



**Universität
Zürich**^{UZH}

SEM XXV

23 – 25 October 2025

University of Zurich

Book of Abstracts

25. Studententag Englisch Mittelalter

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Session I – Medicine and magic

The role of Latin in the use of Old English lexical items for witches

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In early medieval England the existence of witches was an accepted fact and Old English has a variety of lexical items to name them. Different lexical items with the meaning of a practitioner of magic are used, for example, in sermons, saints' lives, law codes and medical texts. The items are largely interpreted in dictionaries such as Bosworth Toller's Anglo-Saxon Dictionary and the Dictionary of Old English as witches, sorcerers, enchanter, and so forth. Based on my study of the lexical items in Old English prose and verse (in preparation), some items have distinct referents and, therefore, connotations while others are used more widely. Due to the limited nature of the surviving Old English corpus, however, the connotations of the items cannot be determined solely on the basis of Old English contexts. Some of the items occur only as glosses to Latin items, translating or explaining them, and the majority of the prose texts in which the items occur are translations or paraphrases of Latin source texts.

In this paper I examine 28 Old English lexical items for magical practitioners and their relationship with their Latin counterparts. I examine what Latin items the Old English items translate and what kind of patterns occur in the translations of the items. I seek to answer the following questions: Does a particular Old English item always translate the same Latin item(s) or are the translations more varied? Can any patterns be detected in the use of the Old English lexical items? What do the connotations of the Latin items reveal about the meanings of the Old English items, especially in the case of the items that only occur in glosses?

Exploring the Latin counterparts of the Old English items allows for the examination of the origins and connotations of the Old English items beyond what the Old English corpus permits. Examining the Latin items is especially important in the case of the Old English items only found in glosses. In their cases, the Latin is our only clue to the meanings of the items and how the early medieval English scribes understood both the Old English and the Latin items. For instance, the Old English items frequently

gloss forms of *parcae*, or the Fates, and *furiae*, the Furies, as well as *magus*, a magician, or *incantator*, an enchanter.

The Categorisation of the Semantic Field of “Medicine” in Middle English

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This paper is part of the project Waxing and Waning Words: Lexical Variation and Change in Middle English (WAW-ME). Part of this project will result in the creation of an online database that will give diachronic, diaphasic, and diatopic information on the Middle English lexicon and offer an overview of its evolution in the semantic fields of medicine, religion, law and education between the 12th and the 15th centuries. Here, I will focus on the semantic field of medicine, and more particularly on the organisation of this semantic field and its categorisation, which represent the architecture of our databases. The first aim of this paper is to provide an overview of the categories and subcategories created to organise the items collected for this project, with a particular focus on the problems encountered when naming the categories and classifying the items within these categories, in particular when the aforementioned items proved complicated to categorise. The lexical data used in this project has been collected mainly on *The Historical Thesaurus of English*, *The Middle English Dictionary*, and the *Oxford English Dictionary*. The second aim of this paper is to discuss the analysis of the data collected in order to describe the evolution of the Medicine lexicon through time, but also the geographical distribution of the terms as well as the different genres and registers in which they appear. This will lead to a description of the manner in which these words were used in specialised and non-specialised contexts.

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Two Charms in Göttingen MS Philol. 163n

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Medieval charms appear across manuscript contexts from medical treatises and devotional collections to literary compilations and household miscellanies. They function as ritual acts that address practical uncertainties while challenging categorical boundaries between sacred and secular knowledge, science and magic, religion and folklore (cf. Grendon 1909; Sheldon 1978; Olsan 1992, 1999; Keiser 1998; Poole 1998; Hebing 2017). This paper presents two protective texts from Göttingen, SUB, 8° Cod. MS Philol. 163n, a fifteenth-century manuscript containing Benedict Burgh's Middle English translation of the *Disticha Catonis*. The Göttingen manuscript has been little studied, with only brief mentions in studies of Burgh's translation (Förster 1918; Dallachy 2013), which presumably explains why these charms have remained unnoticed in Middle English scholarship. The manuscript contains a Latin anti-theft charm that invokes the crucified thieves, Dismas and Gesmas, followed by an English heavenly letter of the *Prière de Charlemagne* tradition, which claims efficacy for numerous situations and ailments. While similar charm types are documented in published surveys (e.g. Storms 1948; Sheldon 1978; Keiser 1998), the Göttingen versions represent previously unedited textual variants that are absent from the established bibliographies. After discussing these charms as protective devices within their manuscript context alongside the pedagogical material, this paper compares their related traditions and provides editions of both texts. The coexistence of Latin and vernacular protective formulae within the broader material context of a household manuscript raises questions about how ritual knowledge was integrated into domestic educational practice and circulated through gentry networks in late medieval England.

