. Barbara Strang (1969) suggests that these two types actually represent different etymologies or different histories of *–er* formative. The latter type, the "specialized" *–er* was established in Old English and has been productive at all periods of the language. The other type, the "actual" *–er* has an entirely different history. Barbara Strang argues that this variant of the morpheme came into use under the direct stimulus of Latin models, with a slight reinforcement from French. First nominalizations of this kind appeared in English in the 14th century and they were typically used in biblical translations. Many of those formations at that time were derived from adjectival, usually participial forms from Latin. For example, Latin *interrogantis* was rendered as *asker*, in which the "actual" *–er* can be identified. The reason for the rise of this new type of nominalization, as Strang (1969) suggests, is the decline in adjective inflection for case, number and gender in the Middle English period. To make up for this loss, two competing patterns

were used: one is the syntactic structure "he who", "those who", and the other is the actual nominalization in *–er*, which additionally exhibits tense and aspect contrasts.

3. Shakespearean neologistic agent nouns in *-er*

The afore-discussed dichotomous nature of word-formation will be illustrated with the study of Shakespearean deverbal agentive nouns in *–er*. There are two reasons for such a selection of data. Firstly, agent-formation in *–er* is one of the most productive word-formational processes, and derivatives in *–er* constitute a considerable portion of Shakespearean coinages. Secondly, the agentive nouns in *–er* can serve as an excellent illustration of the phenomenon that Kastovsky (1983) calls "a double function of word-formation". The data subjected to analysis have been compiled from the corpus of Shakespeare's plays (*First Folio of Shakespeare's Plays*, Norton Facsimile, 2nd Edition) and then checked in the *Oxford English Dictionary* for the date of first attestation. Also, it has been confirmed with the *OED* data that the *–er* nouns sampled in the corpus are true derivatives formed on verbal bases, and not merely loanwords ending in the syllable "er". Altogether, there have been sampled 35 deverbal formations in *–er* which, following the *OED* dating, were first attested in Shakespeare's plays.

3.1 Corpus data: Analysis

The result of the semantic and functional analysis of Shakespearean *–er* nouns demonstrates that the vast majority of the nouns sampled in the corpus (as many as 31 out of the total 35) are closer to syntactic recategorizations than to labels. In the data collected, the suffix under inspection tends to play a purely transpositional, syntactic function – it merely nominalizes its underlying proposition, and the derivatives are semantically equivalent to their motivating verbal bases. The majority of Shakespeare's deverbal agent nouns in *–er* are fully transparent semantically and can be paraphrased simply as "one who V-es", where V stands for the verbal base. There are, therefore, no additional semantic features attached. Such a "syntactic" function of Shakespearean word-formation can be identified in the following derivatives:[1]

[1] All the *–er* derivatives discussed in the article are listed in the appendix together with

(1) *appearer* "one who appears" (Per. 5.3.18)
This is your wife. Per. Reverend appearer*, no.*

(2) *injurer* "one who injures" (John 2.1.174)
Thou monstrous Iniurer *of heauen and earth.*

(3) *employer* "one who employs" (Much Ado 5.2.31)
Troilous the first imploier *of pandars.*

(4) *intercepter* "one who intercepts, an interceptor" (Twel. N. 3.4.242)
Thy intercepter*, full of despight..attends thee at the Orchard end.*

Taking into consideration the full semantic transparency of the majority of the deverbal *–er* formations, it could be argued that the nominalizations in question function as reduced sentences, and are thus closer to syntactic processes than to word-formational operations. The equivalence of the attested *–er* derivatives to syntactic structures is especially visible in expressions where the *–er* noun is the second element in a compound word. In such cases, the word-formational operation merely transposes the direct object of the transitive verb into the modifier element within the compound word, as in the examples (5) – (7) provided below:

(5) *gull-catcher*: "one who catches gulls" (Twel. N. 2.5.204):
An. *Nor I neither*
Fab. *Heere comes my noble* gull-catcher
To. *Wilt thou set thy foote o'my necke*[2]

(6) *king-killer*: "one who kills a king" (Timon 4.3.382)
Lye where the light Fome of the Sea may beate
Thy graue stone dayly, make thine Epitaph,
That death in me, at others liues may laugh.
O thou sweete king-killer*, and deare diuorce*
Twixt naturall Sunne and fire: thou bright defiler
Of Himens purest bed, thou valiant Mars,
Thou euer, yong, fresh, loued, and delicate wooer,

glosses.

[2] All quotations are from the *First Folio of Shakespeare's Plays* (Norton Facsimile, 2nd edition).

Whose blush doth thawe the consecrated Snow
That lyes on Dians lap.

(7) *fortune-teller*: "one who tells fortunes" (Com. Err. 5.1.239)
Along with them
They brought one Pinch, a hungry leane-fac'd Villaine;
A meere Anatomie, a Mountebanke,
A thred-bare Iugler, and a fortune-teller,
A needy-hollow-ey'd-sharpe-looking-wretch;
A liuing dead man.

The syntactic function of deverbal agent nouns in *–er* is especially evident in the case of formations which are contextually dependent, in the sense that their reference is so general and inclusive that it does not characterize particularly any individual. One such example is the derivative *breather* meaning "one who breathes", that is, one who lives. (Ant. & Cl. 3.3.24):

(8) Mes. *She creepes: her motion, & her station are as one.*
She shewes a body, rather then a life,
A Statue, then a breather.

In the case of this derivative, the nominalization is not really a label, as it does not help to identify the referent directly. Rather, the *-er* noun functions here as a deictic device which helps to maintain the cohesion of the text.

The deictic role of agent nouns in *–er* can also be identified in the case of the afore-mentioned *actual* agents, i.e. formations designating performers of actions in which the act of doing is concurrent with the temporal point of reference supplied by the context. In general, actual agents express meanings like "sb who is performing a given action at the moment", so, functionally, they are equivalent to verbs in progressive aspect. The analysis of the Shakespearean agentive formations in *–er* demonstrates that a considerable amount of the first attestations sampled in the corpus function as actual nominalizations, e.g.

(9) *pauser* (Macb. 2.3.117)
Th' expedition of my violent Loue Out-run the pawser, *Reason.*

(10) *opposer* (All's Well 3.1.6)
Holy seemes the quarrell Vpon your Graces part: blacke and fearefull On the opposer.

(11) *waverer* (Rom. & Jul. 2.3.89)
But come young wauerer, *come goe with me.*

Only four of all the 35 sampled types in *–er* have slightly different semantic structures, where a higher level of lexicalization can be identified. They can be claimed to have been coined in order to designate an entity in the extralinguistic world, and the *–er* application here simultaneously characterizes and constricts the number of potential referents by attaching some additional semantic features which are not present in the motivating verbal bases. One such additional sematic feature is [Professional], which can be identified in the following derivatives:

(12) *hare-finder:* "a man whose business is to find or espy a hare in form" (Much Ado 1.1.186)
Or doe you play the flowting jacke, to tell vs Cupid is a good Hare-finder*?*

(13) *perfumer:* "one employed to fumigate or perfume rooms" (Much Ado 1.3.60)
Being entertain'd for a perfumer, *as I was smoaking a musty roome.*

(14) *rat-catcher:* "one whose business is to catch rats" (Rom. & Jul. 3.1.78)
Tybalt, you Rat-catcher, *will you walke?*

Also, the derivative *all-seer* "one who sees all" (Rich. III 5.1.20) has a restricted designation, since it functions as a noun of unique reference and designates God

(15) *That high* All-seer, *which I dallied with.*

4. Conclusion

To conclude, it seems that most of what is generally referred to as "Shakespeare's neologisms" are words whose primary function is purely

syntactic, at least as far as agent formation in *–er* is concerned. Despite the fact that the sample subjected to analysis was quite small, covering only 35 types, the proportions featured in the data provide strong confirmation for the tendency of the agentive *–er* towards "syntactic", syntagmatic operations: as many as 88,57% of the sampled types display such syntactic behaviour. As has been demonstrated, the coinages that function as new names (in the sense of Kastovsky's "labels") are scarce in the corpus: they constitute merely 11,42% of the data gathered. The fact that most of the Shakespearean *–er* coinages are closer to syntactic operations than to lexeme formations questions their status as neologisms, since they might be looked upon as having been generated rather than invented by Shakespeare. It seems plausible that these nouns might not have been perceived as "new words" by Elizabethan audience, since the act of *–er* suffixation here can hardly be treated as an act of naming. Shakespeare's coinages in *–er* are evidently not meant as formations whose primary function is to enlarge the contemporary lexicon. Rather, the suffix *–er* functions here merely as a vehicle for condensing information, which in turn results in the conciseness of expression that on the one hand strengthens the dramatic effect of a given passage, and on the other is convenient metrically and helps to maintain textual cohesion.

The semantic transparency of the agentive coinages in *–er*, the full rule-governedness and productivity of the process, and the fact that in most cases the derivatives act as a kind of grammatical shorthand for a phrase meaning "one who V-es / is V-ing at the moment" render such words unnecessary to be listed in a dictionary. These words do not comply with the idea of a word as a linguistic sign, as they do not represent any "signified", to use de Saussure's term. The fact that they were recorded in the *Oxford English Dictionary* might be attributed to the special affinity which the *OED* editors are believed to have had towards Shakespeare and his language. As Crystal has remarked: "Shakespeare, of course, was a special target of the first *OED* editors: they went through his work with a toothcomb" (2008: 8–9).

Therefore, the question of how many words Shakespeare invented seems to be irrelevant, because, as I hope to have shown, not all of his verbal inventions have the same lexical status. Taking into consideration the function of his coinages might result in still different estimates of Shakespearean neologisms than one would come up with by simply counting the first attestations provided by the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

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APPENDIX

SHAKESPEARE'S DEVERBAL AGENTIVE NEOLOGISMS IN *-ER*

all-seer: "one who sees all" (Rich. III 5.1.20)
appearer: "one who appears" (Per. 5.3.18)
boggler: "one who boggles or hesitates" (Ant. & Cl. 3.13.110)
breather: "he who breathes" (Ant. & Cl. 3.3.24)
breeder: "that who breeds or produces offspring" (Tit. A. 4.2.68)
candle-holder: "one who holds a candle; an attendant or assistant who lights those who are engaged in any work or ceremony by night" (Rom. & Jul. 1.4.38)
cheerer: "one who cheers" (Hen.V 5.2.41)
confirmer: "one who confirms" (John 3.1.24)
counter-caster: "one who casts with counters" (Oth. 1.1.31)
cutter-off: "one who cuts off" (A.Y.L. 1.2.53)
employer: "one who employs" (Much Ado 5.2.31)
fortune-teller: "one who tells fortunes" (Com. Err. 5.1.239)

gibbet-maker: "one who makes gibbets" (Tit. A. 4.3.79)
gull-catcher: "one who catches gulls" (Twel. N. 2.5.204)
hare-finder: "a man whose business is to find or espy a hare in form" (Much Ado 1.1.186)
injurer: "one who injures" (John 2.1.174)
intercepter: "one who intercepts" (Twel. N. 3.4.242)
interposer: "one who interposes" (Merch. V. 3.2.329)
king-killer: "one who kills a king" (Timon 4.3.382)
manager: "one who manages (something specified)" (L.L.L. 1.2.188)
moraller: "a moralizer" (Oth. 2.3.294)
night-brawler: "one who brawls during the night" (Oth. 2.3.196)
opposer: "one who opposes or contends against a person, doctrine, argument, cause, scheme, etc." (All's Well 3.1.6)
pauser: "one who pauses" (Macb. 2.3.117)
perfumer: "one employed to fumigate or perfume rooms" (Much Ado 1.3.60)
plodder: "one who plods" (L.L.L. 1.1.186)
protester: "one who makes a protestation or a solemn affirmation" (Jul. C. 1.2.74)
rat-catcher: "one whose business is to catch rats" (Rom. & Jul. 3.1.78)
ratifier: "one who ratifies" (Ham. 4.5.105)
rumourer: "one who disseminates rumours" (Cor. 4.6.47)
sin-absolver: "one who absolves sins" (Rom. & Jul. 3.3.50)
thunder-bearer: "the bearer of thunders" (Lear 2.4.230)
torturer: "one who inflicts or causes torture" (Rich. II 3.2.198)
undeserver: "one who is not deserving (of sth)" (2 Hen. IV 2.4.406)
waverer: "one who wavers" (Rom. & Jul. 2.3.89)

On Kuryłowicz's notion of metrical equivalences in the light of Late Old English versified prayers

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to revive certain aspects of Jerzy Kuryłowicz's studies on Old English meter. The analysis focuses on the notion of isomorphism between linguistic and metrical patterns, which was fundamental to his theory, and which became the cornerstone of modern metrical analysis. Special consideration is given to the problem of metrical equivalences and opacity in the light of late Old English versified prayers. Thus, this contribution to the analysis of Old English versification serves as a complement to some of Kuryłowicz's important work, combining theoretical inquiry with data analysis of the sources in the vein of the methodology adopted by the renowned Polish linguist.[1]

Keywords: Jerzy Kuryłowicz, late Old English verse, isomorphism, equivalences, opacity, manuscripts.

1. Introduction

Contemporary analysis of poetic meter hinges on the principle that linguistic and metrical phenomena are intertwined and coherent.[2] Naturally, the relation between the two systems is not of equal rank. It is the linguistic structures that constrain the metrical templates (not vice versa) and provide the rationale for different aspects of verse including accent, rhythm, metrical

1 I would like to thank two anonymous reviewers for their comments and several corrections. Any remaining mistakes are my own.

2 For the general exposition of the relation between language and literature see, for example, Fabb (1997) and Fabb (2015). Both studies include further references to the literature and offer a broad coverage of the sources.

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variants, or metrical licensing. This is, essentially, a consequence of the fact that a poem's metrical framework is inherently rooted in the phonological system of the language in which it was composed. Metrical features are transpositions of linguistic features and poetry is, to some extent, constrained by the structure of the language the poet uses as his artistic medium. On the other hand, a metrical analysis may shed light on language development and provide evidence for reconstructed historical forms. Therefore, understanding the architecture of versified texts is an important prerequisite for comparative historical linguistic analysis especially in the traditions in which the earliest written sources were composed in meter. Although metrical continuity and structure preservation are, in general, characteristic of traditional models of poetry with a long history, metrical patterns may adapt to the emerging language patterns over time.

These fundamental principles of isomorphism between language and meter underlying, to some extent, most contemporary metrical studies were first laid down by Jerzy Kuryłowicz in his early article 'Związki metryki z językiem potocznym' (Relations between the meter and spoken language), published in 1930, and then explored and developed in successive studies over the years (e.g. Kuryłowicz 1947, 1949, 1950, 1976, 1979). Unlike most of his predecessors (and some of his successors) who focused on studying meter *per se*, Kuryłowicz adopted a structurally-based and comprehensive methodology that enabled him to look for parallel phenomena in different languages and versification systems.[3] His analysis of linguistic and metrical interface was extensive and included evidence from Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Old Irish, and Old Germanic. As regards the lattermost, Kuryłowicz's insightful contribution has been acknowledged by scholars working on Old English versification on the whole. All major studies on Anglo-Saxon alliterative tradition typically refer to *Die sprachlichen Grundlagen der altgermanischen Metrik* (1970) and *Metrik und Sprachgeschichte* (1975), less often to 'Linguistic fundamentals of the meter of *Beowulf*' (1976).[4] And yet, regardless of this general recognition, some non-trivial aspects of his analysis have passed largely unnoticed.[5] In part, this must have been due

[3] Roman Jakobson adopted the same fundamental approach in his pioneering study on Czech verse in which he distinguished between phonological and non-phonological components of verse (Jakobson 1923). Kuryłowicz refers to Jakobson's work in his later paper on Indo-European metrics (1963: 322).

[4] By way of example, see references to Kuryłowicz in Russom (1987, 1990, 2017), McCully and Anderson (1996), Hutcheson (1995), Fabb (1997), Terasawa (2011), Cornelius (2017).

[5] A critical appraisal of Kuryłowicz's contribution to Old Germanic metrics has been offered by Robert Fulk and Seiichi Suzuki in two short papers published in a memorial volume

to a language barrier: some of Kuryłowicz's papers on metrics are in Polish and, as such, they have a limited readership circulation. Another reason seems to be related to the fact that his research results were used primarily in a technical way lacking the original broad cross-linguistic perspective and universal validity. This paper aims to revisit some aspects of Kuryłowicz's analysis of meter and illustrate them with examples from late Old English versified prayers. As a minor contribution, it hardly unfolds all the different strands Kuryłowicz traced in his investigation of Germanic metrics. The discussion thus centres on resolution, archaisms, and Latin components in late alliterative verse as manifestations of the overarching notions of metrical equivalence and opacity.

2. The sources and the data

In his search for linguistically relevant aspects of poetry, Kuryłowicz (1947) stressed the importance of non-individual poetical features constrained by formal rules consolidated within a given tradition. In other words, he was looking for generalizations resulting from long-term historical evolution. He argued that poetry in which the singular voice of the poet (*parole poétique*) yields to conventional forms and patterns perpetuated by professional corporate groups of singers (*langue poétique*) is the proper subject of analysis within the competence of a linguist.[6] Such conventional forms of poetry, practiced by the *filids* in Ireland, the *þurls* in Iceland, and the *scops* in Anglo-Saxon England, passed down orally from generation to generation, are distinguished by the choice of archaisms and formulaic expressions bound with a set of formal metrical patterns which evolved over time.

Although the metrical prayers examined in this paper were not composed by traditional *scops*, they too are products of an enduring Anglo-Saxon tradition, boosted by the Benedictine Revival in response to educational and religious needs. Intended as devotional meditations on familiar themes to be shared with community, court, or parish, but outside

edited by Smoczyński (1995). The authors focus on the best-known aspects of Kuryłowicz's interpretation of Old English alliterative meter, namely, verse types and rhythm (Suzuki 1995: 483-490) and resolution (Fulk 1995: 491-497). Fulk stresses that the issues raised by Kuryłowicz in his early studies played a significant role in the development of the discipline later but his 'precedence in exploring the subject has scarcely been acknowledged' (Fulk 1995: 492).

6 According to Kuryłowicz (1947: 300-301), individual poetic language, peculiar to a given poet, is the subject of stylistics.

of the daily Offices or regular church ritual, they may have been recited in a monastic refectory or sung on special occasions during social or regnal celebrations (cf. Keefer 2010: 102). The language and form of versified vernacular prayers, such as the *Pater noster*, *The Creed*, *Gloria Patri*, or the metrical psalms are close to those known from narrative biblical poems composed after the conversion of Anglo-Saxon England to Christianity. This affinity is manifested, among other things, in the use of formulaic language integrated with familiar metrical patterns.

Studies of late Old English meter typically involve *The Battle of Maldon*, *The Battle of Brunanburh*, and other *Chronicle* poems.[7] These compositions narrate recent historical events and employ traditional formulaic language characteristic of heroic Anglo-Saxon poetry. They also share significant features which reflect metrical alterations induced by language change, such as the prevalence of the A-type in the off-verse, levelled rhythmical contour, repetitiveness, and expanded dips, to name a few. These metrical developments are reflexes of changes at the morphophonological level in the transition period: the growth of analytic structures to the detriment of inflectional categories, phonological reduction, and morphological opacity. Similar features are discernible in a group of late religious verses linked to the Benedictine Reform and the post-Reform period, attested in several 11th-century codices: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS. 201, Oxford, Bodleian Library MS. Junius 121, and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS. Fonds. Lat. 8824 (also known as the Paris Psalter).[8]

And yet, the alliterative prayers have not been the prime candidates for metrical analysis. The main reasons are, presumably, their religious rather than strictly heroic diction and lexical stratum, on the one hand, and their overall repetitive, mechanical style, on the other. Historically, these prayers are secondary compositions, formed *per analogiam* to classic heroic songs and earlier religious poetry (see Greenfield and Calder 1986: 231-234). They use the traditional alliterative meter and the technique of variation as the vehicle for vocabulary. They also adopt some of the conventional phrases to express Christian notions even though they essentially apply them in an automatic rather than innovative way. On the whole, they form a relatively uniform

7 See, for example, Fulk (1992: 251-268) and the latest work by Russom (2017: 89-133).

8 All three manuscripts have been digitized. Full digital facsimiles can be found at: https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/44360db1-f67e-47c3-8136-6515a090d968/(Oxford, Bodleian Library MS. Junius 121), https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/cr485km1781 (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS. 201), https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8451636f (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS. Fonds. Lat. 8824), accessed July 2022.

body of texts owing to the shared lexicon and a long-established repertory of formulaic expressions associated with Christianity. A distinctive feature of this group of texts, especially the vernacular psalms, is a significant ratio of Latin and Latinate terms adopted from the liturgical sources which served as their basis.[9] Embedded within the alliterative lines they provide a testing ground for the operability of the metrical rules and metrical extensions. In short, the corpus of late metrical prayers offers tangible material for parsing metrical units in correlation to bilingual, transforming linguistic structures characteristic of the transition period.

3. Metrical equivalences

Among the linguistic-metrical correlatives, Kuryłowicz distinguished, in particular, elements of stress and rhythm, and variability or formal equivalence. He argued that the latter, being essentially an aesthetic category in poetry, is conditioned by phonological phenomena specific to a given language. Furthermore, he demonstrated that the equivalence of certain metrical components, or the order of *responsiones*, as he called it alternatively (Kuryłowicz 1930: 283), is a universal phenomenon and some types of equivalence are recurrent even in metrical systems of a substantially different nature.

One type of metrical equivalence to which Kuryłowicz returned in several works hinges on the parallelism between a long (i.e. heavy σ̄) syllable and a sequence of two short (i.e. light σ̆) syllables. In metrical terms, this means that a single heavy syllable can be resolved into two light ones which function as a unit or implement one metrical position. In Old Latin poetry this type of metrical equivalence stems from an iambic shortening rule. By this rule, unstressed heavy syllables which immediately follow light syllables in disyllabic words (i.e. σ̆σ̄) become light due to the shortening of the vowel in the second syllable. The result is a σ̆σ̆ template. In terms of phonology, this operation establishes symmetry within a string of syllables and repairs marked sequences by removing a mora (Baldi 2002: 264). From the artistic point of view, the variation helps to break prosodic monotony by changing the rhythmical pattern from iambic or spondaic to pyrrhic feet, as exemplified by numerous verses of Plautus and Terence (cf. Kuryłowicz 1949: 295).

[9] Some examples are given in section 4.2.

Kuryłowicz demonstrated that a parallel phenomenon occurred in Old Germanic metrics and, more importantly, that it was related to the phonological rule of syncope. Fulk (1999: 491) traces this idea back to his paper on 'Latin and Germanic Metre' published in 1949. However, already in 1930, Kuryłowicz suggested that vowel syncope/apocope and resolution are corresponding phenomena in Germanic. In the final section of the article 'Związki metryki z językiem potocznym', he uses an example from *Hildebrandslied* to illustrate the point. His argument is based on the observation that *prūt* (line 20a) and *fateres* (line 24a) implement the same position within a metrical template. On the surface then, the resulting metrical equivalence in Old High German (i.e. $\bar{\sigma}=\breve{\sigma}\breve{\sigma}$) is identical to that found in Greek. Yet, he argues, at the underlying – linguistic – level they are different. In Germanic, resolution derives from vowel syncope, whereas in Greek, it stems from hiatus and contraction. Kuryłowicz defines the Germanic syncope (i.e. a short final or medial vowel is syncopated if preceded by a long stressed syllable; if the final vowel is deleted, the medial vowel stays intact) and quotes several forms that would become standard examples in later analyses of High Vowel Deletion[10]: word-finally WGmc **gasti* (guest) > OE *gast* vs. PGmc **wini* (friend) = OE *wini*[11]; WGmc **handu* (hand) > OE *hand* vs.**sunu* > (son) = OE *sunu*; word-internally: OHG *nerita* (saved) vs. *hôrta* (not: *hôrita*, I heard). Given that, he recapitulates, *gast-*, *hand-* and *hôr-* are long, whereas *win- sun-* and *ner-* are short syllables.[12]

In a later paper, Kuryłowicz (1949) elaborates on the analysis and presents further arguments. One of them follows from the fact that Northwest Germanic languages lack monosyllables ending in a short vowel and tend to repair syllable structure (i.e. weight) by contraction and lengthening (cf. PGmc **taihu* > OE *tā*, toe). He stresses that the lack of light monosyllabic fully-stressed words and the presence of geminates is characteristic of languages that make use of the metrical equivalence $\bar{\sigma}=\breve{\sigma}\breve{\sigma}$. Thus, in Old English, Old Saxon, and Old High German a bisyllabic word may never carry two metrical stresses or implement two metrical positions unless its syllables are heavy, as in the compound *hring-nett* (mail-coat). By implication, then,

[10] For example, Kiparsky and O'Neill (1976), Keyser and O'Neill (1985), Dresher and Lahiri (1991), McCully (1992), Lass (1994: 98-102).

[11] In fact, Kuryłowicz (1930: 293) is not entirely correct when he says that PGmc **wini* 'retains the final *i* unchanged' ('[…] *wini* utrzymuje końcowe *i* pozostając bez zmiany'). By virtue of another rule, the non-syncopated high vowels were lowered in Old English, hence EOE *wini* > OE *wine*. The data are tacitly corrected in Kuryłowicz (1949: 296).

[12] In contemporary studies on Old English prosody, the opposition is conveyed in terms of syllable weight rather than syllable length: heavy vs. light syllables.

a compound such as *sigor-rēadig* (blessed with victory) cannot constitute a verse by itself even though it has four syllables (i.e. the default metrical verse template), because its first syllable *si-* is light and must be resolved to carry the metrical stress. At the metrical level, then, *sigor* implements one and not two metrical positions.

One final point raised by Kuryłowicz in his early paper – 'Związki metryki z językiem potocznym' – is worth mentioning. Namely, in the concluding paragraph, Kuryłowicz (1930: 293) says that there is an important difference between the prosodic equivalence as instantiated in Greek and Germanic. In the former, light bisyllabic forms and heavy monosyllables are co-occurring variants (e.g. ἔτι-μαέ∼ἔτι-μα), whereas in the latter, they become morphologically conditioned mutually exclusive variants (i.e. OE *gast*:*wini*, *hand*:*sunu*). While Kuryłowicz's assertion complies with the examples he gives, later studies have shown that there is, in fact, variation with regard to the implementation of the syllable/foot parameters in the same word forms. In Old English, the variation concerns words, such as *fugol*, *heafod*, *wæter*, *werod*, *worold*, *wundor*, etc., in which the syncopated vowels vacillated and were often analogically restored in inflectional forms (Campbell 1959: 226-227; Hogg 2000).[13]

Excellent examples illustrating this type of variation come from a vernacular paraphrase of the Latin prayer *Gloria Patri* copied by different scribes in two late Anglo-Saxon manuscripts: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS. 201, pp. 169-170 and Oxford, Bodleian Library MS. Junius 121, fols. 43v-44v.[14] This is a rare case since most Old English texts have survived in single copies. The witnesses are both dated to the first half of the 11th century but it is hardly possible to specify the date more accurately. What is clear, however, is the fact that each scribe was consistent in the choice of the forms he used: the Corpus Christi scribe used the syncopated variants, whereas the Bodleian scribe – the resolved ones in the same poetical lines, which implies compatibility at the phonological and metrical level. Whether the variants had exactly the same status linguistically is another matter. Both

[13] In contradistinction to Campbell (1959: 159-160), Hickey (2011: 360-361) claims that in some forms the second vowel comes from epenthesis, and its later loss 'cannot be interpreted as syncope, but simply as the reversal of epenthesis with the relaxation in English phonotactics.' From the metrical point of view, however, the source of the vowel is of minor significance. What matters is the prosodic template and rhythmical pattern that change depending on the presence/absence of the vowel.

[14] The examples from Old English texts are quoted after Krapp and Dobbie's *Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records* (1931-1953), unless stated otherwise. Reference to the manuscript data and folios is given when necessary.

may have been in use at the time, though one might have been regarded as a more conservative variant. Other extragrammatical factors, for instance, sociolinguistic or regional variables, cannot be precluded as possible determinants of the variation, either. Metrically, the forms are equivalent (non-contrastive), but the choice of a given variant – syncopated vs. resolved – engenders a difference in rhythm between σ̄ = ˈS(x) in (1a) and σ̆σ̆ = ˈsx(x) in (1b).[15]

(1) Syncopated vs. resolved sequences in the Old English paraphrase of *Gloria Patri*

	a. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS. 201, pp. 169-170	b. Oxford, Bodleian Library MS. Junius 121, fols. 43v-44v
Line 2b	wide ge**opnod**	wide ge**openod**
Line 18a	earle **worlde**	earle **worulde**
Line 38a	ofer ealre **world**	ofer ealre **woruld**
Line 46a	and on **worlda world**	and on **worulda woruld**
Line 61b	**orð** and sawle	**oruð** and sawle

Later studies have indicated that resolution may be suspended in Old English meter under secondary stress. This breach has led some scholars to believe that there is actually no symmetry between the prosodic and metrical phenomena and, therefore, resolution should be analysed in metrical terms only. However, there are several arguments to the contrary. First, the suspension of resolution in Old English verse may be triggered by several factors, including relative stress, position in verse, the weight of both resolving syllables (cf. Fulk 1995: 491-492). Second, the phonological processes of Northwest Germanic lengthening and High Vowel Deletion can be sensitive to stress grading and suspended, as well (Fulk 1995; Hogg 2000). Given that the phonological rules may oscillate, it is only to be expected that their metrical extensions can exhibit differential application, too. Despite the inconsistencies, the equivalence between ¯ and ˘˘ has been recognized as a fundamental property of Old English (or Germanic) prosody manifested via

[15] For the sake of this presentation, I adopt the following notation: ˈS = stressed metrical position (or a heavy stressed syllable), ˈs = resolved stressed metrical position (or a light stressed syllable), and x = unstressed but metrically relevant syllable. Parentheses indicate an optional unstressed syllable. The relevant forms in each half-line have been emboldened.

several weight-sensitive processes in phonology and via resolution in meter. Viewing all of these phenomena as operations conspiring to ensure prosodic optimization helps to provide a simple and unified explanation for a range of facts related to Old English stress and meter (Dresher – Lahiri 1991: 264).

4. Metrical opacity and ambiguity

Kuryłowicz recognized the problem that the relation between linguistic and metrical phenomena is not always transparent. However, he sought to give a principled explanation at the interface of linguistics and metrics, rather than to postulate an autonomous set of rules for each of the domains.16 In general, he viewed opacity as a corollary to the fact that poetical language evolves at a slower pace than spoken language or, to put it differently, that the poetic language tends to retain older linguistic features longer. One of two historically equivalent forms may acquire the status of a secondary, colloquial, or conservative variant in speech but persevere in poetry as a legitimate metrical variant. Archaisms that fall out of use in spoken language are often retained in poetry as convenient long-established metrical variants or metrical fillers. Using examples from Latin and Middle Persian, inter alia, Kuryłowicz (1930: 284ff) shows that poets may even generate inorganic or historically unattested forms by analogy to phonological patterns that used to be productive at a certain stage of language development.

4.1 Archaisms

In late Old English, one source of archaisms in verse comes from stems with h∼ø alternation, such as *hēah∼hēa* (high, nom./acc. sg.), *feoh∼fēos* (cattle, nom./gen. sg.), *nēah∼nēara* (near, adj./comp.), etc. The deletion of the voiceless velar fricative word-internally started circa the 8th/9th century and coincided with contraction and vowel lengthening in the case of light roots (Lutz 1988; Fox 2000: 69ff; Opalińska 2004). Intervocalic *h* is occasionally rendered in the earliest texts (e.g. *thohae*, clay, in Epinal Glossary, cf. Pheifer 1974: 3), but in later records forms with ø are the standard representation. In verse, such contracted forms fill one metrical position and along with

16 This is implied in many places and stated explicitly in e.g. Kuryłowicz (1949: 294).

the remaining components typically carry out a regular prosodic pattern, as exemplified by the data in (2a-c). Occasionally, however, poetical lines which include such lexical components are ambiguous and elude transparent classification. By way of example, consider the half-lines in (2d-f). These verses seem deficient either because they violate the requirement on the minimal number of metrical positions (2d-e: three instead of four syllables) or because they implement an inadequate metrical contour (2f: no dip after the second stress).

(2) Contracted forms in Old English verse

a. *Beowulf*, line 713b: in sele þam **hēan (**Sievers' type B)
b. Paris Psalter, *Psalm* 72, line 18a: on **hēan** hūse (Sievers' type C)
c. Paris Psalter *Psalm* 76, line 30a: þara **hēan** handa (Sievers' type C)
d. *Beowulf*, line 116a: *hēan **hūses**
e. *Beowulf*, line 1275b: *dēaþwīc **sēon**
f. *Beowulf*, line 839b: *feorran ond **nēan**

One way to account for the deficiency is to assume that the contracted forms are metrically bisyllabic and thus generate two metrical positions instead of one: /hē.an/, /sē.on/, /nē.an/ (cf. Amos 1980: 40-63; Russom 1997: 40). Phonologically, however, this solution is unsatisfactory because it produces hiatus which was a strongly marked category in Germanic languages. Hence, the bisyllabic hypothesis entails hiatus resolution, presumably implemented via *h*-epenthesis. In Old English phonology, segment insertion as a strategy of hiatus resolution was ranked low and could be activated when other, more optimal mechanisms (i.e. diphthongization, segment deletion, gliding) were blocked by higher-ranked constraints. In verse, however, poetical licence warrants nonstandard solutions. In this case, epenthesis is tantamount to re-establishing historically proper forms designated as metrical archaisms. Technically, the operation reverses the phonological processes of *h*-deletion and diphthongization. In practice, it simply reinstates obsolete variants of words for the sake of metrical coherence.

(3) *h*-epenthesis as hiatus resolution in metrically deficient contracted forms

a. hēan > *hē.an > hē.han
b. sēon > *sē.on > sē.hon
c. nēan > *nē.an > nē.han

The rationale for the scenario outlined above stems from synchronic alternations and metrical coherence grounded in diachronic facts. It hinges on the assumption that prosodic structures are part of the poet's (= native speaker's) internalized grammar and are recoverable from phonological alternations despite surface opacity. Theoretical reasoning underlying the mechanism of phonological and metrical structure optimization via *h*-epenthesis is substantiated by scribal evidence from Oxford, Bodleian Library MS. 121 Junius and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College Ms. 201, given in (4). In the former, the copyist renders *hēan* as a bisyllabic form with an intervocalic *h* – *hēahan* – to provide an additional syllable and generate the B-type pattern (cf. 4a). In the latter, the scribe must have originally rendered the word in the same way, but at some point, the intervocalic *h* was erased with the resulting gap in the script (cf. 4b).[17]

(4) Old English metrical paraphrase of *Gloria Patri*, line 30a

a. Oxford, Bodleian Library MS. 121 Junius, fol. 44r: þone **hēahan** dæg
b. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS. 201, p. 169: þone **hēa an** dæg

Both witnesses depart from the standard representation of the word current at the time, which implies that it was a deliberate strategy driven by metrical constraints.