Session II – Borrowings and binomials

Binomials and Multinomials in Sir Thomas Elyot's *The Boke Named The Governour*: Structures and Functions

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Multi-word expressions such as *myght and powar, weighty or heuy, trees/herbes / 7 floures* (Elyot 1531) are known as bi- and multinomials (BMs). Structurally, binomials can be defined as two coordinated items made up in their basic form of a head each, the heads corresponding to each other in word class. Multinomials are chains of three or more heads. To fully qualify as a bi- or multinomial a distinct sense-relation has to be discernible between the structure's heads (cf. Koskeniemi 1968, Kopaczyk & Sauer 2017). Any exploration of BMs therefore involves the study of word classes, coordinators and sense-relations. In-depth explorations of forms, functions or motivations of BMs can be based in a wide variety of additional aspects, such as (ir)reversibility (cf. Malkiel 1959, Mollin 2014), interpretation theory & etymological makeup (cf. Leisi 1947, Tani 2025). This study investigates the use of BMs in the first edition of Sir Thomas Elyot's (c.1490 –1546) *The Governour*, which details Elyot's idea of the ideal upbringing of England's future elite. In this context, the use of a further criterion to aid the clear delineation of BMs from other phrasal coordinations is explored, i.e. the holistic concept communicated by a bi- or multinomial, e.g. *trees/herbes / 7 floures* PLANTS. Structural and functional aspects are explored by means of: (1) the introduction of a classification system consisting of seven structural variation types (SVT), systematically capturing all structural variation occurring in Elyot's BMs; (2) the study of BMs' syntactic roles (e.g. premodifier, subject), and (3) the study of the heads' etymologies. Preliminary findings include: (1) the majority of cases are core BMs, i.e. cases of lower structural complexity (B: 81,46% M: 53,23%), peripheral BMs, i.e. cases of higher structural complexity, show a stronger presence among multinomials (B: 18,54%, M: 46,77%); (2) BMs occur primarily on the phrase level (B: 55,25%, M: 70,97%), less so on the clause level (B: 44,75%, M: 29,03%); (3) the largest groups of etymological patterns among Bs are *lw+lw* (49,01%), *nat+lw/lw+nat* (27,47%) and *nat+nat* (10,74%); among Ms the majority of cases show

patterns of diverse etymological origin (i.e. 72,58%), combinations consisting purely of loanwords (lw) or native words (nat) are also both present, lw+lw+lw (22,58%), lw+lw+lw+lw (3,23%), nat+nat+nat (1,61%).

Norse-derived terms and native synonyms in Havelok the Dane: Patterns of lexical choice and semantic distribution

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The integration of Norse loanwords into the English lexicon remains an area of scholarly inquiry that is far from exhaustively charted. Although substantial progress has been made through landmark studies, such as Sara Pons-Sanz's *Norse-Derived Terms in the Ormulum: A Reappraisal* (2024) and the analysis presented in *The Lexico-Semantic Distribution of Norse-Derived Terms in Late Middle English Alliterative Poems: Analysing the Gersum Database* (2025), the lexical landscape of Middle English continues to present fertile ground for further semantic and etymological analysis. Recent advances in lexicographic and semantic tools, notably the *Middle English Dictionary* (MED), the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), and especially the *Historical Thesaurus of English* (HTE), have facilitated increasingly nuanced inquiries into the semantic stratification and relationships between Norse-derived and native English vocabulary.