4.2 Hybrid verses

A conspicuous feature of late metrical prayers is a noticeable proportion of Latin words or partially assimilated Latinate forms. Hybrid verses which contain such non-native lexical elements are another potential source of metrical opacity or ambiguity. The ambiguity may arise from the

[17] Cf. Opalińska (2018: 181) for the respective details from manuscript images.

difference in prosodic parameters between the two languages (differences in stress assignment[18]) or phonological discrepancies (e.g. language-specific constraints, hiatus). In Old English verse, the stressed syllable, or the metrical ictus, often coincides with alliteration, which constrains metrical flexibility and makes the adjustment more difficult, though not unattainable. The following examples from the metrical psalms and *The Creed* in (5) and (6) demonstrate that Anglo-Saxon poets were capable of generating metrically coherent hybrid lines by actuating adjustment mechanisms – stress shift, gliding, resolution, or segment deletion – where necessary.

In some verses the changes are minimal. For instance, in (5), the correct implementation of the metrical contour rests on vowel gliding in *Iacob*, *Ioseph* and *Marian* (V.V- > jV-), which eliminates hiatus and produces an optimal ˈCVCV/trochaic structure.

(5) Hybrid verses with Latin lexical components

a. Paris Psalter, *Psalm* 134, line 9b: Iacob drihten (Type A)
b. Bodleian Library, MS. Junius 121, *The Creed*, line 32b: Ioseph byrigde (Type A)
c. Bodleian Library, MS. Junius 121, *The Creed*, line 15a: Sanctan Marian (Type A)

Not all verses, however, are equally transparent. Some forms require a major adjustment to fit into an established template. In (6a) alliteration helps to identify the metrical pattern in both half-lines. Thus, relying on this cue (i.e. alliterating voiceless bilabial stop in *pontisca* and *Pilatus*), it is possible to analyse the string in the on-verse as Sievers' C-type with the secondary stress carried by *-isc-*. The off-verse is more opaque. The alliterative curve implies that ictus falls on the first syllable, while the second syllable retains a weaker, secondary stress (Lat. Pī$_{|}$lātus > ˈPī$_{|}$lātus). Given that the second major metrical stress is carried by *weold*, the entire verse can be tentatively analysed as the low-ranked E-type verse. The hybrid compound in (6b) is subject to even more complex changes: in the second compound component – *psalterium* (originally stressed on the antepenultimate syllable: Lat. psal.ˈtē.

[18] English stress is maximally binary and left-headed and the head must dominate two moras (cf. Dresher – Lahiri 1991; Fikkert et al. 2008), whereas Latin stress is right-headed and falls on the antepenultimate syllable or the penultimate syllable if it is heavy, see Baldi (2002: 268-270); Roca (1999: 659f).

ri.um) – the primary stress is shifted to the initial syllable and the secondary stress is assigned to the second syllable (as predicted by the Germanic Stress Rule proposed by Dresher – Lahiri 1991), the initial stop is deleted to satisfy the language-specific constraint on **ps*-onsets, and the high vowel is subject to gliding. The resulting output is a trisyllabic nativized form /ˈsal.ˌter.jum/, which, along with the Germanic component *wyn*, implements a D-type verse.

(6) Metrically ambiguous hybrid verses

a. Bodleian Library, MS. Junius 121, *The Creed*, line 28:
Da se pontisca Pilatus weold (on-verse: Type C; off-verse: Type E)
b. Paris Psalter, *Psalm* 56, line 32b: wyn-psalterium (Type D)

Although both lines in (6) correspond to regular Sieversian templates, the entire scheme is artificial not only because it involves complex adjustment mechanisms. The major problem is the lack of transparency between the morphological/lexical versus metrical tiers. In traditional Old English verse, the 'fit' principle warranted transparency between the two levels of representation in the output forms (i.e. 'parameters of the poetic meter should be set so the core vocabulary of the language can be used as fully as possible', cf. Hanson – Kiparsky 1996: 294). By virtue of this constraint, contour metrical templates – D and E – were typically implemented by compounds and phrases with a transparent morphological structure correlated with stress grades, as in, for instance, *Beowulf*, line 164b *feond mann-cynnes* (Type D) or *Deor*, line 40a *leod-cræftig mon* (Type E). Hybrid verses implemented by polysyllabic Latin words with a complex stress pattern and different vowel length are at variance with this constraint.

Anglo-Saxon poets tried to minimize metrical ambiguity by generating simple metrical templates built of two bisyllabic lexical words like *sanctan Marian*, quoted in (5c) above. This tendency is particularly conspicuous in macaronic poetry in which the off-verses are implemented by lexical units that mimic the default trochaic template: *factor cosmi*, *omnes sancti*, *salus mundi*.[19] Yet, even there the result is not entirely satisfactory since the same adjustment mechanisms are activated or suspended in an *ad hoc* manner. For instance, in the macaronic section of *The Rewards of Piety*, gliding is applied

[19] The examples come from *The Rewards of Piety* (lines 86-112), cf. Robinson (1994: 192).

to generate the A-type in line 89b *summi filius* (Lat. fī.li.us > fīl.jus), whereas, in line 95b *clēmens deus*, it is blocked to warrant the correct number of metrically relevant positions (hence: ˈde.us). By the same token, resolution is suspended on the light syllable in *salus* in line 87b of the same poem (hence *salus mundi* implements Type A), even though the ¯ = ˘˘ equivalence was functional in Latin as well as in Germanic (see Kuryłowicz 1949).

5. Concluding remarks

The idea that verse patterns are grounded in patterns of ordinary language underlies Kuryłowicz's analysis of meter. He returned to this notion in different studies over the years and explored it by investigating data from various languages and versification systems. In this way, he was able to demonstrate that the same or similar patterns discernible in diverse metrical systems may be triggered by language-specific rules. By tracing these rules and their metrical extensions he paved the way for a unified and coherent account of different phenomena operating at the linguistic-metrical interface. Kuryłowicz's studies are technically complex but they are not abstract. His theoretical considerations are supported by linguistic and metrical data and amply illustrated with examples. Following the same trajectory, this paper focuses on Kuryłowicz's original concepts of metrical equivalences and opacity, and explores their effects in the corpus of late Old English metrical prayers. A noticeable feature of these understudied texts is their metrical ambiguity. Levelled rhythmical contour, repetitiveness, and schematization, the amplification of overheavy verses with expanded dips, and the overflow of extrametrical syllables obscure the scansion and often make it difficult to establish the metrical pattern. Most of the anomalies are reflexes of changes in language structure, involving the growth of analytic formations, phonological and morphological reduction, and the ensuing shifts in stress or the prosodic contour. Some result from their complex bilingual lexical input. Owing to this inherent complexity, late versified prayers provide substantial material for an analysis of metrical extensions and metrical flexibility vis-à-vis the changing language structure.

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The merger of OE *þyncan* and *þencan*

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ABSTRACT

The development of Modern English *think* is often explained by the morphological merger of the two verbs *þencan* 'to think' and *þyncan* 'to seem' in early Middle English. This paper exemplifies that it is not the confusion between personal construction of *þencan* and 'impersonal' constructions of *þyncan* but the loss of contrast between < -e- > and < -i- > in the Northern dialect and other dialects, which leads to the merger of the two verbs that occurred with the present forms *þence* and *þince*, as well as the merger between < -u- > and < -ou- > in the preterite forms *þohte* and *þuhte*.

Keywords: Old English, Middle English, 'impersonal' constructions, merger.

1. Introduction

In the history of English, the Old English period is featured by 'impersonal' verbs.[1] We should rather use the expression "verbs used 'impersonally'" instead of "'impersonal' verbs", since these verbs often have the nominative of thing and a few examples of the nominative of person.

Gaaf (1904) starts his investigation of *þinken* (p. 77) by quoting from Sweet's *New English Grammar* § 1340, which I re-quote here as an important remark for further discussion: (Abbreviations and punctuations follow the quotation.)

[1] I use 'impersonal' (with single quotes) for the construction with the dative of person like *him þyncþ* 'it seems to him' in contrast to that without the dative of person like *hit rinde* 'it rained'. See Ogura (1986: 13).

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> In O.E. there were two weak verbs of allied form and meaning: *þencan*, *þohte* 'think'; *þyncan*, *þuhte* 'seem', which was impersonal, *me þincþ* 'it seems to me' having much the same meaning as *ic þence*. In M.E. *þencan* became regularly *þenchen* in South-Thames English, *þenken* in North-Thames English; and *þyncan* became *þünchen*, *þinchen* in South-Thames English, *þinken* in North-Thames English. The pret. *þuhte* was soon disused, *þo(u)hte* taking its place; he *þohte* 'he thought', him *þohte* 'it seemed to him'. In Standard M.E. the two verbs were still kept apart in the infin. and present tenses, which had the Midland forms *þenken*, *i þenke*; *þinken*, *me þinkeþ*, etc.; but in the compound *beþinken* 'consider' = O.E. *beþencan*, the latter had already begun to encroach. In Northern E. *þink* completely supplanted *þenk*, as in Mn.E. Hence Mn.E. *think* is historically = O.E. *þyncan*, and its pret. *thought* = O.E. *þohte*, the pret. of the lost *þencan*'. (*New Eng. Gram*. § 1340).

The first point I cannot accept is the quick disuse of *þuhte* and its replacement by *þo(u)hte*. Owing to the Norman French spelling, both preterite forms could have been spelled *þo(u)hte* and the vowel in the stressed syllable could be pronounced [-u-]. [-ʊ-] or [-o-]. The second point is that the syntactic merger might have been accompanied by the morpho-phonological merger. What we should wonder now is how far the present forms *þinc-* and *þenc-* have been mingled without obvious syntactic and semantic difficulty. The aim of this study is to re-examine the examples discussed in previous studies and try to show a clearer process of the merger of *þyncan* and *þencan*.

2. Examples to be re-examined

Gaaf (1904: § 85) mentions "two possibilities" of the phonetic fusion of the two verbs, i.e. "*a*. *þyncan* might be assimilated to *þencan*, or *b*. the opposite might take place", and seeks Kentish examples. He quotes "[t]he only O.E. instance" from the *Blickling Homilies*, which is a personal construction, i.e.

(1) BlHom 59.11 (HomS 17 (BlHom 5) 76)[2]

[2] I use *DOE* data with abbreviated titles to update the texts, page, and line numbers. The boldface is mine and is meant to emphasise a word, a phrase or a sentence. Translations are given for Old English and Middle English texts before 1400.

& eal se lichoma geúnlustaþ þa geogoðlustas to fremmenne þa þe he ær hátheortlice lufode, & hi*m* swete wæron to aræfnenne. **Hie him þonne eft swiþe bitere þencaþ**, æfter þon þe se deað him tocymeþ Godes dóm to abeodenne.

'And the whole body loatheth to perform those youthful lusts that he aforetime so earnestly loved, and which were sweet to him to perform. Then, again, they shall appear very bitter to him, after that death shall come to him to announce God's judgment.'

(translation by Morris)

In the *Kentish Sermons* he finds an example of the verb in an 'impersonal' construction. Although it is included in *O.E. Misc.* (EETS, o.s. 49), it is from Laud MS 471, that is, in the latter half of the thirteenth century.[3]

(2) Old Kentish Sermons (Laud MS 471) 35.2
bote yef ha luuie god almichti. and him serui‹ al **hit him may þenche** for-lore and idelnesse.

'unless they love God Almighty and serve him, it may seem to him entirely forlorn and in vain'

An earlier example can be added by quoting *OED3* (**†think**, *v.*[1]).

(3) a1225 (? c1175) Poema Morale (Lamb) 62 (*OED3*, line 62 only)
Þo þe mest doð nu to gode. *and* þe lest to laðe.
Eiðer to lutel *and* to muchel scal **þu*n*chen** eft hom baþe.

'Those[4] who do most now for good and least for evil,
Either too little or too much shall both seem to them afterwards.'

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3 I use Laing (1993) concerning the dates of early Middle English manuscripts and Ker (1957, 1977) for those of Old English manuscripts.

4 EETS translation has "He who", but the forms are *Þo þe* 'those who' in the plural. Cf. (Trin) *Se þe*.

Cf. [a1225 *Digby* **þenchen**, a1225 *Egerton* **ðinche**] (by *OED3*)

Also cf. (Trin) Se þe mast doð nu to gode and se last to lothe.
Eiðer to litel and to muchel hem sal **þunche** boðe.

Gaaf finds that the possibility *a*. "was not restricted to Kent", and he enumerates Middle English examples from various texts, sometimes with page and line numbers and sometimes just numbers of occurrences. Here are two examples from *Vices & Virtues* (*a*1225 (*c*1200)) quoted in his § 86. They are personal and 'personal.'

(4) Vices & V. 9.29
Ðu me **þen(c)st** wel to wreiȝen to-fore gode for ðessere senne;

'You think well to accuse me before God for this sin.'

(5) Vices & V. 29.34
Ðies ilke haliȝe mihte, ðar ðe hie cumeð and bieð mid ðe manne, hie makeð him unwurð
alle ðo faire þinges ðe on ðare swikele woreld faire **þencheð**;

'This same holy virtue, where it comes and is with men, makes worthless to him all the fair things which in the deceptive world seem fair.'

Two manuscripts of Laȝamon's *Brut* (Cotton Caligula A. ix and Cotton Otho. C. xiii) give evidence for spelling variants. Examples from Gaaf (§ 86) are (6) with the nominative of thing[5] and (7) 'impersonal.'

(6) Laȝ 15856[6]
C. þa tiðende me **þuncheð** game.
O. þe tydinge me **þencheð** game.

'the tiding seems to me sport'

[5] I name this construction 'personal' (see Ogura (1986: 16)).
[6] Modern English translations for Laȝ are from Madden (1847).

(7) Laȝ 26028
C. sellic þah hit þunche.
O. wonder þeh hit þenche.

'wonderous though it may seem'

I add two more: (8) 'impersonal' and (9) personal.

(8) Laȝ 8261[7]
C. And al hit **þuncð** hi*m* wel idon.
O. And al hit **þincheþ** him wel i don.

'and all it seems to him well done'

(9) Laȝ 8555
C. ich … and **þench** mid wulche deden. þu miht werien þine leoden.
O. ich … and **þinche** mid woche dede. þou miht witie þine leode.

'and (I) think with what deeds you can defend your people'

Gaaf writes that he has found at least two examples in Shoreham's Poems (*c*1350 (*a*1333)) without mentioning the details. I give three examples which can be considered appropriate for the discussion. Concerning example (12), we should not think that the form *þouȝte* is for a personal construction and *þoȝte* for an 'impersonal' construction, because we find *hym þouȝte* in VII (109) 649.

(10) Shoreham IV (46) 181
He þat ne **þynkeþ** nauȝt bote wel,
And spekeþ and doþ al ryȝt,

(11) Shoreham VII (8) 47
Wat, hou fareþ hy þat hy nasynkeþ,
Ase here kende were, hyt **þynkeþ**;[8]
Ho halt ys op?

[7] This example is classified under *þenchen* 'to think', but the context is obviously 'impersonal.'
[8] The footnote says: "*þynkeþ* in MS. (Wright *þenkeþ*)."

(12) Shoreham VII (129) 769, 773
Ryȝt al-so, þo he gyle **þouȝte**,
For to brynge man to noȝte
Pryuelyche,
God almyȝty, þat hys wyl wyste,
Aȝeyns hym **þoȝte** go by lyste
Al so styllyche.

From *OED3* **†think** *v.*[1], I add three examples here. Example (15) shows *me thenk*, which may develop into *methink* as well as *methinks*.[9]

(13) *c*1330 (? *a*1300) Arthour & Merlin (Arch.) 4974
Me þenkeþ he makeþ long duelling.

(14) *a*1393 Gower *CA* IV. 220
So that **him thenketh** of a day
A thousand yer, til he mai se
The visage of Penolope

(15) *a*1500 (? *a*1400) *Firumbras* 717
Me thenk that thou canst wel
To schastise the sarsins with thy swerd of stel.

According to his detailed investigation of the texts in each dialect, Gaaf says that "[a]lthough as regards the entire supplanting of *e* by *i* in *þenk* the Northern dialect was far ahead of the others, still the earliest beginnings of the confusion are found in Midland and Southern productions" (§ 90).

Gaaf sees "the *syntactical blending*" with the similarity of meaning which gave rise to "anomalous constructions" (§§ 105-106). He gives the following as a result: "Entire blending of the two verbs became unavoidable whenever a nominative + a form of the M.E. representative of O.E. *þencan* could no longer be distinguished from a dative + a form of the M.E. representative of O.E. *þyncan*. This was, for instance, the case in all dialects when this nom. or dat. was a noun or an indeclinable pronoun and the verb was in the preterite

9 Gaaf, § 109. See also *OED3* **methinks**, v.

or accompanied by an auxiliary" (§ 107). In the next section, examples are given and discussed diachronically and stylistically.

3. Old English examples

Gaaf's investigation of Middle English dialects is praiseworthy, when we consider the fact that even in the twenty-first century the web corpus of the whole of Middle English dialects is not available. The *DOEC* makes a statistical survey possible, even though a semantic investigation must wait on the completion of the *DOE*. While waiting on that development, I have found several examples which may suggest the confusion or merger of *þyncan* and *þencan*.

3.1 Old English poems

I find three examples of *þyncan* in personal construction in Old English poetry, i.e.

(16) Beo 368b
Hy on wiggetawum wyrðe **þinceað**
eorla geæhtlan;

They seem worthy of earls' esteem by (their) war-gears.'

(17) ChristC 1424a
Lytel **þuhte** ic leoda bearnum, læg ic on heardum stane,
cildgeong on crybbe.

'Little I seemed to the sons of men; I lay an infant in its bed on the hard rock.'

(18) Res 35b
þy þe hy him sylfum sellan **þuhten**
englas oferhydige þonne ece Crist.

'because they, the proud angels, considered themselves better than eternal Christ'

I also find two examples in the *Metres of Boethius*, one in 'impersonal' and the other in personal construction.[10]

(19) Met10 66b
Forðæm þe nane forlet, þeah hit lang **ðince**,
deað æfter dogorrime, þonne he hæfð drihtnes leafe.

'Because death leaves no one, though it may seem long, after a number of days, when it has the Lord's permission.'

(20) Met15 15b
Ðeah hine se dysega do to cyninge,
hu mæg þæt gesceadwis scealc gereccan
þæt he him ðy selra sie oððe **þince**?

'Though the foolish man should make him king, how can the intelligent man explain that he should be or seem the better for it?

3.2 Old English prose

In *Cura Pastolaris* (Hatton 20) I find three examples of *þyncan* in personal construction, one example in both 'impersonal' and personal 'reflexive' constructions, and one in Gregory's *Dialogues* (Hatton 76), which has a variant of *gesewen wesan* in Cotton Otho.C.i (vol.2).

(21) CP 42.306.6
Ne sculon ge no **ðyncan** eow selfum to wise.

'You must not think yourselves too wise.'

(22) CP 45.339.24
hie sint to manigenne ðæt hie geðencen, ongemang ðæm ðe hie wilniað ðæt hie gifule **ðyncen**,

'those are to be admonished to take care, while they wish to seem generous'

10 See Ogura (1986: 100).

(23) CP 57.439.34
& ðeah hi formicel god ne don, hi wilniað ðæt hi micel **ðyncen**, & hi mon widherge.

and although they do not do too much good, they wished that they should be considered great and should be praised far and wide'

(24) CP 17.113.10-12[11]
Æresð him **ðuhte** selfum ðæt ðæt he wære suiðe unmedeme, ac siððan he understungen & awreðed wæs mid ðys hwilendlican onwalde, he **ðuhte** him selfum suiæe unlytel & suiðe medeme.

'At first he himself thought that he was incompetent, but when he was supported by transitory authority, he considered himself far from despicable and quite competent.'

(25) GD1(H) 10.77.5
ac he wolde **beon ȝeþuht**, swylce he bet dyde þonne se bisceop 'but he wished to be thought, as he did better than the bishop'

Cf. GD1(C) 10.77.7
ac he wolde, þæt for mannum ȝesewen wære, þæt he betran lifes wære þonne se biscop

'but he wished, as it seemed for men, that he were in better life than the bishop'

I also find two examples of 'personal' construction of *þyncan* and one example of either 'personal' or personal (which can be a personification of the gems on the priest's robe) in *CP*, and one example of 'impersonal' and 'personal' constructions in prose *Boethius*. The co-occurrence of the construction of indefinite *mon* or another 'impersonal' verb can be effective on the personal use of *þyncan*.

(26) CP 0.23.11
Ðara byrðenna hefignesse, eall ðæt ic his geman, ic awrite on ðisse andweardan bec, ðylæs hi hwæm leohte **ðyncen** to underfonne;

[11] This example is quoted in Ogura (1986: 101) and Ogura (1989: 21).

'The heaviness of those burdens, all of which I remember, I will write in this present book, lest they seem easy for anyone to undertake.'

(27) CP 34.235.24
forðæm for ðæs æfstes scylde forweorðað ða godan weorc, ðeah ðe hie beforan monna eagum **ðyncen** trumlice gedon

'because good works perish through the sin of envy, although in the eyes of men they seem strongly wrought'

(28) CP 18.135.17
Forðæm ðeah hie <woroldcundlice> drohtigen, hie wiliniað ðæt hie[12] **ðyncen** ða betstan, ond ðeah hie gan on ðone ruman weg hiera agnes willan & lustfulnesse, hie wilniað ðæt hie mon hæbbe for ða betstan & ða halgestan.

'Because, although they live in a worldly manner, they wish to be considered the best, and although they go on the wide road of their own will and desire, they wish to be considered the best and the holiest.'

(29) Bo 39.127.26
& me **þincð** þæt þu sadige hwæthwugununges, & þe **ðyncen** to ælenge þas langan spell, swelce þe nu lyste lioða

'and it seems to me also that you are somewhat sated and this long argument seems to you too wearisome, as if you now wanted songs' (translation by Godden – Irvine)

3.3 Transitional period

I find two examples in *Ormulum* (*c*1175), personal and 'impersonal' constructions side by side.

(30) Orm 12436-12439
He sahh him fasten mare inoh
Þann aniȝ mann maȝȝ fasten,
ꝛ **þohhte** þatt he wære Godd
Þatt doþ all þatt him **þinnkeþþ**.

[12] Here *hie* can be priests (*ða sacerdas*) or the gems (*ða gimmas*) in the preceding sentence.

'He saw him fast enough, more than anyone can fast, and thought that he were God who does all that seems (good) to him.'

(31) Orm 15667-15673
Forr hemm itt **þinnkeþþ** scone,
Forrþi þatt teȝȝ ne **þennkenn** nohht
Off heffness ærdess blisse,
ꝺ forrþi **þinnkeþþ** hemm full god
ꝺ luffsumm her to libbenn,
To follȝhenn þeȝȝre flæshess lust
I maniȝ kinne sinne.

'For it seems shining to them, because they do not think of heaven's joy, and therefore it seems very good for them and pleasant here to live, to follow their carnal desire in many kinds of sin.'

When we consider 'personal' construction, i.e. with nominative of thing (or thought, etc.) + dative of person, together with 'impersonal' and personal (with nominative of person), we may confirm that OE *þyncan* had these three types of constructions from its appearance before its morpho-phonological merger with personal *þencan*.

4. The verb *seem*

When did the verb *seem* come into use? The earliest attestation appeared in *Orm* (*OED3*, **seem**, *v.*[2]) and the other in *Þe Wohunge of ure Lauerd*.[13] I add a few more.

(32) Orm D66
ꝺ te bitæche icc off þiss boc,
Heh wikenn alls itt **semeþþ**,
All to þurrhsekenn illc an ferrs,

[13] See Ogura (1986: 104). From *OED2* it was the second quotation.

'and I entrust you of this book as it seems noble duty to examine each verse wholly'

(33) *Þe Wohunge of ure Lauerd* 271
For he þurh þe þ*at* wisdom art al þis world wrahte *and* dihteð hit *and* dealeð as hit best **semeð**.

'for he through thee, that art wisdom, created all this world and ordereth it and divideth it, as it seemeth best'
(translation by Morris)

(34) Ancr (Titus) 28/33
For ful of angoisse was tat ilke ned swat þ lihte of his licome aȝein þe angoisuse deað þ he schulde þolien þ **hit semde** read blod.

Cf. AW 60/8
for se ful of angosse wes þ ilke ned swat þ lihte of his licome aȝein þe angoisuse deað þ he schulde þolien¶ þ **hit þuhte** read blod.

'For so full of anguish was that violent sweat which poured from His body at the thought of the agonizing death He was to die, that it seemed like read blood.'
(translation by Salu)

(35) St Marg (Bod 34) 20/24 (f. *MED* **sēmen** v. (2))
His grisliche teð **semden** of swart irn.

'His horrible teeth seemed of black iron.'

(36) Cursor 9111 ('impersonal')
C: Quar-thoru it **semes** wel wit þis
G: Quarthoru it **semed** wele bi þis

(37) Cursor 3311 ('personal')[14]

[14] These three examples from *Cursor Mundi* are cited in *OED3*, **seem**, *v.*[2]; *can* and *dud* are both preterite auxiliary (i.e. *can seme* 'seemed'). See Ogura (2018: Chap. 7). *Cursor* 12445 is in a 'reflexive' construction, denoting 'to vouchsafe, deign' (*Obs*.).

C: How all hir dedes can hir **seme**.
T: how alle hir dedes dud hir **seme**

Cf. Cursor12445
C: For he þ*a*t sent him vs a-mang To be born, he wald him **seme**,
G: For he þ*a*t sent hi*m* vs amang To be born, he wold him **seme**,

(38) Shoreham VII (92) 547
Þe wyse man þe wiser **semeþ**
Þer þet menye foules dremeþ,
And no reysou*n*;

5. Conclusion

Through the re-examination of the examples found and discussed in previous studies, as well as the examples I found, my investigation has reached the following results.

1. Since 'impersonal' *þyncan* had 'personal' (with the nominative of thing) and personal (with the nominative of person) constructions as well as 'impersonal' one, what was seen in earlier English is a shift from 'impersonal' to personal in proportion and not a drastic change from one to the other.

2. It is not only a confusion of *þuhte* and *þohte*, which started the merger of the two verbs, but also the loss of contrast between *þinc-* and *þenc-* found in a limited number of extant contexts. Similarities of syntactic environments have supported the merger.

3. As Gaaf (1904) exemplified, most (not all) examples are found in Northern texts. But since the merger had already started in Old English, we should note that Northern texts were composed earlier but written later.

I have not included examples of *beþencan* and *geþencan* here in this investigation, but the semantic resemblance, i.e. 'to consider', could be one of the factors of the merger as well as morpho-phonological confusion.15

15 Though the 'reflexive' use of OE *beþencan* is usually found, there is no example of *beþencan* (*DOE*), *bethink* (*OED*) or *bithinken* (*MED*) in 'impersonal' constructions, and I have never found one in Ogura (1986), (1989) or later.

What we need is a philological enthusiasm to find possible examples, as Gaaf did in the early twentieth century, rather than the completion of a Middle English web corpus.16

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16 When dealing with 'impersonal' verbs and constructions, Old English manuscripts, even though scarce, must not be ignored, because 'impersonal' constructions did not start after, say, *c*1200. Semantic and syntactic analyses should not be separated completely. Synonyms and synonymous expressions include personal and 'impersonal' expressions at the same time; investigations about frequent or infrequent occurrences, changes or gradual shifts, native or loan words, should also be undertaken.

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Similarity measurements in tracing textual affinities: A study of Psalm 129 in 16th-century devotional manuals*

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines 30 instances of Psalm 129 in 16th-century English devotional manuals printed during the reign of the first three Tudor monarchs. The objective of the study is to detect relationships between the analysed texts and compare them to available Psalter translations to determine textual affinities. This is achieved by applying similarity measurements which can capture intertextual relations in mathematical terms. The obtained results are subsequently verified against the available textual and philological knowledge, which corroborates the similarity scores of individual texts. In the single instance where similarity scores seem to be defied by the information provided in the literature on the topic, textual analysis proves the applied method right. The examination presented in the paper shows that English devotional practices in the turbulent period when they were emerging were much more complex than the purely denominational differences between Catholics and Reformers (often misconceived from the present-day perspective) might suggest.

Keywords: psalm translations, primers, *Book of Common Prayer*, text similarity measurement.

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1. Introduction

Ever since its emergence the Psalter has been a central text in the devotional life and spirituality of those acquainted with it. Its importance in Judaism outlived the emergence of Christianity to the effect that the Psalter has occupied a special place in both religions. The Psalter has remained one of the few devotional continuities to survive schisms and denominational divides, no matter how cataclysmal. Or perhaps it would be more correct to say *the psalms* instead of *the Psalter*, as not all of the 150 psalms have enjoyed the same popularity. While the religious not only sang the whole Psalter but also learnt it by heart, devotional materials designed for the lay contained only a selection of psalms (cf. Duffy 2006: 157; Morey 2000: 182-186). These religious manuals started to emerge in the mid-13th c. (Duffy 2011; Erler 1999 [2008]; Kennedy 2014) and were intended to guide the laity (de Hamel 1998) in their daily devotions and help them to participate in the services of the Church. Needless to say, these manuals were originally in Latin but in time they started to show vernacular elements (especially prayers and forms of confession; Reese Jones – Riddy 2005: 219) to the effect that in the second half of the 14th c. there emerged exclusively English manuals, i.e. also the scriptural material was offered there in translation (Butterworth 1953; Hargreaves 1956; Kennedy 2014, and Charzyńska-Wójcik - Wójcik in prep.).[1] Psalms were at the heart of these (non-standardised) anthologies for the laity (Duffy 2006: 156) called *Books of Hours* or *Primers*, which are widely regarded the most popular book of the Middle Ages (de Hamel 1998; Erler 1999 [2008]; Duffy 2006; Kennedy 2014).

With the advent of print, this popularity took on an even greater impetus. The boost given to English Biblical translations by the activity of William Tyndale[2] quickly resulted in the emergence of not one but more versions of the Psalter in English. In a similar manner, printed primers, which had been exclusively in Latin up to 1523 (Butterworth 1953: 5), started to show first non-scriptural vernacular material, and as of 1529 also the psalms in English. The growing multitude of printed vernacular manuals

[1] The limitations of space preclude even a broad overview of the history of psalm translations in the manuscript period, though – through Wycliffe's involvement in two of them (as part of two complete Bibles) – they had an impact on the comparatively late outset of the translational activity in England.

[2] This is not to deny the impact of the wider European context of Humanism and Reformation, which produced manifold new translations (cf. for example François 2018 and Charzyńska-Wójcik – Charzyński 2014 for an overview).

for prayers and of the emerging English versions of the Psalter poses the question which psalm versions were selected for which manuals.

It is the purpose of this contribution to examine several early manuals of devotion printed between 1530 and 1557 from the perspective of the psalm version printed in them in order to trace the source of these translations (Section 2). The novelty of this contribution will consist not so much in answering the posed question – though this will also be the case – as in offering a methodology for comparative evaluation of coexisting translations in objective mathematical terms (Section 3). The methodology is grounded in digital humanities and will be used to detect relationships between texts and shown to work in unison with philological examinations (Section 4). In effect, while the applied methodology independently produces results which are in concord with philological knowledge, it will be shown to be a reliable starting point in future examinations where philological textual knowledge is either lacking or inconclusive (Section 5).

2. The texts

We set out to examine the English translation of Psalm 129[3] as it appears in 14 devotional manuals printed under the three successive Tudor monarchs: Henry VIII, Edward VI and Mary I. The selection of Psalm 129 is motivated by two factors: not only is it one of the Seven Penitential Psalms, which were a stable component of all primers, but it also appears in some manuals more than once (in various types of devotions). In view of the fact that the contents of primers were originally not standardised, the first factor ensures that the psalm to be examined will actually be found in all analysed manuals. The second factor, i.e. the repeated occurrence within one publication will help us in interpreting the achieved similarity scores. In particular, it is important to see if and how two or more occurrences of Psalm 129 differ from each other if they appear in the same publication, before setting out to interpret numerically expressed differences between psalms appearing in different books and representing reworkings, revisions or new translations.

The primers and manuals selected for examination are the following. For Henry VIII's rule (1509-1547) we selected the first extant primers and

[3] Throughout the paper we rely on the Vulgate numbering, which derives from the Septuagint tradition. It differs from the Hebrew numbering in most psalms. In effect, what we refer to as Psalm 129 corresponds to Psalm 130 according to the Hebrew numbering.

Henry VIII's authorised Primer, listed as 01, 04-05, 07-09, and 14 below. The obvious choice for Edward VI's rule (1547-1553) are the first and second version of the *Book of Common Prayer* (cf. 16 and 18 respectively), which represented the milestone of the early Anglican Church, and the primers printed in the same years as the *Book of Common Prayer* (cf. 15 and 17 below).[4] As for manuals of devotion printed in Mary's reign (1553-1558), we selected three: two printed in the same year, i.e. 1555 (cf. 19 and 20) and one printed late in her reign, i.e. in 1557 (cf. 21).[5]

To determine the sources of the versions of Psalm 129 contained in the examined manuals, the text of this psalm was compared to those contained in seven available prose translations of the Psalter.[6] These Psalters are listed below in chronological order under 02-03, 06, 10-13.

List of texts[7]

01 *Ortulus anime* from 1530 (STC 13828.4)
02 George Joye's English Psalter translated from the Latin text of Martin Bucer; first published in 1530 (STC 2370)
03 George Joye's English Psalter translated from the Latin text of Huldrych Zwingli; first published in 1534 (STC 2372)
04 Marshall's primer from 1534 (STC 15986)
05 Godfray's primer from 1535 (STC 15988a)
06 Psalms from Coverdale's first complete Bible issued in 1535 (STC 2063)
07 Rouen primer from 1536 (STC 15993) (3 occurrences of Psalm 129)
08 Redman's primer from 1537 (STC 15997)[8] (4 occurrences of Psalm 129)
09 *Manual of prayers* from 1539 (STC 16009) (3 occurrences of Psalm 129)
10 Psalms from Coverdale's second complete Bible, known as the Great Bible; first issued in 1539 (STC 2068)
11 Psalms from Richard Taverner's Bible issued in 1539 (STC 2067)

4 Cf. MacCulloch (1999 [2001]) for information on manuals of devotion under Edward VI.

5 Cf. Duffy (2009 [2010: 57-60]) for an overview of printing policies in Mary's reign and for information on Robert Caly and John Wayland, who printed manuals of devotion.