This study draws on the HTE classification to conduct a lexico-semantic examination of Norse-derived lexicon in the 13th-century Middle English poem *Havelok the Dane* preserved in a single manuscript (Bodleian Library, Laud Misc. 108, entry 3, MS A). The first part of my presentation focuses on the classification of Norse vocabulary in *Havelok* into lexical-semantic domains. Following this overall classification, I examine in detail one specific semantic category, SOCIETY, focusing on a selection of Norse-derived terms within sub-groups such as OCCUPATION / WORK and ARMED HOSTILITY. With this lexico-semantic study of *Havelok*, which has not been previously addressed, I aim to take a closer look at the semantic and stylistic connections between the Norse-derived terms with native synonyms in the poem, exploring the determining factors in the author's choice of vocabulary to convey particular meanings and the stylistic needs that may constrain the use of certain words.

Session III – Space and environment

A Pilot Study on the Spatial Vocabulary in Old English

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Despite growing interest in the study of space across various disciplines over the past few decades, linguistic research on spatial vocabulary in older stages of English remains limited. Most research has concentrated on Modern English (e.g. Shusterman & Li, 2016) or 'Language and Space' as a cognitive concept in general (e.g. Talmy, 1983; Levinson, 2003; Levinson & Wilkins, 2006), while medieval studies have approached spatial concepts primarily from historical or literary perspectives (e.g. Valtonen, 2008; Kemp & D'Olier, 2016) rather than linguistic ones. Yet, examining the Old English spatial lexicon can offer a valuable glimpse into how the Anglo-Saxons conceptualized and perceived space (Jackendoff, 1985) centuries before the advent of cartography.

This pilot study, part of a broader project examining the linguistic encoding of spatial concepts from Old to Early Modern English, aims to identify and analyze Old English lexemes related to spatial concepts (e.g. *onbutan* 'around, about', *setlgang* 'west', *wiputan* 'outside'). It explores how these words reflect early medieval understandings of the physical world, drawing on insights from Prototype Theory (Rosch, 1978) to account for the graded membership and fuzzy boundaries within spatial categories. A twofold approach is employed: first, the Historical Thesaurus of English (HTE) provides initial lexical identification and a semantic classification system acknowledging overlapping spatial concepts (e.g. 'Location/Position', 'Direction', 'Boundary'). Following this semantic mapping, a corpus-based analysis using the York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose (YCOE) will examine usage environments and contexts to refine semantic understanding and explore linguistic patterns. The data will reveal how spatial vocabulary established orientation, defined territories, and influenced 'inside' vs. 'outside' perceptions (Pollio et al., 2005), raising broader questions of belonging and power.

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The Beowulf-Poet's Sense of Human-Water Relationship: An Affective Eco-Critical Interpretation

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Through eco-philological analysis of the passages about water and the coexistent descriptions of human motions in Beowulf, this paper explores the Beowulf-poet's sense of human-water entanglement and interplay from the perspective of affective eco-criticism. It demonstrates that the Beowulf-poet's symbiotic and synergetic view on human-nature relationship can be extrapolated from their writing about human-water harmonious co-presence, which is scattered in this Old English epic. This essay also reveals, by extension, that the Beowulf-poet's writing about water, which constructs water as an affective element equipped with more agency than human beings, manifests the poet's non-dualistic and non-anthropocentric conceptualization of human-marine interaction in the intellectual context of early medieval North Atlantic. Three case studies will be provided to substantiate the poet's awareness and poetic expression of human-water symbiosis and synergy, revolving around the narratives of Scyld's ship-burial, the swimming contest between the eponymous hero and Breca, and the ecological setting of Grendel's mother's den.

Session IV – Sexual euphemisms and insults

Bestelich gederunge, scheomelese somnunge: lexical expressions that present intercourse as a perverted gathering in early English

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Tracing one euphemism type identified by Julie Coleman in her 1992 article, “Sexual Euphemisms in OE” into post-Conquest lexis, this paper examines COMPANIONSHIP euphemisms in The Katherine Group. Focusing on gaderung/gaderinge, samnung/samninge, and gemana/(i)mone, it explores how words with original gathering, companionship, assembly, or meeting meanings are applied to denote sex, and how they are disambiguated through imagery evoking fire, filth, and shame.

One appeal of the companionship type of euphemism might have been that words plausibly denoting only companionship, or fellowship were not directly obscene or offensive but, in texts which warned against lust and sex, could be disambiguated with language which made it clear that they should be avoided: we see this for example, in texts such as the Ancrene Riwe, where this is done by pairing COMPANIONSHIP terms with lexis of FILTH and FIRE.