6 Although metrical Psalm translations were increasingly popular (cf. Charzyńska-Wójcik 2017), they were never printed in devotional manuals, which are restricted to prose versions.

7 Throughout the paper, we are going to refer to these texts using the two-digit numbering system presented here.

8 The original 1536 edition is in the possession of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. It does not have STC and is not available through EEBO.

12 1539 edition of Coverdale's Psalter translated from the Latin of Johannes Campensis (first printed in 1535) (STC 2372.6)
13 Coverdale's Psalter translated from the Vulgate; issued in 1540 (STC 2368)
14 Henry VIII's primer from 1545 (STC 16034)
15 Primer from 1549 (STC 16052)
16 *Book of Common Prayer* from 1549 (STC 16270a)
17 Primer from 1552 (STC 16057)
18 *Book of Common* Prayer from 1552 (STC16288)
19 Caly's Primer from 1555 (STC 16062) (2 occurrences of Psalm 129)
20 Wayland's Primer from 1555 (STC 16063)
21 Wayland's Primer from 1557 (STC 16080) (2 occurrences of Psalm 129)

3. Methodology

In order to detect relationships between the versions of Psalm 129 found in the texts specified above, we are going to perform similarity measurements using the cosine distance method.[9] Performing text similarity measurements on texts produced before the standardisation of spelling,[10] required normalising the texts so that the random differences in spelling, so characteristic of English spelling before standardisation, were not treated as meaningful in the comparison. In particular, different spellings of the same word or morpheme were normalised by adopting one consistent spelling. Moreover, all punctuation was removed and all words spelled with a capital letter were turned to lower case. To ensure full consistency of the process, normalisation was performed with the use of software called VARD. VARD – from VARiant Detector is a (semi-)automatic tool (Baron – Rayson 2008, 2009) designed specially to assist research on historical data featuring spelling variation, particularly eMnE texts. The tool has so far been used as a prerequisite or

[9] Cosine distance method for analysing historical texts has also been applied in Charzyńska-Wójcik (2021), Lis – Wójcik (in press), Wójcik (2021b), and Charzyńska-Wójcik – Wójcik (in prep.). See also Drout et al. (2011), where similarity measurements are used to detect relationships between Old English poetic texts.

[10] Researchers differ with respect to the timing of the process, placing it in the mid-17th c. (Brengelman 1980), at the end of the 17th c. (Scragg 1974; Salmon 1999; Görlach 2001; Nevalainen 2012) and the 18th c. (Osselton 1963, 1984; Tieken-Boon van Ostade 1998). Regardless of whose analysis one decides to follow, the period covered by this study predates even the beginning of spelling standardisation. For an overview of these developments see Wójcik (2021a).

pre-processor to other corpus linguistic tools such as part-of-speech tagging, semantic tagging, keyword analysis, collocations, and annotation. We apply it in the text pre-processing stage before calculating similarity scores.

Text similarity measurements are the basis of many natural language processing tasks, which play an important role in information retrieval, automatic question answering, machine translation, dialogue systems, and document matching (Wang – Dong 2020).[11] One of the methods of measuring text similarity is based on calculating the distance between two texts, which traditionally has been assessed by measuring length distance, using the numerical characteristics of text (number of types and tokens) to calculate the distance between texts represented as vectors (Wang – Dong 2020: 421). As observed by Welbers et al. (2017: 246), such distance measurements use bag-of-words text analysis models, meaning that only the frequencies of words per text are used and word positions are ignored. One of the most common formats for representing a text in a bag-of-words format is a document term matrix (DTM), in which rows are documents (texts), columns are terms (words), and cells indicate how often each word occurs in each text. As a result, each of the compared texts can be represented as a numerical vector whose elements correspond to the frequency of occurrence of all words in the compared texts. The advantage of this representation is that it allows the data to be analysed with vector and matrix algebra, effectively moving from text to numbers (Welbers et al. 2017: 252). Kwartler (2017: 21) notices that the bag-of-words model "treats every word [...] as a unique feature of the document. Word order and grammatical word type are not captured in a bag of words analysis". These latter parameters, however, do not seem crucial in comparing different translations or versions of what is ultimately the same source text. So, the bag-of-words model selected for this examination focuses on analysing word selection and use and therefore promises to offer the most relevant data for the purposes of the examination pursued in this paper.

It has to be noted that there are many ways in which the distance between texts represented as vectors can be calculated. Han et al. (2012: 77) observe that vectors represented as DTM are typically very long and sparse (i.e., they have many 0 values, which correspond to words absent in one text but present in another). They further state that traditional distance measures fail for such sparse numeric data because two vectors may have many 0

[11] For an overview and comparison of different text similarity measurements see, for example, Gomaa – Fahmy (2013) or Wang – Dong (2020).

values in common, meaning that the compared texts do not share many words, but this does not make them similar. Han et al. (2012: 77-78) propose to measure similarity between sparse vectors using cosine similarity, which computes the cosine of the angle between vectors. A cosine value of 0 means that the two vectors (each representing a text) are at 90 degrees to each other and have no match (the texts are completely different, i.e. they do not share a single item). The closer the cosine value to 1, the smaller the angle and the greater the match (similarity) between vectors. The cosine similarity of 1 means that the compared texts are identical. All the calculations were performed by means of R software (R Core Team 2020), with the use of the quanteda package (Benoit et al. 2018).

4. Results

4.1 Interpreting the scores[12]

Psalm 129 appears 30 times in the 21 publications selected for examination, 14 of which represent manuals and 7 are translations of the Psalter either as an independent enterprise or as part of the complete Bible. We compared each text with each text and as a result we received 900 scores, half of which are doubled, as the similarity between every two texts is the same, whether text A is compared to Text B or the other way around. The obtained results range between 1 and 0.597.

Let us begin with the texts which are repeated within one publication, i.e. Redman's primer (08), with four occurrences of Psalm 129, the primer from Rouen (07) and the *Manual* (09) with three occurrences of Psalm 129 in each; Caly's primer from 1555 (19) and Wayland's primer from 1557 (21), each printing this psalm twice. The first three publications exhibit similarities between the repeated texts of Psalm 129 ranging from 0.997-1.0 for Redman's primer and the primer from Rouen and 0.944-0.989 for the *Manual* from 1539. The situation changes radically when it comes to the primers from 1555 and 1557, i.e. primers printed in Mary's reign. The similarity between the two occurrences of Psalm 129 in Caly's primer is 0.757, while in the case of Wayland's primer it is 0.763. Even a cursory look at the texts of Psalm 129

[12] Although the purpose of this examination was to search for textual indebtedness of Psalm 129 as contained in devotional manuals, we also measure similarity scores between the seven complete Psalter versions and so will be commenting on these similarities as well.

contained in Marian primers shows that they offer two very distinct versions of Psalm 129 in different parts of the primer.[13]

To make this discussion less abstract, let us illustrate the scores obtained for the repeated occurrences of Psalm 129 in the 1539 *Manual* (09) with the actual text, so that we can see what it means that the similarity is assessed at 0.944, 0.948, and 0.989, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Similarity scores for the three occurrences of Psalm 129 in the *Manual* (09)

	09_1[14]_1539 *Manual* (STC 16009)	09_2_1539 *Manual* (STC 16009)	09_3_1539 *Manual* (STC 16009)
09_1_1539 *Manual* (STC 16009)	1	0.948	0.944
09_2_1539 *Manual* (STC 16009)	0.948	1	0.989
09_3_1539 *Manual* (STC 16009)	0.944	0.989	1

As transpires from the above, out of the three occurrences of Psalm 129, the second and third are most similar (0.989); next comes the similarity between the first and second occurrence (0.948), while the first and third occurrences show most differences (0.944). Consider the texts below, where we use bold type to indicate differences between the first and third occurrences, while underlining is used to accentuate differences between the second and third occurrence.

(1)[15] a. 09_1_1539 Manual (STC 16009)_THE VII PSALMES
FRom the depe **places** haue I called vnto the (O Lorde) Lorde heare **me**.
Let thyne eares **be intentyue to** *the* voyce of my **prayer**.

[13] While this is intriguing in itself, we cannot take up this issue here for reasons of space.

[14] Throughout the paper, the digit following text number and the underscore indicates the occurrence of the psalm in the examined text.

[15] The texts quoted throughout the paper, mostly represent our own transcripts and appear in the original spelling, with abbreviations expanded (and italicised). However, as indicated in Section 3, all texts were normalised before the similarity calculations were performed.

Yf thou (Lorde) wylt **loke so straytly vpo*n* synners** O Lorde who **shall** abyde it.
But there is mercye with the, and because of thy lawe haue I abyden the, O Lorde.
My soule hath abyde*n* in his worde, my soule hathe trusted in the Lorde.
From the mornynge watche **vnto** nyght, let Israell trust in the Lorde.
For with the Lorde there is mercye, and hys redemption is plenteous.
And he shall redeme Israell from all **the** iniquytyes **of it**.

b. 09_2_1539 Manual (STC 16009)_THE XV PSALMES
OVt of the depe called I vnto the Lorde (O Lorde) heare my voyce.
O let thyne eares consyder wel the voyce of my complaynte.
Yf thou (Lorde) wylt be extreme to marke our iniquities (o Lorde) who maye abyde it?
But there is mercy with the, and because of thy lawe haue I abyden the (O Lorde.
My soule hath abyden in his worde, my soule hath trusted in the Lorde.
From the mornynge watche vntyll nyght, let Israell truste in the Lorde.
For with the Lorde there is mercye and hys redempcion is plenteous.
And he shall redeme Israell from all hys synnes.

c. 09_3_1539 Manual (STC 16009)_THE DIRIGE
OVte of the depe called I vnto the (O Lorde) Lorde heare **my voyce**.
O let thyne eares **consyder well** the voyce of my **complaynte**.
Yf thou (Lorde) wylt **be extreme to marke our iniquities** (O Lorde) who **maye** abyde it?
But there is mercy wyth the, and because of thy lawe haue I abyden the (O Lorde.)
My soule hath abyden in his word, my soule hath trusted in the Lorde.
From the mornynge watche **vntyll** nyght, let Israell trust in the Lorde.

For which the Lorde ther is mercye, and hys redemption is plenteous.
And he shall redeme Israell fro*m* al **his** iniquities.

As is clear, while the first and third occurrence (cf. 1a and 1c) represent the same text, there are also visible differences between them, reflected by the

score of 0.944. In contrast, the second and third occurrences (cf. 1b and 1c) are practically identical, with only two points of divergence: one of them intended (*sins* vs. *iniquities*) and one resulting from a printer's mistake (*with* vs. *which*), which we preserved in our attempt at not intervening in the texts beyond normalisation of variable spellings. These minute differences have scored the similarity of 0.989. It is therefore visible that scores around 0.94 and higher reflect anything between very close affinity of the compared texts and near identity.

Let us now look at the texts repeated within the same publication whose similarity scores were lowest (around 0.7), i.e. Marian primers (19 and 21). They invite comparison with the lowest values of similarity obtained in the whole data set, which turn out to be those for Psalm 129 from Coverdale's Psalter translation based on the Latin of Johannes Campensis (12), whose similarity scores range from 0.597-0.69. Once again, let us illustrate the above results by quoting the actual texts. The similarity scores between Psalm 129 in Coverdale's translation of Campensis (12) and the two versions of this psalm in Caly's primer (19) are given below.

Table 2. Similarity scores for Psalm 129 in Coverdale's Psalter (12) and Caly's primer (19)

	12_1539 edition of Coverdale's Psalter (STC 2372.6)	19_1 Caly's primer (STC 16062)	19_2 Caly's primer (STC 16062)
12_1539 edition of Coverdale's Psalter (STC 2372.6)	1	0.597	0.602
19_1 Caly's primer (STC 16062)	0.597	1	0.757
19_2 Caly's primer (STC 16062)	0.602	0.757	1

(2)[16] a. 12_1539 edition of Coverdale's Psalms from the Latin of Campensis (STC 2372.6)

When I was almost suncken in the very depe waters of troubles, I called for thy helpe o Lorde.

[16] We follow the convention of marking differences between texts by bold type, but it is restricted here to (2b) and (2c). (2a) departs from (2b) and (2c) to such an extent as to render this impractical.

Lorde heare my voyce, I beseke the, let thyne eares be inclyned vnto my dolorous peticyons.
If thou wylt for euermore remembre the wyckednesses that we haue done, or laye them vp by *the* in kepynge O Lorde, who maye be able to abyde.
Therfore folow thys rather whyche is naturall for the, thou mayeste gracyeuslye forgyue oure synnes: and therowe thy goodnesse to lyfte vp them that were fallen: and so to induce them to the ryght worshyppynge of the.
I haue styll wayted for the Lorde, my soule also hath wayted for hym: And because he had promysed to stande by me, I doubted not, but that he wolde abyde by his worde.
My soule wayted more feruen*t*ly for the lordes commynge, then the nyght watchers loke for the mornynge tyme: then *the* watchers (I saye) which beynge heuy for slepe, wayte for the daye tyme, that they maye take theyr rest.
Let euery man of Israel (yf he be wyse) wayte for the Lorde, for he is most mercyfull of kynde and of hys owne nature most redy to helpe.
Wherfore he shall delyuer Israel from all hys iniquytes, be they neuer so many.

b. 19_1_1555 Caly's Primer (STC 16062)_SEVEN PSALMS
FRom the depthe I **called** on thee (O Lorde) Lorde heare my **voice**.
Let thyne eares **take good heede to** the voice of my **praier**.
If thou Lorde **wilt loke straitlye vpon** synnes, **O** Lorde, who shall abide it?
But **with thee is mercy, and for thy lawe I haue suffred thee, O Lorde**.
My soule hathe abyden in hys worde, my soule **hathe trusted in our Lorde**.
From the morning watch **vntil nighte**, let Israell truste **in** oure Lorde.
For with our Lord there is mercye, and **with hym is** plenteous redemption.
For he **will** redeme Israell from all his iniquities.

c. 19_2_1555 Caly's Primer (STC 16062)_THE DIRIGE
OUt of the bothomles pit of my heuy trouble I **cal vnto** the, o lorde, lord heare my **prayer**.
Let thy eares **be atten***t* **vnto** the voice of my **complaint**.

For if thou Lord, **imputest me*n*s** sinnes **vnto them**, lord who shal / not fall?
But **thou art mercyfull and easie to entreate: that we might reuerence and feare thee**.
Oure Lorde is my hoope vnto whome my soule **cleueth**, **and I beleue his worde**.
My soule is set vpon our Lord from the **one** mornynge watch **vnto the other**.
Let Israel trust **vnto** our lord for with our lorde is there **both infinite** mercye *and* plentuous redemption.
For **it is** he **that** redemeth Israell from all **theyr sinnes**.

As clearly transpires from the above, we are dealing with three different texts, whose similarity scores reflect two facts: they all ultimately derive from the same Hebrew original and they are in English. We can thus conclude that similarity scores of 0.757 (between 2b and 2c) and lower (between 2a and 2b-2c) indicate no direct textual affinities and capture the fact that different texts in the same language deal with the same subject matter. In what follows we will move on to interpreting the obtained similarity scores in search of textual affinities.

George Joye's two Psalters were a popular source of Psalm 129 in the examined manuals. In particular, Joye's first Psalter (02),[17] based on the Latin of Martin Bucer[18] and first printed in 1530 in Antwerp was relied on in four manuals. Chronologically speaking these are: *Ortulus anime* (01), with the similarity score of 0.994 between the two texts. Next comes Marshall's primer (04) from 1534 (the first primer printed in London and perhaps the first book ever printed in England containing entire psalms in English; Butterworth 1553: 52), with the score 0.989, and Godfray's primer (05), scoring 0.99. And finally, there is the primer printed in 1549 (15), i.e. under Edward's rule, which also shows considerable similarity to Joye's 1530 rendition: 0.983. These relationships and the detailed similarity scores are shown in Table 3a and 3b respectively.

[17] As a matter of fact, it is the first printed English Psalter and a fascinating topic in itself. For more on that, see Charzyńska-Wójcik (2014) and Wójcik (2019).

[18] Martin Bucer prepared a new translation of the Hebrew Psalms into Latin and printed it in September 1529 under the pseudonym Aretius Felinus, hence the appellation "feline Latin", occasionally encountered in the literature (cf. Wójcik 2019).

Table 3a. Devotional manuals relying on George Joye's 1530 translation for Psalm 129

02	George Joye's English Psalter translated from the Latin text of Martin Bucer; first published in 1530 (STC 2370)		
⇩			
01 *Ortulus anime* from 1530 (STC 13828.4)	04 Marshall's primer from 1534 (STC 15986)	05 Godfray's primer from 1535 (STC 15988a)	15 Primer from 1549 (STC 16052)

Table 3b. Devotional manuals relying on George Joye's 1530 translation for Psalm 129 – similarity scores

	02	01	04	05	15
02[19]	1	**0.994**	**0.989**	**0.99**	**0.983**
01	**0.994**	1	0.992	0.997	0.985
04	**0.989**	0.992	1	0.989	0.993
05	**0.99**	0.997	0.989	1	0.982
15	**0.983**	0.985	0.993	0.982	1

Joye's second translation of the Book of Psalms (03), this time based on a different Latin source, namely the Latin of Zwingli was first printed in August 1534. It constituted the source for the 1536 primer from Rouen (07), where this psalm appears as many as three times, and each time it is drawn from the same source, with the similarity scores ranging from 0.994 to 0.997. It is also used in a primer printed in 1555 by Caly (19), i.e. under Mary's reign. As noted above, there are two occurrences of Psalm 129 in this primer: it appears in the Seven Psalms and in the Dirge, and it is the Dirge version that shows affinity to Joye's 1534 Psalter, with the similarity score of 0.949. This version is also used in one of the two occurrences of Psalm 129 in the 1557 Wayland's primer (21), also in the Dirge, where its similarity score to Joye's 1534 translation is 0.947.