The paper will reference the thematic hierarchies within the Historical Thesaurus of English. The HTE (newly updated in 2020 and structured around semantic principles which aim to provide an accurate lexical snapshot for any given theme at any given time) is especially useful for scholars wishing to examine topics which have previously been seen as taboo/obscene. As Coleman notes, many sexual intercourse terms have historically had their meanings “obscured by the euphemistic definitions provided in the standard OE dictionaries,” wherein compilers “evaded the responsibility of defining a word” or sought to “bury” it). The existence of the updated HTE in tandem with the most recent editions of the OED and MED, plus the online Bosworth Toller dictionary, means we can now explore diachronic aspects of taboo lexis in more detail (especially since resources like the MED and BT now hyperlink to the other dictionaries).

Ultimately this paper will address the conceptual metaphor established by Lakoff and Johnson of DEPRAVITY IS DOWN, noting how this appears alongside companionship euphemisms in Ancrene Riwe and the Katherine Group texts in warnings about how surrendering to lust will cause one to be dragged down or slip into a watery or boggy landscape of sin. It will also posit two additional conceptualisations at play: SEX IS A (PERVERTED) GATHERING and SEX IS (PERILOUS) COMPANIONSHIP.

Sexual Insults in Old English – Not Used, Lost, or Not Found?

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Old English (hereafter OE) insults have been investigated by Chapman, who retrieves 256 tokens of insulting epithets by searching the Dictionary of Old English Corpus (DOEC) for the second-person pronoun þu and its genitive form þīn (2008: 2–5). In his study, it emerges that lexical forms of OE insults are largely conventional; however, it stands out that sexual and scatological insults seem to be absent from OE, which Chapman ascribes to the religious nature of OE texts (2008: 5–6). Yet, the absence is striking since both sexuality and scatology have been shown to be frequent source domains for insulting lexemes in many languages, including Old Norse as a contact language of OE (e.g. Clover 1980: 453).

This paper investigates whether evidence for the use of OE insults from the source domain SEXUALITY can still be found. Given that the DOEC is a complete record of OE texts, a different methodology was required to identify insults that Chapman might have missed. Instead of locating constructions of direct address as the most prototypical manifestations of insults, the DOEC was searched for personal nouns that employ the semantic source domain SEXUALITY. These were determined by means of lexicographical resources, such as the Dictionary of Old English and the Thesaurus of Old English.

With this method, 51 OE lexemes that could potentially be used in sexual insults were identified, for instance *myltestre* 'prostitute' or *forliġer* 'adulterer'. Given the restricted set of lexemes, a manual analysis of the individual instances in the DOEC was manageable. In that, utterances were considered insults if they consisted of a demeaning predication about a target that was perceived as a face-threatening act by the target (cf. Jucker and Taavitsainen 2000: 73). This approach proved to be successful in identifying instances of sexual insults in OE, but also uncovered challenges in the classification of insults. Both borderline cases and examples that are considered insults will be discussed in this paper.

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Session VI – Translation, transmission and textual variation

The codicology of fragmentary *Floire et Blancheflor* witnesses

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In this paper, I draw on my doctoral research within HHU Düsseldorf's Post-REALM project on the pan-European *Floire et Blancheflor* tradition to examine the fragmentary Middle English and Middle Dutch versions of this widespread narrative. My focus lies on the following MSS:

Cambridge, UL, MS Gg.4.27.2; c. 1300

London, BL, Cotton Vitellius D.iii; c. 1300

Edinburgh, NLS, MS Advocates 19.2.; c. 1330

London, BL, Egerton 2862; c. 1400

Leiden, UBL, LTK 191; c. 1325–1350

Leiden, UBL, LTK 2040; c. 1275–1300

The respective *Floire* versions in all of these manuscripts are fragmentary in one way or another. All four English MSS lack the intro and beginning to the text, and the Vitellius MS has sustained considerable further damage. In the Dutch tradition, LTK 191 is conventionally considered the 'complete' version, despite significant inconsistencies across its various constituent segments, while LTK 2040 consists of just eight leaves. While some of these textual absences are likely the consequences of chance events in the MSS' life stages, certain parallels in what has been lost—even across language traditions—invite speculation about deliberate interference and censorship.

These speculations arise from several observations. Not only are the beginning sections absent from all English versions, making it difficult to identify the narrative's original context and framing—but both the Cambridge and the Auchinleck MSS lack almost precisely the same opening episodes, with the former

joining the parallel text a mere six lines after the latter. In the case of the Dutch manuscripts, an owner or reader of LTK 2040 deemed it necessary to erase references to love and tenderness from an MS that had already been reduced to a short fragment. Similarly, an owner or user of LTK 191 removed half a folio from the 'complete' codex version, resulting in the absence of two columns which would have contained a detailed description of a Babylonian trial of chastity.

As part of my work on a comprehensive manuscript overview chapter for my dissertation, a particular point of interest have been the life stages and the reception history of all of these manuscripts. In observing how diverse damage and loss to MSS can be, I have been reconsidering what it means for an MS to be fragmentary. By examining the witnesses of choice alongside each other, I aim to shed new light on the circumstances forming the incomplete shape in which these texts have survived.

Valuing the Variants in the Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour* Tradition

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The romance of *Floris and Blancheflour*, first surfacing in twelfth-century French literature, may count as a 'bestseller' of the European Middle Ages: it survives in 26 versions and 46 copies, including texts in French, Italian, Spanish, Greek, German, and English. The broad transmission of this particular romance clearly speaks to the trans-temporal and supra-regional fascination with the story of two lovers whose different social and religious backgrounds lead to their separation, but who are ultimately reunited 'against the odds'. The Middle English text, dating from the second half of the thirteenth century, is in itself anything but uniform. It survives fragmentarily in four later manuscripts that show a great deal of variation in their language, style, and thematic emphases: 1) Cambridge, University Library, MS Gg.4.27(2); 2) London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius D. iii; 3) London, British Library, MS Egerton 2862; and 4) Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates 19.2.1 (Auchinleck). Scholars have previously studied this variation mainly with regard to what it tells us about the transmission of Middle English romances, discussing the interface between the oral and the written, and engaging with the concept of 'memorial transfer' proposed by Murray McGillivray. This paper will build on past scholarship by showing how specific instances of variation across the four textual witnesses testify to the needs and tastes of a wider circle of agents involved in shaping the Middle English text as we encounter it in manuscripts today. Special attention will be devoted to the peculiarities of the Cambridge manuscript, which has attracted the interest of scholars because it preserves some of the earliest copies of Middle English romances.

The Mirrouir of Simple Soules: MN's Translation and Innovations

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Marguerite Porete's *Mirouer de simples ames* consists of several allegorical figures discussing the state one must attain in order to ascend to an experience of God. Central to this state of being is the capacity for self-annihilation: a complete renunciation of one's will in order to create space within the soul for divine indwelling. However, equally important to the *Mirror's* model of mystical ascent is *understanding*, both as a faculty of the soul and as an activity of said faculty. Characters within the text and readers without it are often instructed to 'vndirstande the glose' of the text (its deeper meaning), but without any explanations of how this should be done. Instead, the capacity for understanding the esoteric claims of the text is equated with the capacity for divine indwelling, conceptualising the former as an inherent characteristic of annihilated souls.

Despite the central role *understanding* plays in the *Mirror*, it has generally escaped scholarly attention. Imke de Gier has carried out the most comprehensive studies of *understanding*, but without linking it to annihilation. Moreover, her analyses, similarly to those of other scholars, have focused on the Middle French *Mirouer*, though this is as much a translation of Marguerite's writing as is the Middle English *Mirrouir*.

In fact, the Middle English *Mirrouir* may provide valuable insight into the text's ideas and reception thereof, given the inclusion of fifteen explanatory glosses by its anonymous translator, MN. Though the text has been deemed a rather literal and thus mediocre translation, this is in fact a boon for *Mirror* scholars, making it possible to identify points of divergence between the text and glosses that highlight MN's individual interpretation. Similarly, the places where the Middle English text deviates from corresponding passages in other translations of the *Mirror* also signal MN's emendations of the text. Whether intentional or simply resulting from their imperfect grasp of French, what results is a unique readerly response to Marguerite's text that offers room for deeper interpretation.