[19] For the clarity of presentation, we are going to rely on text numbers in the tables with scores. Also, we use bold face to indicate the crucial scores in the tables.

Table 4a. Devotional manuals relying on George Joye's 1534 translation for Psalm 129

03	George Joye's English Psalter translated from the Latin text of Huldrych Zwingli; first published in 1534 (STC 2372)

07 Rouen primer from 1536 (STC 15993)	19 Caly's Primer from 1555 (STC 16062) (Dirge)	21 Wayland's Primer from 1557 (STC 16080) (Dirge)

Table 4b. Devotional manuals relying on George Joye's 1534 translation for Psalm 129 – similarity scores

	03	07	19	21
03	1	**0.994-0.997**	**0.949**	**0.947**
07	**0.994-0.997**	1	0.949-0.952	0.948-0.951
19	**0.949**	0.949-0.952	1	0.998
21	**0.947**	0.948-0.951	0.998	1

Another frequent source of Psalm 129 in the analysed publications is the 1537 edition of Redman's primer (08), although it shows no textual affinity to any of the translations of the whole Psalter we are aware of. In particular, *Manual* from 1539 (09) contains three occurrences of Psalm 129. All three occurrences show greatest similarity to Redman's Primer, with the similarity scores of 0.951–0.995. Redman's text is also the source of Psalm 129 in Henry VIII's primer (14), primer from 1552 (17), and Wayland's primer from 1555 (20), with the similarity scores ranging between 0.945 and 0.965. Moreover, one of the two occurrences of Psalm 129 in Caly's 1555 primer (19) (in the section with the Seven Psalms) shows a very high degree of similarity to Henry VIII's primer (14), with the similarity score of 0.953. The same is true of Wayland's primer from 1557 (21), with the identical similarity score.

Table 5a. Devotional manuals relying on the 1537 Redman primer for Psalm 129

08 Redman's primer from 1537 (STC 15997)[20] (4 occurrences of Psalm 129)			
⇩			
09 *Manual of prayers* from 1539 (STC 16009)	14 Henry VIII's primer from 1545 (STC 16034) ⇩	17 Primer from 1552 (STC 16057)	20 Wayland's Primer from 1555 (STC 16063)
	19 Caly's primer from 1555 (STC 16062) (Seven Psalms) 21 Wayland's primer from 1557 (STC 16080) (Seven Psalms)		

Table 5b. Devotional manuals relying on the 1537 Redman primer for Psalm 129 – similarity scores

	08	09	14	17	19	20	21
08	1	**0.951-0.995**	**0.949-0.952**	**0.945-0.949**	0.889-0.892	**0.961-0.965**	0.889-0.892
09	**0.951-0.995**	1	0.923-0.941	0.916-0.941	0.88-0.891	0.927-0.958	0.88-0.891
14	**0.949-0.952**	0.923-0.941	1	0.996	**0.953**	0.922	**0.953**
17	**0.945-0.949**	0.916-0.941	0.996	1	0.949	0.926	0.949
19	0.889-0.892	0.88-0.891	**0.953**	0.949	1	0.928	0.998
20	**0.961-0.965**	0.927-0.958	0.922	0.926	0.928	1	0.928
21	0.889-0.892	0.88-0.891	**0.953**	0.949	0.998	0.928	1

The last two manuals whose sources remain to be established are the two versions of the *Book of Common Prayer*, i.e. the first version from 1549 (16)

[20] Again, the original 1536 edition in is possession of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris; it does not have STC and is not available in EEBO.

and the second version from 1552 (18). Psalm 129 in both versions shows very high similarity scores to three other productions: Coverdale's second complete Bible translation (10), with the similarity score of 0.964, Coverdale's first complete Bible translation (06) and Taverner's Bible printed in 1539 (11), which both show the similarity of 0.947. This is in consonance with historical facts: Taverner's Bible is a slightly revised edition of Matthews Bible of 1537. Matthews Bible, prepared by John Rogers, relied on the portions of the Bible which Tyndale had managed to translate. For the parts that Tyndale had not translated, Rogers relied on Coverdale's first Bible printed in 1535 (Daniell 2003: 193). It is, therefore, only to be expected that the similarity scores for Taverner's Bible and Coverdale's 1535 Bible should be very high. As a matter of fact, the two texts of Psalm 129 in these publications are identical, which is reflected by the similarity score of 1. The similarity of Coverdale's second complete Bible to his first text (0.976) also reflects the fact that it offers a revised text of his first rendition.

Table 6a. Devotional manuals relying on Coverdale's Great Bible for Psalm 129

10	Psalms from Coverdale's second complete Bible, known as the Great Bible; first issued in 1539 (STC 2068)
	⇩
16 *Book of Common Prayer* from 1549 (STC 16270a)	18 *Book of Common* Prayer from 1552 (STC16288)

Table 6b. Devotional manuals relying on Coverdale's Great Bible for Psalm 129 – similarity scores

	10	16	18
10	1	0.964	0.964
16	0.964	1	1
18	0.964	1	1

Two publications remain to be discussed: the 1539 edition of Coverdale's Psalter first printed in 1535 (12) and Coverdale's Psalter translated from the Vulgate issued in 1540 (13). The former is based on the new Latin rendition of the Psalms prepared by Johannes Campensis. As has already been noted at the outset of this section, this text shows the lowest similarity scores to all the remaining texts (0.597-0.69). Ferguson (2011: 154) in discussing Coverdale's treatment of the Latin of Campensis refers to it as a paraphrase, which tallies with our results: it does not resemble any of the remaining six Psalter translations analysed here. Moreover, it does not constitute a source of any of the examined manuals. When it comes to Coverdale's Psalter translated from the Vulgate (13), its highest similarity scores are for Redman's 1537 primer (08) – 0.919 and the *Manual* from 1539 (09) – 0.91-0916. This might reflect a common source text, i.e. the Vulgate.

4.2 Verifying the scores

Let us now see how the above results compare to the available textual and philological knowledge. For the period 1529-1545, we shall rely on Butterworth's (1953) seminal work on primers. The textual provenance of psalms contained in the two *Books of Common Prayer* is discussed in Jacobs (2013). As for the remaining texts, there is no comprehensive study covering this topic.[21]

With respect to the textual affinities expressed in Table 3a, they are all confirmed in full by Butterworth's (1953) examinations. In particular, Butterworth (1953: 39, 59 and 64, 76-77) states explicitly that the 1530 *Ortulus* (01) and Marshall's (04) and Godfray's (05) primers are based on Joye's 1530 translation (02). Butterworth does not discuss the 1549 primer (15), shown in Table 3a to also descend from Joye's 1530 rendition, since his study does not go beyond Henry VIII's 1545 primer.

Moving on to Table 4a, here Butterworth's classification can only be verified with respect to the Rouen primer (07). Butterworth (1953: 134) claims that the Rouen primer "actually introduced a new translation of nearly all the Psalms it used. Thus, the Rouen primer cut loose from the tradition of Joye and Marshall, and based its version, with conservative

[21] One can come across remarks in the literature mentioning Mary's attempt at emphasising continuity with her father Henry VIII (Wooding 2006 [2016: 232-233]). This, however, would imply that Marian primers only printed the Henrician text of the psalms, which, as we have seen, is not the case, for one thing because Mary's primers tend to present two variant texts of psalm 129.

fidelity, on the accompanying Latin text in its margin". At first glance, this stands in contradiction to the results of cosine similarity measurement, which pinpointed Joye's 1534 translation (03) as the source of Psalm 129 in the Rouen primer (0.994-0.997). However, as it appears, Butterworth's conclusions exclude two of the Penitential Psalms, which he shows to derive from Joye's 1534 version.[22] Psalm 129 is one of them (Butterworth 1953: 135).

As for Table 5a, which shows the lineage of Psalm 129 in as many as six manuals, only one of them is covered by Butterworth's study. In particular, Butterworth says that the 1539 *Manual* contains two versions of Psalm 129 in three occurrences: it first appears in the section with the Seven Psalms, and, this rendition derives from the 1538 Redman primer (Butterworth 1953: 187-188), while the rendition occurring in the Fifteen Psalms and the Dirge comes "partly from Coverdale and partly from Redman" (Butterworth 1953: 188). This is confirmed by our data, with similarity scores of the first occurrence of Psalm 129 in the *Manual* (09) (cf. 1a above) to Redman's primer of 1538 (cf. 3a below) at the level 0.99.[23] The second and third occurrences of Psalm 129 in the *Manual* (09) (cf. 1b-c) show similarity to Redman's primer at the level of 0.95 and to Coverdale (06; cf. 3b below) at around 0.9, indeed representing a combination of the two renditions. As a textual examination shows, the first two and a half verse in (1b) and (1c) come from Coverdale's version shown in (3b) below, where the part borrowed into (1b) and (1c) is marked in bold. The remaining verses of (1b) and (1c) clearly follow Redman's text given in bold in (3a) below.

(3) a. 1538 edition of Redman's Primer (STC 16008)_1st occurrence
FRom the deepe places, haue I called vnto the (oh lorde) lorde heare my voyce.
Let thyne eares be intentife, to *the* voyce of my prayer.
If thou (lorde) wylte loke so straytly vpon synners, **o lorde, who shall abyde it**?

[22] While it is interesting in itself why the compiler decided on this particular psalm selection, the answer to this question falls beyond the scope of the present paper. What is crucial for our research is that the applied methodology produces results which correctly reflect the perceived textual affinities.

[23] Because Butterworth (1953: 188) explicitly refers to Redman's 1538 text, we provided here the 1538 version but it is identical with Redman's 1537 text except for the spelling differences, abbreviations and punctuation, which are naturally excluded from similarity measures. Hence, all measurements presented for Redman's 1537 edition (08) are applicable to the 1538 version.

But there is mercye with the: *and* bycause of thy lawe, haue I abyden the, o lorde.
My soule hath abyden in his worde: my soule hath trusted in the lorde.
From the morning watche vnto night: let Israel truste in the lorde.
For with the lorde there is mercye: and his redemption is plentuous.
And he shal redeme Israel, from all the iniquities of it.

b. 06_1535 Coverdale's Bible (STC 2063)
OVt of the depe call I vnto the (o LORDE) LORDE heare my voyce.
Oh let thine eares considre well the voyce of my complaynte.
Yf thou (LORDE) wilt be extreme to marcke what is done amysse. Oh LORDE, who maye abyde it?
But there is mercy with the, that thou mayest be feared.
I loke for the LORDE, my soule doth wayte for him, and in his worde is my trust.
My soule doth paciently abyde the LORDE, from the one mornynge to the other.
Let Israel trust in the LORDE, for with the LORDE there is mercy and plenteous redempcion.
And he shal redeme Israel from all his synnes.

As for Henry VIII's primer (14), Butterworth (1953: 261) states that it mostly utilised the psalms from Redman's primer of 1537 (08). This converges with our results. However, Butterworth (1953: 261) further explains that Redman's 1537 primer offers an emended version of the Rouen primer from 1536 (07). This stands in contrast to the data obtained in our study: the similarity score between Redman's primer (08) and the Rouen primer (07) is 0.815-0.821. The striking differences between the two texts can be appreciated by comparing (4a) with (4b) below.

(4) a. 08_1_1537 edition of Redman's Primer (STC 15997)_1st occurrence[24]
FRom the depe plac*es*, haue I called vnto *the* (o lord) lord here my voyce.

[24] As already noted, the Rouen primer prints Psalm 129 three times in almost identical versions (with similarity scores between these occurrences at 0.997-1.0). So, we quote here only the first occurrence of Psalm 129.

Let thyn eares be intentife, to the voyce of my prayer.
If thou (lorde) wylte loke so straytly vpon synners: o lorde, who shall abyde it?
But there is mercy w*ith* the: and bicause of thy lawe, haue I abyden the, o lorde.
My soule hath abyden in his worde: my soule hath trusted in the lorde.
From the morning watche vnto night: let Israel truste in the lorde.
For with the lorde there is mercy: and his redemption is plentuous.
And he shall redeme Israel, from all the iniquities of it.

b. 07_1_1536 Primer from Rouen (STC 15993)_SEVEN PSALMS
OUt of the botomles pytte of my heuy trouble I call vnto the / oh Lorde: Lorde heare my prayour.
Let thy eares be attente vnto the voyce of my complaynt.
For if *thou* lorde / imputest mens synnes vnto them / lorde who shall nat fall?
But thou arte mercyful and easy to entreate: that we myght reuerence and feare the.
The lord is my hope vnto whom my soule cleaueth / and I beleue his worde.
My soule is sette vpon the lorde, frome the one mornynge watche vnto the other.
Let Israell trust vnto *the* lorde, for with *the* lorde is there bothe infinite mercy and plentuous rede*m*pcyon.
For it is he that redemeth Israel from all theyr synnes.

As transpires from the above, Butterworth's claim that Redman's (08) primer offers a slightly emended text of the Rouen primer (07) is incorrect with respect to Psalm 129 because the two texts are very different.

The textual affinities expressed in Table 6a, i.e. the indebtedness of Psalm 129 in the two version of the *Book of Common Prayer* (1549 and 1552, i.e. 16 and 18 respectively) are confirmed by Jacobs (2013) and Daniell (2003). Jacobs (2013: 182) states that the psalms in the *Book of Common Prayer* came from Coverdale's second translation of the Bible and this textual choice in the case of psalms (in contrast to other scriptural material) remained

unchanged in all subsequent revisions of the *Book of Common Prayer* until the 1960s (Daniell 2003: 189).[25]

5. Conclusion

Two major objections could be raised against the analysis presented in this paper and we would like to address them here because we voiced them ourselves while working on this project. First of all, it could be said that the study is based on too small a sample of data to warrant reliable conclusions; secondly, that the cosine distance scores express what we can see with the naked eye, so why complicate things by introducing mathematical values, whose immediate significance has to be learned before it can be of any use.

There are two points we would like to make with reference to the first objection. Firstly, let us emphasise that whatever conclusions were drawn from the analysed texts concerned only the texts that constituted the focus of this study, i.e. Psalm 129 as contained in the analysed publications. We have not made any generalised claims with respect to any other texts contained in the devotional manuals we examined, though, of course the achieved results may be treated as an implication as to the source of other psalm versions. This, however, is not a drawback of our study. On the contrary: it can direct further research in an informed way. Secondly, on the practical side of the cosine similarity measurement, it has been shown independently (cf. Charzyńska-Wójcik in prep.) that cosine measurements performed on bigger samples of data which show a propensity for repeated vocabulary, as psalms certainly do, are best performed on small chunks of text, as feeding big portions of text into the calculation does not produce the same overall result as the medium of the sums of the scores for small portions of texts. This prompts the necessity of working on small textual units and most psalms represent such units. In effect, the small size of the analysed text does not adversely affect the achieved results.

When it comes to the second objection, i.e. that the cosine similarity scores express what we can see with the naked eye, we also have two counterarguments to offer. Firstly, notice that it does not in fact constitute a shortcoming that a mathematically expressed similarity score *repeats* what we can see on the basis of our philological examination; far from it, though

[25] An examination on the provenance of Psalm 8, which also relied on cosine similarity shows the similarity of Psalm 8 printed in these two sources at the level of 0.993 (Charzyńska-Wójcik 2021).

the ultimate gain is not immediately visible in extreme cases. In particular, for identical or near-identical texts we do not need to rely on cosine distances. Similarly, we do not seem to require assistance in expressing the observation that two texts are different. We can describe two texts as (almost) identical or (completely) different. However, when it comes to comparing *how* different or *how* similar *several* texts are to each other, we face three problems. One of them is related to perception, one to description, and one to methodology. Let us begin with the first of them.

While we can state the degrees of mutual similarity with respect to a small closed set of texts, say four or five, when more elements are added to the compared set, the degrees of relatedness have to be established anew because they were expressed relationally, with no objective values assigned to them. This effect is avoided when textual relatedness is expressed by mathematical similarity scores. No matter how many other texts are added into the compared set, the similarity values calculated for the original set remain stable, even if we need to make room for the added texts in the established similarity hierarchy. Crucially, adding a text to the compared set will never result in a researcher having to reformulate their observations because they are expressed in objective mathematical terms. This contrasts with the situation in which comparison relies on purely relational assessments. In particular, if in a pool of texts some texts cluster together and one stands out as visibly different from the rest, we will conclude that the texts are all related, except for this one, which we will call "very different", "unrelated", "independent" or "original". However, extending the compared set by a text which shows some similarities to both the texts that clustered together and the one which stood out will inevitably require restating the conclusion with respect to the text which was originally classified as "independent". This is caused by the way we perceive differences and similarities: relationally. And that is also how we express them, which brings us to the second point raised above: what we have at our disposal to *describe* the observed differences.