As such, this paper offers close readings of key passages of the Middle English *Mirroure* relating to *understanding* – in comparison with French extracts and with MN's prologue and glosses – in order to provide a comprehensive view of its significance within the text. Furthermore, by adopting the perspective of MN as a reader and respondent to Marguerite's text, this paper aims to redeem MN's reputation and demonstrate their translation's place within Mirror studies.

Session VII – Form, function and faith

An “Old Saxon Mini Epic of Damnation” in Palatinus Latinus 1447

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The poems of MS Junius 11 – Genesis, Exodus, Daniel, and Christ and Satan – span a range of biblical topics, from Creation and the Fall to the Harrowing of Hell. Appealing to their recently Christianised audience, Anglo-Saxon poets adapted such material through alliterative verse conventions and imbued Old Testament narratives with implicit Christological elements, thereby incorporating them within Salvation History. J. R. Hall even argues that the Junius poems were compiled to form a theologically unified sequence – an ‘Old English Epic of Redemption.’ Although scholars have made similar arguments regarding thematic unity within other Anglo-Saxon poetic manuscripts, no such argument has been advanced for a continental manuscript directly connected to MS Junius 11. Among its calendrical material, Palatinus Latinus 1447 contains three fragments of an Old Saxon Genesis poem and an extract from the Old Saxon gospel poem Heliand. The first fragment – Adam’s postlapsarian lament – corresponds to lines 790–817 of the Junius Genesis, confirming that a substantial section of that poem was incorporated from an Old Saxon source. The other Old Saxon Genesis extracts (the Fratricide of Cain and the Destruction of Sodom) complement the Heliand extract (the Beatitudes) to form a sequence on transgression and divine punishment. Close reading these texts comparatively reveals their thematic interrelatedness as a monitory sequence motivated, in part, to discipline the recently Christianised Saxons. Indeed, the Genesis poetry of the Anglo-Saxons and their continental counterparts suggests a special interest in the antediluvian and postdiluvian ages as reflections of their immediate pre- and post-Christianisation experience. Examining alliterative verse conventions and scribal practice in Palatinus Latinus 1447, this study sheds new light on the theological and literary connections between Old English and Old Saxon culture.

Optionality in Dative Marking and Pragmatic Prominence in Early Middle English: A Functional Approach to Syncretism

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The decline of the OE nominal inflection system has been widely studied and framed as the “reshaping of nominal morphology in Early Northern West Germanic” (Adamczyk 2018). Traditional accounts based on stem classes have been shown to lack synchronic relevance by late Old English, where declensional patterns became lexicalized (Kastovsky 1997; Krygier 1998). More recent work emphasizes frequency and morphological productivity (Rogos 2009), and proposes synchronic models aligned with native speaker intuitions (Hogg & Fulk 2011). These developments set the stage for investigating syncretism, a key aspect of morphological change. Alongside these shifts, studies have identified a broad set of factors contributing to syncretism: analogical levelling, markedness, iconicity, syllable structure, metrical constraints (as in the *Ormulum*), phonological environment (e.g. hiatus), and frequency effects (Adamczyk 2018; Allen 2005). Yet despite this wide array of research, pragmatic motivations remain largely underexplored. This presentation reports on a work in progress that addresses that gap by proposing that the optional marking of the dative case in EME - especially in “case-rich” dialects and texts (Allen 2006) - may be influenced by discourse-pragmatic structure. Specifically, I hypothesize that noun phrases occupying topic and focus positions resist formal syncretism due to their cognitive salience and informational prominence in discourse (Cowles et al. 2007). This pragmatic retention may reflect an intermediate stage where functional distinctions persist even as formal marking begins to erode. The project does not assume a pragmatic explanation in isolation. Each annotated instance of potential dative marking will also be coded for known competing influences. This multifactorial approach allows us to isolate whether discourse prominence offers additional explanatory power. The methodology involves digitizing a selection of EME texts known to retain case distinctions (Allen 2006), and parsing them using UAM CorpusTool (O’Donnell 2023). Annotations include morphosyntactic case and detailed discourse-pragmatic roles (Krifka 2008; Féry & Ishihara 2010; De Bastiani & Hinterhölzl 2020). The study distinguishes between syncretism of form and function,

aiming to clarify how case categories dissolve or endure during morphological transition.