All too often in the literature do we come across claims expressed with respect to the same psalm translations by different researchers articulating the mutual relationship of these texts in terms of revisions, deep revisions, or calling them practically new translations. Similarly, at the other end of the scale, the same texts are described by different scholars as identical, while others see them as the same text printed with only minor modifications, or speak of the later text as a slightly revised version of the former (cf. Charzyńska-Wójcik 2021 for concrete examples). In effect, it is not very far from "slightly revised" to "revised", while the linguistic reality behind

this apparent similarity may be very different. This inevitably introduces confusion and does not contribute to propelling our knowledge of psalm translations and their revisions.

With reference to the methodological problem signalled above, let us note that, as has been indirectly intimated above, while all linguistic differences between compared texts can be spotted, catalogued and counted, there is no obvious way of actually assessing them, not only because vocabulary that is accurate enough is missing but also because it is not obvious how to classify omissions with respect to additions or replacements. In particular, while it seems clear that diverging word choices need to be classified as textual differences, and neither is the source text consulted in such cases nor is the difference evaluated in any way in assessing text similarity, it is not immediately obvious how to approach instances where one text exhibits an item which is missing from another one. For one thing, to classify such instances, one would have to consult the source to determine whether we are dealing with addition or an omission. Omissions may result from the imperfections inherent in the copying process and in some cases this is clearly what has happened (especially if function words are missing). In contrast, additions require a different approach and, therefore, different classifications. Problems of this type do not arise when a researcher may avail themselves of objectively computed mathematically expressed scores of similarities.

It is hoped that the arguments presented above have not only dispelled any potential initial doubts as to the usefulness of the applied method, but have – in fact – spoken strongly in favour of it. To these advantages, we can add the practically unlimited number of texts that can be covered by a comparison, as we have done here with 30 texts, which would admittedly be hard to compare without reliance on the applied method. Finally, let us add that the software necessary to perform text similarity measurement is freely available, while the number of texts available in Text Creation Partnership is increasing rapidly, contributing to the growing applicability of this method by eliminating the need to prepare transcripts of the compared texts.

On a more general plane, the examination presented in the paper shows that English devotional practices in the turbulent period when they were emerging were much more complex than the purely denominational differences between Catholics and Reformers (often misconceived from the present-day perspective) might suggest. The shared texts of the psalms and unexpected continuities show the heterogenous character of the devotional manuals reflecting the power of the psalms to bridge confessional divides.

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Parallel fitt-endings in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*: A case of medieval paratextuality

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the endings of the so-called fitts in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. For the first time in the criticism of this renowned fourteenth-century alliterative romance of the Matter of Britain attention is called to a remarkable number of lexical and thematic features shared by the concluding sections of the poem's four compositional divisions. It is argued that the parallel fitt-endings serve to underline the units of *Gawain* as an orally delivered Arthurian narrative of the kind that was used as a form of entertainment at medieval round tables and generally at court. The rationale behind the parallel fitt-endings is discussed in terms of paratextuality, with emphasis on such typical paratextual effects as pointing to the genre and the mode of the text in question. Paratexts peculiar to medieval literature and to Middle English alliterative romance are pointed out.

Keywords: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, alliterative romance, courtly entertainment, fitt, closure, parallelism, paratext.

1. Introductory remarks

The story of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is customarily divided into four compositional units, the so-called fitts. The term *fitt*, alternatively spelled *fit* and apparently related to the *fittea* which occurs in the Latin preface of the alliterative Old Saxon *Heliand* (c. 830), signifies a division of a long narrative poem; like *canto*, *fitt* presumably indicated a portion of a poem that could be sung or chanted by a minstrel at one sitting. Unlike cantos, though, fitts seem to belong distinctively to the tradition of alliterative versifying, where the label *fitt* is used along with what appears to be its close synonym, *passus*, and

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where such units have been shown to have two separate functions: "they can allude to a device of performance […] as typically practised by minstrels and typical ballad-singers" or "they can represent the conventional divisions of long texts in alliterative measures" (Hardman 1992: 67).

The division of *Gawain* into fitts was proposed in the first modern edition of the romance by Sir Frederic Madden which appeared in 1839 and has been almost universally accepted ever since, although, as Phillipa Hardman points out, none of the four fitts is "so named or numbered in the manuscript" (1967: 63). The division is based chiefly upon the manuscript's four large decorated initials – letters of blue, flourished with red. In the "Introduction" to Tolkien's edition of *Gawain* it is stated that "Madden was right in accepting them as structural divisions of the poem having the authority of the author" (xii).[1] This paper supports the division of *Gawain* into four narrative units on different grounds – by observing considerable similarity of the fitt-endings. Just as the beginning of each fitt is marked by the manuscript's visual feature, a large decorated initial, so are the fitt-endings marked at a deeper, narrative level by verbal and thematic correspondence rather than sheer graphic layout. The fitt-concluding passages taken here into consideration extend each over a considerable number of lines: thirty (Fitt I), twenty (Fitt II), forty-five (Fitt III), and forty-one (Fitt IV). In the last case, ending the fitt merges with closure of the whole romance. Thematic parallels between the fitt-endings are highlighted in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of the fitt-endings in *Gawain*

Fitt I 460-90	– New Year Day's feasting at Camelot; mirth and laughter; courteous speech – entire court present – principal actors: Arthur, Gawain, Guinevere – dialogised response to the adventure enacted in the Fitt – end of day and entertainment: bedtime – focus on Gawain alone with his thoughts

[1] Among the few critics who questioned the fourfold division, on account of the occurrence of five more ornamented initials in the *Gawain* portion of the manuscript, was Laurita L. Hill.

Fitt II 1105-25	– revelry at Hautdesert; drinking to seal the exchange of winnings contract – Gawain and the lord of the castle as main actors – whole court present: lords and ladies; serving-men as extras – courtiers' commentary in their private conversations – repeating the covenants – end of day and bedtime
Fitt III 1952-97	– New Year Eve's feasting, merrymaking, and jesting at Hautdesert – whole household present, including servants – main actors: Gawain, the lord, and the two ladies of the castle – Gawain's courteous leave-taking of everyone, including the servants – end of day and bedtime – focus on Gawain asleep, possibly disturbed by his thoughts
Fitt IV 2489-2530	– enthusiastic reception of Gawain upon his return to Camelot – Arthur's court present – principal actors: Gawain, the king, and the queen – Gawain's recapitulation of his adventure – the court's laughter and re-interpretation of Gawain's story – turn to book reading and writing – conclusion of the romance; final prayer

The clearly noticeable thematic correspondence calls attention to these passages as signals of concluding a major part of the poem in accordance with alliterative and tail-rhyme romance tradition. Chaucer in his parody of popular romance in *Sir Thopas* makes explicit textual reference to fitts, which suggests that such was, on average, the actual practice. Although the *Gawain*-poet shuns this straightforward method, I would argue that he does indicate finalization by means of more sophisticated signals implicit within the story.

Both Chaucer in *Sir Thopas* and the *Gawain*-poet follow a general practice noticeable in medieval manuscripts, where indications of a fitt or passus do not mark the beginning of a new part but the part which has just been completed. In brief, they are not headings, or chapter titles, "marking the beginning of a new passus", but "a sign of completion marking the end of the finished passus" (Hardman 1992: 68). The *Gawain*-poet's fitt-ending narrative pattern mirrors the way minstrels marked off convenient breaks in oral transmission, though in his case the indication is not imposed by a

performer but is authorial, with the author merely adopting the minstrel's stance. Another practice observable in medieval alliterative romances is that some of them mark the completion of the first fitt or passus only, but not the other parts. In *William of Palerne*, for instance, the author makes "an elaborate break at the end of the first passus, and nowhere else" (Hardman 1992: 70). The explanation offered by Hardman is that the first fitt functioned as a sample, or a way of advertising the whole work, on the basis of which the public decided whether they would have the rest of it. In *Gawain*, the first fitt is the most self-contained one while being also open-ended: it can stand alone or it can be continued, depending on the audience's choice, but its suspenseful ending compels the audience to carry on, all of which makes this fitt a masterful introduction of the whole work in terms of salesmanship. Notably, it is the only one of the poem's four fitts that is not further subdivided by decorated initials, and the decorated initial marking its completion at line 491 differs in size from all the other ones, extending over four lines rather than three or six. Fitts, particularly the first one, are a pre-modern version of instalments into which Victorian writers would divide their novels.

2. Analysis and discussion

An important narrative signal of the completion of a fitt in *Gawain* is that in each case the end of story coincides with the end of day and its entertainment. In the first fitt, it is stated: "Wyth wele walt þey þat day, til worþed an ende / in londe" (485-86; they spent that day with delight till the end came to pass on earth).[2] The sense of an ending is here emphasized by the fact that the key words, *ende* and *day*, are placed at the close of, respectively, the line and its first half-line, in the last line of the alliterative stock of the stanza running on to the bob in which another key word is placed, *londe*. The implied sense is that this is like the end of the world for Gawain anticipating the Green Knight's return blow. The wheel focuses on Gawain alone with his thoughts, presumably in his bedchamber. In the second fitt, the light-hearted revelry of the courtiers continues until it is time to kiss good-byes, take leave, and go to bed. The growing quiet is conveyed as the courtiers speak softly, "stylly" (1117), and are led away "ful softe" (1121 – a bob line) to their bedchambers by many brisk serving-men with gleaming torches. The phrase "to bed"

[2] All quotations from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* are after the Tolkien edition and are followed by line numbers.

(1120) is reiterated as "to his bed" (1122) and *bed* is a link-word between the stock and the wheel of the stanza. The sense of end of day is conveyed too by the line-final phrase "at þe laste" (1120) concluding the stock. In the third fitt, exuberant feasting continues till late at night – "Burnez to hor bedde behoued at þe laste" (1959; it was time for folk to go to bed) – and Gawain has to take leave of the lord, the two ladies, and the whole court. Eventually, Gawain is led away by serving-men with lights "to his chambre" (1989). He is brought "to his bedde to be at his rest" (1990). Gawain's disturbed sleep and anxious thoughts are suggested, like at the close of Fitt I. In the first line of the wheel, the narrator wishes his hero to lie there without stirring: "Let hym lyȝe þere stille" (1994). The word *stille* is used in the rhyming position and rhymes with the same word spelled slightly differently, *stylle*, as the narrator implores his audience to wait silently for the rest of the story. The *rime riche* underscores the quiet of the night. In the fourth fitt, the latter part of the day is implied by Gawain's arrival at Camelot after a long journey, and the end of the whole poem is signalled by the transition from oral communication to book reading and writing. In each case, the end of the day's entertainment implies the end of the job of storytelling, especially as the minstrel-like authorial narrator reveals his presence in these passages and there is parallelism between his verbal act of narration and the court's speech acts so that it is almost as if he too was about to retire to bed after his day's work. Interestingly, *fitt* or *fit* has been derived from German *Fitze*, 'the thread used to mark a day's work' (Wheeler). The fitt-endings thus have the illocutionary power to perform narrative closure.

At the end of each fitt, a scene of communal feasting at court is described – at Camelot (Fitt I, IV) and at Hautdesert (Fitt II, III). In Fitt I, the feast proceeds with "alle maner of mete and mynstralcie boþe" (484, all sorts of both food and minstrelsy) and with "wele" (485, delight). In Fitt II, the exchange-of-winnings agreement made between Gawain and the lord of the castle is referred to in terms of the lord's desire "to layke" (1111, play) and is celebrated by both of them with drinks and laughter (cf. 1112-13), and then by everyone: "Þay drunken and daylyeden and dalten vntyȝtel, / Þise lordez and ladyez, quyle þat hem lyked" (1114-15; they drank and trifled and behaved freely, these lords and ladies, as long as it pleased them). In the last line of the wheel that closes the Fitt, the agreement is again referred to as a form of amusement, "layk" (1125). The scene at the end of Fitt III opens with similar general feasting and merriment following the third day's exchange of winnings, with an abundance of dishes, the hall resounding with revelry, music-making, ladies' laughter, and jesting speeches, yet without

overstepping the bounds of propriety: "With merþe and mynstralsye, with metez at hor wylle, / Þay maden as mery as any men moȝten – / With laȝyng of ladies, with lotez of bordez" (1952-54) and "maden mony iapez" (1957). Overflowing happiness encompasses the entire court, referred to collectively as "þe douthe" (1956, company) and "þe meyny" (1957, 1983; household). In Fitt IV, when Gawain "commes to þe court" (2489) of King Arthur, we are told that there "wakned wele in þat wone" (2490; there arose joy in that abode). Gawain tells them his story with shame, but is comforted by both the king and "alle þe court" (2513): they "[l]aȝen loude þerat" (2514; they laughed aloud at that). The whole "broþerhede" of "þe Table" (2515-16) is implicated.

In the fitt-endings the whole court, no doubt present throughout the story, is involved as an audience watching and commenting upon what happens before their eyes. In Fitt I, the Green Knight's unexpected survival and his shocking departure head in hand is declared by the court to be a complete marvel: "Ȝet breued watz hit ful bare / A meruayl among þo menne" (465-66). The phrase *þo menne* (those people), placed emphatically at the very end of the stanza and the wheel, casts the court in the role of spectators and interpreters. The general response is then dialogised between King Arthur, Guinevere, and Gawain. At the end of Fitt II, the court's response to the making of the contract between the lord of the castle and Gawain is given emphasis. In Fitt IV the whole court of Camelot listens to and interprets Gawain's story. Each court is at once a collective protagonist of the story and its listening/reading public. The latter role emerges emphatically in the fitt-endings.

But the fitt-endings also invoke the poem's actual rather than fictive public as they bring to the fore communication between the poet-narrator and his real-life audience. When in the bob of the penultimate stanza of Fitt I the court's hermeneutical impasse is dramatically highlighted by the brief, elliptical question, "What þenne?" (462), it is the poem's addressee that is apparently being interrogated by the authorial narrator at this point. While the question performs transition to the next part of the story by creating narrative suspense, it also situates itself on the borderline between the in-text and the off-text world. The question is reminiscent of the *demande d'amour* type of rhetorical question which creates a pause in the narrative flow, as used by Chaucer at the end of the first part of the *Knight's Tale*.[3] In the same

[3] Like *Gawain*, the *Knight's Tale* is a romance in four parts, which are explicitly delineated by Latin inscriptions such as *Explicit prima pars* and *Sequitur pars secunda*, placing Chaucer's romance in a Latinate, non-alliterative literary culture.

fitt-ending, the first-person narrator is implied again as the subject of the enunciation when he directly addresses Gawain in the first line of the fitt's final wheel: "Now þenk wel, Sir Gawan" (487). In the fourth fitt-ending the narrator suggests that he has shaped his poem "[a]s hit is breued in þe best boke of romaunce" (2521; as it is written in the best book of romance) and thus reveals himself in the capacity of the writer sharing intertextual space with his reader and other authors. The off-text communication surfaces most clearly in the closing lines of Fitt III, where the authorial narrator suddenly steps in by speaking in the first person and thus drawing attention to his speech acts and his own hermeneutical anxiety: "say ne dar I" (1991). At this point he also directly addresses his public in the final lines of the fitt-closing wheel: "And ȝe wyl a whyle be stylle / I schal telle *yow* how þay wroȝt" (1996-97, my emphasis; if you are silent for a while, I shall tell you how they acted).

The intersecting vectors of internal and external communication that form part of the festive court scenes described in the fitt-endings of *Gawain* remind me, on the one hand, of Philippe Beaussant's discussion of Paolo Veronese's painting *The Wedding at Cana* as depicting a typical pre-modern feast: a great spectacle with actors, stage, parts, dialogues, play, and audience, with no border between onstage and offstage reality, with the spectators among the decorations and in the depicted crowd, suggesting continuity and ongoing communication between the separate realities within the same space. On the other hand, I am reminded of Gérard Genette's study of the paratext. It is the latter concept more pertinent as it is to *Gawain* as text that I shall adopt in order to further illuminate the nature and functions of the poem's fitt-endings. Apart from being transitional points between successive stages of the narrative, these passages situate themselves on the threshold between the in-text and the off-text reality, which is exactly how Genette defines the paratext.

The paratext is a threshold, "an 'undefined zone' between the inside and the outside" of the text, "a zone not only of transition but also of *transaction*", a privileged place "of an influence on the public, an influence that is at the service of a better reception of the text, a more pertinent reading of it (in the eyes of the author and his allies)" (Genette 1997: 2). Paratexts include such liminal elements as titles, author's name, dedications and inscriptions, prefaces, and epigraphs. Genette acknowledges that "the ways and means of the paratext change continually, depending on period, culture, genre, author, work" etc. (1997: 3). He notes that in the Middle Ages "texts often circulated in an almost raw condition, in the form of manuscripts devoid of any formula of presentation", though "the sole fact of

transcription – but equally of oral transmission – brings to the identity of the text some degree of materialization, graphic or phonic, which may induce paratext effects" (Genette 1997: 3). *Gawain*, even though lacking author's name and authorial title, employs, in fact, a wider range of paratexts than, say, those of the handwriting or the type of script. There are decorated initials and large illustrations, both of them being probably allographic, that is, provided by someone other than the author. Allographic is probably also a version of the Garter motto in French inscribed in the manuscript at the end of *Gawain* as a kind of epigraph. Certainly authorial, on the other hand, is the closing prayer, which forms a typically medieval paratext: "Now þat bere þe croun of þorne, / He bryng *vus* to his blysse! Amen" (2529-2530, my emphasis; may He who bore the crown of thorns bring us to His bliss). The paratetxual character of this prayer lies in the way the authorial narrator, the implicit subject of the enunciation, establishes a bond with his presumably aristocratic fourteenth-century public by using a typical for them form of devotion (for example, Henry Grosmont Duke of Lancaster, who has been considered as the *Gawain*-poet's possible patron, cherished the holy relic of a thorn from Christ's mock-crown).

The fitt-endings are less obvious yet equally compelling sites of paratextual effects in *Gawain*. Like the prayers typically closing medieval texts, they underscore closure, though in other than religious terms. The liminal character of the fitt-endings has already been demonstrated above. It remains to be shown how they reveal aspects of the poem's genre and mode, which Genette considers to be a conventional function of paratexts such as titles and prefaces. The fitt-endings have, in fact, much in common with the preface of sorts that is inserted by the *Gawain*-poet in the latter part of the second stanza of his romance (26b-36), between the poem's historical prologue or *Vorgeschichte* and the narrative proper. In this literary preface the poet repeatedly speaks in the first-person and adopts the minstrel's stance (26b, 27, 31), directly addressing his public, "ȝe" (30). Also, the genre of the poem is approximately defined: on the one hand, in terms that underscore the marvellous, as "an aunter" (27, adventure), "a selly" (28, marvel), and "an outtrage awenture of Arthurez wonderez" (29, an exceedingly strange adventure of Arthur's wonders); on the other hand, in terms of "stori stif and stronge" (34; brave story), suggestive of the *chanson de gestes* tradition. Furthermore, the romance's verse form as "laye" (30; lay, poem) is indicated, as well as its oral circulation – "as I haf herde telle" (26b), "lysten" (30), "I schal telle hit as-tit, as I in toun herde, / In tonge" (31-32; I shall tell it at once, aloud, as I have heard it in the court) and, finally, the poem's alliterative

metre – "with lel letteres loken (35; linked with true letters). The mode of quasi-theatrical showing, along with that of telling, is suggested too: "I attle to *schawe* […] a selly *in siʒt*" (27-28, my emphasis; I intend to show a marvel to see).[4] The amount of technical vocabulary pertaining to literary art is truly remarkable in this prefatory passage.

The fitt-endings, similarly, point to the poem's genre and mode. Arthur's court declares the Green Knight episode to be a complete marvel, and Arthur says that he has seen "a selly" (475), while the penultimate line of the Fitt refers to the poem as "þis auenture" (489). Arthur attempts to rationalize what has been seen in terms of typical Christmas "craft" (471, artistry), specifically as the "laykyng of enterludez" (472, playing of interludes). The term *enterludez* suggests various short dramatic or mimic entertainments provided between courses at a banquet (not to be confused with the interlude as specific dramatic genre popular in Tudor England). Arthur mentions interludes along with other typical forms of entertainment, such as courtly "caroles" (473; dance-songs) and "mynstralcie" (482, minstrelsy; cf. also 1952). The latter term covered a range of entertainments, from musical performance, singing, and dancing to story-telling (cf. *MED*, minstralsī). The axe, "don abof þe dece on doser to henge" (478, placed above the dais and hung against an ornamental backcloth), where "alle men for meruayl myʒt on hit loke, / And bi trwe tytel þerof to telle þe wonder" (479-80; where everyone could look at it for marvel and relate the wonder by its true title) is transformed into the token of the Green Knight adventure and its *tytel* at the level of storytelling, bringing to mind book or chapter titles. Similarly, the green girdle becomes "þe token" (2509, sign) of Gawain's adventure in the castle Hautdesert and the Green Chapel, symbolizing to Gawain his dishonesty. Subsequently, the girdle is adopted by Arthur's court as the sign of their renown. In the final lines, the poem is referred to as "þis aunter" (2522), one among many "aunterez" (2527) of Britain's past, and in terms of written tradition, as "þe best boke of romaunce" (2521) among "þe Brutus bokez" (2523). The titles of the first and the last fitt, as suggested by the poet himself, could therefore be, respectively, "The Axe" and "The Girdle".

The genre of *Gawain* thus proffered to the reader by the poet himself brings to mind the Arthurian re-enactments that formed part of actual chivalric festivals during the thirteenth and the first half of the

[4] The apparent interconnection of the medieval discourses of literature and magic, suggested by the terms like *selly in siʒt*, is discussed by Kowalik in the context of G. Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale* (2022: 181).

fourteenth century, as discussed by Richard Barber.[5] Arthurian romances were apparently presented at such festivals through dramatic readings and possibly through more developed forms of playacting as a way of fostering chivalric virtue. One type of tournament, in particular, the so-called round tables, combined jousting and Arthurian interludes performed over several days. Accounts of such round tables survive in northern European literary works which allegedly mirror the contemporary social reality. For example, Sarrasin describes in his poem a tournament held in 1278 in northern France, including an interlude enacted during supper on the first day, more interludes on the second day, followed by feasting and dancing, and by jousting only on the third day. There was a mixture of reality and fiction on such occasions as some participants impersonated Arthurian characters while some others appeared as themselves. In a round table held by Edward I, described in detail by the Dutch chronicler Lodewijk van Velthem, jousting initiated by knights with Arthurian identities was followed by a feast at which Arthur refused to eat until he heard some news, which was a signal for playacting to begin. The round table festivals made use of Arthurian dressing up, assigned shields to Arthurian heroes, followed the basic storyline of Arthurian romances, and depended upon carefully written scenarios rather than pure improvisation. The festivals disappear from the records after 1344. In January that year King Edward III held a feast which ended with his promise to found the Round Table, but the project was subsequently abandoned by the king and the Order of the Garter was created instead. *Gawain* is clearly linked to this tradition in general and to the founding of the Order of the Garter in particular, as suggested by the green girdle which is adopted by Arthur's court, called "þe broþerhede" of "þe Table" (2515-16) and "þe Rounde Table" (2519), as the sign of the new order, as well as by the Garter motto appended to the poem at the end of the manuscript.[6]

Apart from helping the reader to identify the poem's genre, the fitt-endings in their paratextual function call attention to other socially significant verbal acts that are at the heart of *Gawain*. In Fitt II, the "forwarde" (1105; agreement) or "bargayn" (1112) concerning the exchange of winnings crucial to the poem's plot is made between the lord of the castle and Gawain in the fitt-ending and the conditions of the agreement, "counenauntez" (1123, terms of compact) are *recorded*, recalled, in the wheel of the last

[5] The following account is based on Barber (2007: 84-99).

[6] For a detailed study of the poem's connection to the Order of the Garter see Ingledew.

stanza. Indeed, "Covenants" could be the title of Fitt II, as suggested by the fitt-ending. Over the two final stanzas of Fitt III, various forms of courtly speech are displayed as Gawain takes leave of his host. Gawain's polite and appropriately long utterance is quoted. He thanks the lord of the castle for his hospitality and, in an extremely courteous manner, asks to be given a guide to the Green Chapel. After this request is granted and the lord thanks Gawain in return for the honour of entertaining him, Arthur's knight takes leave of the two ladies. We are told that he parted with them sorrowfully with kisses and many hearty thanks and that they promptly returned him the same and commended him to Christ with extremely sad sighs. Finally, Gawain takes leave of the entire household, honourably thanking everyone for their services, kindness, and solicitude, while the servants are so sorry to part with him as if he had honourably dwelt with them all their lives. Though no title for this longest and most complex fitt, which deftly interweaves the hunt, bedroom, and court scenes, is suggested in the fitt's ending, the ending foregrounds the intricate relationships developed by Gawain with various members of the Hautdesert household.

The fitt-endings indicate too that the poem is to be taken ultimately in the comic mode. Some of their sentences almost resemble cues for performers. For example, King Arthur's speech in response to the Green Knight episode is introduced as follows: "Þaȝ Arþer þe hende kyng at hert hade wonder, / He let no semblaunt be sene, but sayde ful hyȝe / To þe comlych quene with cortays speche" (467-69), prompting how Arthur's part is to be performed by whoever reads it aloud. An almost comic effect is created by the transition from Arthur's feelings, *at hert*, and his struggle not to show them in his appearance, *semblaunt*, to the way he is betrayed by his *ful hyȝe* voice despite managing to address the queen in appropriate courteous manner. Arthur's understatement when he addresses Gawain is also comical: "Now sir, hang vp þin ax, þat hatz inogh hewen" (477). Basically, the fitt-endings suggest that the story is to be taken in festive, humorous, light-hearted spirit, which ultimately prevails, as conveyed by abundant formulaic diction of mirth. Laughter resounds in all four fitt-endings. In Fitt I we are told that Arthur and Gawain laughed and grinned at the green man: "þay laȝe and grenne" (464), and Arthur points out that it is proper "to laȝe" (472) at Christmas. In Fitt II both Gawain and his host laugh to seal their bargain: "þay laȝed vchone" (1113). In Fitt III the "laȝyng of ladies" (1054) is mentioned. In Fitt IV Arthur's court laughs loudly in response to Gawain's story: they "laȝen loude þerat" (2514). Play, *layk*, is another recurrent motif, underscored in two of the fitt-endings: in Fitt I the "laykyng of enterludez" (472, interlude-

playing) is mentioned, and in Fitt II the lord of the castle is described as the one who likes "to layke" (1111, play) and again, in the last line of the wheel, as the one who certainly knew how to keep up the fun, "layk" (1125). Other vocabulary conveying the festive atmosphere includes *mynstralsye*, *mete*(z), and *wele*, each of which is likewise used in two of the fitt-endings. Table 2 presents the formulaic diction associated with the key semantic threads of the fitt-endings discussed in this paper.

Table 2. Recurrent motifs conveyed by formulaic diction

Motif and diction	Fitt I, 460-90	Fitt II, 1105-25	Fitt III, 1952-97	Fitt IV, 2489-2530
Whole court	- *knwe non þere* - *þay* (x2) - *þo menne* - *knyȝtez and ladyez* - *alle men* - *kene men hem serued*	- *þay* (x2), *hem*, *her* - *þise lordez and ladyez* - *with mony leude ful lyȝt* - *vche burne*	- *þay* (x4), *hor* (x2), *hem* - *as any men* - *þe douthe* - *þe meyny* (x2) - *burnez* - *vche mon þat he mette* - *vche segge* - *ledes*	- *þe court* - *in þat wone* - *þe grete* - *hym* (them) - *mony syker knyȝt* - *alle þe court* - *lordes and ladis þat longed to þe Table* - *vche burne of þe broþerhede* - *þe Rounde Table*

Motif and diction	Fitt I, 460-90	Fitt II, 1105-25	Fitt III, 1952-97	Fitt IV, 2489-2530
Festive atmosphere, mirth, laughter, play, eating and drinking	*- þay laȝe and grenne* *- Cristmasse* *- Laykyng of enterludez* *- to laȝe and to syng* *- þise kynde caroles* *- to my mete I may me wel dres* *- þay boȝed to a borde* *- of alle dayntyez double, as derrest myȝt falle* *- wyth alle maner of mete and mynstralcie boþe* *- wyth wele walt þay þat day*	*- and þat yow lyst for to layke* *- Who bryngez vus þis beuerage* *- þay laȝed vchone* *- þay dronken and daylyeden and dalten vntyȝtel […] quyle þat hem liked* *- Cowþe wel halde l ayk alofte*	*- With merþe and mynstralsye, wyth metez at hor wylle* *- Þay maden as mery as any men moȝten* *- With laȝyng of ladies* *- with lotez of bordes* *- maden mony iapez* *- at þis hyȝe fest* *- blyþely*	*- Þer wakned wele* *- Þe kyng comfortez þe knyȝt, and alle þe court als* *- laȝen loude þerat*

Motif and diction	Fitt I, 460-90	Fitt II, 1105-25	Fitt III, 1952-97	Fitt IV, 2489-2530
End of day, bedtime, parting company, end of book	*- til worþed an ende in londe*	*- kysten ful comlyly and kaȝten her leue* *- With lemande torches vche burne to his bed watz broȝt at þe laste, ful softe* *- To bed ȝet er þay ȝede*	*- Til þe sesoun watz seȝen þat þay seuer moste* *- Burnez to hor bedde behoued at þe laste* *- his leue at þe lorde fyrst / Fochchez þis fre mon* *- Þen at þo ladyez wlonk / Þe knyȝt hatz tan his leue* *- Syþen fro þe meyny he menskly departes* *- soré to seuer* *- he watz ladde to his chambre and blyþely broȝt to his bedde to be at his rest* *- ȝif he ne slepe soundyly* *- Let hym lyȝe þere stille*	*- Amen.*

Motif and diction	Fitt I, 460-90	Fitt II, 1105-25	Fitt III, 1952-97	Fitt IV, 2489-2530
Acts of interpretation	*- knwe non þer* *- What þenne?* *- ȝet breued watz hit ful bare / A meruayl* *- Arþer þe hende kyng at hert hade wonder* *- Wel bycommes such craft* *- I haf sen a selly* *- bi trwe tytel þerof to telle þe wonder* *- Now þenk wel, Sir Gawan*	*- lef hit me þynkes* *- Þay stoden and stemmed and stylly speken* *- Recorded couenauntez ofte*	*- For he hade muche on þe morn to mynne, if he wolde, / In þoȝt*	*- gayn hit hym þoȝt* *- Þis is þe bende of þis blame* *- þe token of vntrawþe* *- luflyly acorden a bauderyk schulde haue* *- þat watz accorded þe renoun of þe Rounde Table* *- As hit is breued in þe best boke of romaunce* *- Þe Brutus bokez þerof berez wyttenesse*

A final paratextual feature to be noted in the fitt-endings is their foregrounding of acts of interpretation. From the universal ignorance about the Green Knight's whereabouts asserted at the end of the penultimate stanza of Fitt I, "knwe non þere" (460), the ensuing question *What þenne?* in the bob of the same stanza, followed by the court's interpretative declaration in the wheel, *breued watz hit*, as well as the king's *wonder* and the narrator's turn to Gawain's thoughts (*þenk wel*) in the Fitt's final stanza; through emphasis on Gawain's thoughts (*to mynne*; *in þoȝt*) at the end of Fitt III and

his personal interpretation of the meaning of the girdle against the court's communal re-interpretation of it (they *acorden*) at the end of Fitt IV; up to the narrator's turn to books and writing (*hit is breued in þe best boke of romaunce*; *þe Brutus bokez*) towards the end of the poem and the injunction not to *mal pence* (think ill) in the appended Garter motto – the endings bring into focus hermeneutical activity in the in-text world which in turn provides models of analogous activity for the poem's external audience. The boundaries in the triangle of the poem's characters, its internal, fictional audience, and its real-life public are fluid. At the end of Fitt I Arthur and Gawain behave like actors, each properly enacting his social role of, respectively, king and hero, but at the same time they are spectators struggling to interpret the marvellous *enterludez* of the Green Knight. The collective court's hermeneutical engagement as commentators of what is going on at its centre is underlined in Fitt II: "And syþen with Frenkysch fare and fele fayre lotez / Þay stoden and stemmed and stylly speken" (1116-17; and afterwards with French observances and many courteous words they stood about, hesitated, and spoke softly/secretly). This apparently French-speaking and Francophile court, cast in the role of fictional audience, parallels the poem's external Anglo-Norman aristocratic audience. The courtiers' comments are not disclosed to the reader, though, being uttered as *stylle* as they would have been at a real-life court. The reader is thus challenged to undertake his/her own interpretative effort. As modern readers, we may be missing an underlying conceptual grid that would allow us to make full sense of all this, but to my mind the paratext is a useful modern concept that captures such liminal effects.

3. Closing

The fitt-endings in *Gawain* perform the completion of a fitt through formulaic language and narrative, rather than by simply announcing it or suggesting it visually. The fitt-endings thus confirm the romance's four-part construction based on the manuscript's large decorated initials and indicate that intermission in a dramatic reading of the poem may be intended at these points. The division into four parts parallels, in terms of sheer number and the idea of progression, the four seasons of the year so beautifully described at the outset of Fitt II, a passage which might be yet another site of paratextuality in *Gawain*. The four-part division also parallels the manuscript's bringing together of four poems. Other divisions of *Gawain* within this

principal structure, whether those based on the remaining decorated initials or those derived from the poem's inherent sense, are by no means excluded by the present argument.[7] The fitt-endings encapsulate, as I have argued, the author's paratextual concerns. The anonymity of many medieval texts or their lack of titles does not mean that these texts are devoid of paratextual information for, as Genette points out, "a text without a paratext does not exist and never has existed" (1997: 3). Paratextuality in an age of manuscript culture, of textuality mixed with orality, when the familiar paratextual conventions like title and author's name at the head of the text had not yet crystallized, had different forms, though. Some typically medieval paratexts have been discussed in this paper: in particular, the narrative indication of the completion of a fitt, the special role of the first fitt in terms of salesmanship, the text-closing prayer, and the Garter motto at the end of *Gawain* as a kind of epigraph. One can formulate a tentative conclusion that there is a tendency in this literary tradition to locate paratextual information at the end rather than at the outset of a text and to disperse paratextuality over a text. Medieval paratextuality is a vast yet somewhat neglected field of study. It is hoped that this paper will encourage further research into this fascinating field.

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[7] For a different proposition concerning the poem's division see Robertson. He points out, for example, that Gawain retires to bed accompanied with torches also in lines 988-97, in the latter part of Fitt II (Robertson 1982: 782). In fact, the whole stanza of which these lines form part has much in common with the fitt-endings as discussed in this paper, yet it lacks the paratextual dimension crucial for my argument.

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