“Damysell, þat can ȝe best do”: The use of *Thou* and *Ye* in a selection of Saints’ Lives from the South English Legendary and the Northern Homily Cycle

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An examination of early Middle English (ME) texts is essential for understanding the emergence and development of the T/V distinction, which refers to the functional distinction between the less formal singular pronoun *thou* (T) and the more polite plural form *ye* (V) to address a single interlocutor. Since most studies investigating the use of address pronouns have focused on texts from the later ME period, many earlier works, which bear witness to the initial stages of the T/V distinction in English, have only received little scholarly attention. The present study aims to fill this research gap by examining two early ME collections of saints’ lives, namely the South English Legendary (SEL) and the Northern Homily Cycle (NHC), both of which are dated to around 1300. The analysis of these two works draws on Jucker’s (2006) notion of interactional status and the framework devised by Timofeeva (fc), which is based on speech acts, to offer deeper insights into the use of address pronouns in early ME. The results of this study demonstrate that T forms predominate both in the SEL and the NHC. A comparison between the northern and the southern collection of saints’ lives reveals that both the frequencies and the sociopragmatic functions of T/V pronouns are almost identical, which indicates that dialectal differences in the use of address pronouns must have been minimal at the time when these two works were composed. Furthermore, this study has found that the few V forms which appear in the selected saints’ lives often signal marked respect for a superior interlocutor and usually occur in contexts where interactionally inferior speakers make requests or seek information. These findings show that pronouns of address were highly functional and thus suggest that T/V forms could be employed strategically by ME authors to characterise the interlocutors and their verbal interaction. A careful examination of address pronouns in early ME texts can, therefore, enlighten not only linguistic but also literary analysis.

Poster Presentations

The grammaticalization of the indefinite article in West-Germanic languages

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Articles typically function as determiners in noun phrases (NP), expressing notions such as (in)definiteness, (non)specificity, (non)uniqueness, and (un)identifiability (Szczepaniak 2011: 79, Sommerer 2018: 7, Geist 2011: 2). While the definite article generally marks referents that are specific and identifiable within a discourse, the indefinite article is used to introduce new or non-identifiable referents (Szczepaniak 2011: 79, Raumolin-Brunberg & Kahlas-Tarkka 1997: 21), and can be used in specific contexts as in I'm going to visit a friend tomorrow or in non-specific contexts as in I need to buy a car. My old car was stolen. While the grammaticalization of the definite article has been subject to numerous studies and extensively studied (e.g., McColl Millar 2000, Sommerer 2018, Bauer 2007), the development of the indefinite article has received comparatively little attention. Some of the few notable contributions on the development of the indefinite article include the works of Weiss for Macedonian EDEN (2004) and Szczepaniak EIN/E (2016), who determine the following grammaticalization path for 'one':

NUMERAL > INDEFINITE PRONOUN (SINGULATIVE CONTEXT) > SPECIFIC DISCOURSE TOPIC MARKER > GENERIC & PREDICATIVE USE > NON-SPECIFIC USE

However, an extensive diachronic study of this grammaticalization pathway is still missing. In my PhD project, I would like to address this research gap by examining the grammaticalization of A(N) across the Old West-Gmc varieties Old English (OE), Old Saxon (OS), and Old High German (OHG), as well as their respective later stages Middle English (ME), Middle Low German (MLG), and Middle High German (MHG), based on the York Corpus, Referenzkorporus Altdeutsch, Referenzkorporus Mittelhochdeutsch, and Referenzkorporus Mittelniederdeutsch. To examine the emergence of the indefinite article and to identify different stages of its grammaticalization, I intend to analyze NPs across a range of texts to determine whether they appear with a definite or indefinite article, or with bare nouns, and to explore the functions that A(N) expresses in these contexts. The study aims to investigate if the grammaticalization path above is applicable to the development in

the Old West-Gmc languages, and how the emergence of the indefinite article interacts with Information Structure, Givenness, and Topicality (Krifka 2007, Rochemont 2016).

The Fusion-confusion of Rune form Variants X Gyfu, † Gear, and * Iar

Anja Isabel Schellenberg, University of Zurich

This poster presents an overview of the relationship of the futhorc runes X g gyfu, † j gear and * io iar and their variants. These runes were investigated in the context of manuscripts and epigraphs. This poster illustrates that these rune form variants present significant overlap and ambiguity in their usage. These findings align with the notions that there is no definitive divide between manuscript and epigraphical runic lore, nor between the Continental and Anglo-Saxon runic traditions.

Diachronic explanations for present-day irregularities in the grammatical number of the lexeme foot as a unit of measurement

Katharina Huber, LMU Munich

This paper investigates the diachronic linguistic developments underlying present-day irregularities in the grammatical number of the lexeme foot when used as a unit of measurement in English. The study aims to explain why both the singular and plural forms—foot and feet—can be used interchangeably in such contexts (e.g., “six foot” vs. “six feet”). Using data primarily from the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), the paper analyses morphological, semantic, and syntactic changes from Old English through Middle and Early Modern English to the present day. In regard to morphology, the plural feet arose through i-mutation in Old English and remained the dominant form despite periods of analogical plural formation (footes, foten). Semantically, the unit foot has developed polysemous meanings, with conceptual variation between singular and plural forms in measurement contexts. Concerning syntax, the transition from a synthetic to an analytic language structure diminished the need for strict agreement between numerals and noun number, allowing both forms to coexist. The findings suggest that frequency, grammatical change, and speaker perception jointly contributed to the grammatical flexibility observed in contemporary English.

Select bibliography:

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The Thames Scramasax: A pragmatic reintroduction

Linda Steiner, University of Zurich

This poster presents the Thames Scramasax, a sword from 10th century Kent that was found in the river Thames and which bears, among other inscription, a full Old English runic alphabet. The blade provides the only full epigraphic set of these futhorc runes discovered so far and is thus of great interest to runologists. Still, it remains a mystery as the presence of the runic alphabet on the blade is deeply unusual. The poster will provide a brief insight into the contents of the blade and the theories, as well as the questions associated with them. It will thus serve as a point of entry into the study of this fascinating archeological piece, as well as into the runic system of Anglo-Saxon England.

The origins of the H in the Old English futhorc

Ramona Meier, University of Zurich / University of Ghent

The paper titled “The Origins of the H in the Old English Futhorc”: Overview and Evaluation of Theories on the Emergence of the Double-barred H Rune in Old English Futhorc Inscriptions’ outlines the most pervasive transmission theories concerning the introduction of the double-barred hægl variant into the Old English (OE) futhorc. The OE runic script, introduced during the Anglo-Saxon settlement period, was subject to numerous innovations between the 5th and 10th century. The abovementioned paper homes in on the theories surrounding one of these innovations, namely the replacement of the H with H at the end of the 7th century. As such, it evaluates the plausibility of the different h-rune transmission theories by analyzing the chronology, geography and context of inscriptions featuring H via Gantt charts and geographic spread maps. The analysis supports a pathway of transmission from the Continent to Frisia before then traveling across the channel to England. Furthermore, an introduction of the rune into the Anglo-Saxon context via the ecclesiastic sphere emerges as the most plausible theory, while other theories such as the H as an English innovation or a coexistence of the two h-rune variants are discredited. The paper thus adds to the field of OE runology, and historical linguistics more broadly, by offering a concise and methodologically nuanced evaluation of transmission theories that had previously been predominantly speculative in nature. In doing so, the paper aims to work towards a move from runology’s association with the occult, magical and the Third Reich towards its establishment as a more broadly accepted research area in historical linguistics.

The Viking as the “other”: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Alfredian texts

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Not only modern but also contemporary historians have long portrayed the Vikings in terms that emphasize their Otherness and used particular language that cast them as the cultural and moral ‘Other’. With this, language is used as an important reflection of thoughts and ideas and serves to shape identity. However, not only the identity of the outgroup was constructed as such. King Alfred linguistically shaped an ingroup Angelcynn identity that stood in broad opposition to the Viking identity while simultaneously emphasizing the latter’s Otherness. Previous research in this field heavily focused on the construction of the outgroup identity, however, this paper aims to investigate ingroup identity construction, particularly a construction that defines itself against the outgroup. By employing critical discourse analysis, this paper thus explores specific linguistic and rhetorical strategies employed by Alfredian texts to construct the Viking as the ‘Other’ and, most importantly, how this discourse contributes to the formation of a collective Angelcynn identity.