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Dialectal Analysis and Linguistically Composite Texts in Middle English

By Margaret Laing

In recent years students of medieval literature and its history have begun increasingly to appreciate the value of their primary source materials — the manuscripts. Editors of Middle English texts are less apt nowadays, having found their “best text,” to jettison as worthless all other surviving copies and renderings of it. It is recognized that a “corrupt” text may reflect the activity of a contemporary editor, critic, or adapter rather than that of a merely careless copyist. Medieval scribes, whether professional or amateur, clerical or lay, were producing works of literature for their original consumers; close examination of scribal behavior, whether it be script, spelling, or choice and ordering of material, provides insight into the way literary texts were received, understood, and disseminated. The studies of paleographer, dialectologist, textual critic, and literary historian can and should be complementary.

The work of the Middle English Dialect Project (now the Gayre Institute for Medieval English and Scottish Dialectology) in Edinburgh has, since its inception in 1953, upheld the usefulness, and indeed necessity, in medieval studies of examining each scribal text separately as a valuable source in its own right. It is obvious perhaps that in order to place geographically the linguistic usage of a scribe his output must be subjected to dialectal analysis. It may be less obvious that such dialectal analysis often provides the means to do far more than place a scribe on the map.

By examining the language of scribal texts, it may be possible to identify and isolate archetypal and even authorial spellings. In 1978 Ian Doyle and Malcolm Parkes demonstrated that two of the earliest copyists of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* worked also on manuscripts of Gower.¹ Comparison of the linguistic usage of these and other London scribes enabled Michael Samuels to identify the most likely forms of language used by Chaucer himself. Samuels judges Chaucer's own spellings to be almost identical with those

I am indebted to Prof. Michael Benskin of the University of Oslo for help with an earlier version of this paper and to Prof. Angus McIntosh of the University of Edinburgh for many useful comments and suggestions.

¹ A. I. Doyle and M. B. Parkes, “The Production of Copies of the *Canterbury Tales* and the *Confessio Amantis* in the Early Fifteenth Century,” *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts and Libraries: Essays Presented to N. R. Ker*, ed. M. B. Parkes and A. G. Watson (London, 1978), pp. 163–210.

preserved in Peterhouse, Cambridge, MS 75. I, the sole surviving text of the *Equatorie of the Planetis*.²

The localization of separate dialectal elements within a single scribal text may itself become a means by which to identify authorial language. In his paper on Langland's dialect³ Michael Samuels isolates a core of linguistic usage assignable to Langland himself. This core consists of forms demanded by the original alliteration, together with "relict" usage — that is, forms alien to the language of the copyists of the surviving Langland manuscripts but retained by them from their exemplars, thus reflecting the language of an antecedent stage of copying.

The identification of two regionally distinct strata in the language of the Fairfax and Stafford manuscripts of Gower led Michael Samuels and Jeremy Smith to the inescapable conclusion that Gower's own language was a mixture of the usage of North West Kent and South West Suffolk.⁴

The above studies depend on the recognition of linguistically composite texts and the ability to sort out to some extent their constituent layers of language. The recognition of such composites is not new. Early this century J. W. H. Atkins, following a previous study by Willi Breier, identified two linguistic layers in the Cotton manuscript of *The Owl and the Nightingale*.⁵ This is a comparatively simple case, in which the Cotton scribe was evidently working from an exemplar written in two different hands. He reproduced enough of the distinct linguistic features of each to make it quite obvious where their stints in the exemplar began and ended.

Robert Thornton, the copyist of Lincoln Cathedral MS A.5.2 and British Library MS Additional 31042, another more or less accurate transcriber, provides the control in Angus McIntosh's study of the alliterative *Morte Arthure*.⁶ McIntosh reveals two further layers of language behind Thornton's transcription, the oldest layer being localizable in Lincolnshire. There is no linguistic evidence in this one surviving copy of the poem to support the previously received opinion of a West Midland provenance for the original although, of course, such negative evidence cannot be used to discount the possibility.

Linguistic analysis may sometimes confirm, sometimes refute, modify, or even confuse textual or historical evidence, but it always adds something to our knowledge of a scribe and his work. As the investigations in Edinburgh have progressed, our knowledge of the detail of Middle English dialect

² M. L. Samuels, "Chaucer's Spelling," *Middle English Studies Presented to Norman Davis in Honour of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Douglas Gray and E. G. Stanley (Oxford, 1983), pp. 17–37.

³ M. L. Samuels, "Langland's Dialect," *Medium Ævum* 54 (1985), 232–47.

⁴ M. L. Samuels and J. J. Smith, "The Language of Gower," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 82 (1981), 295–304.

⁵ *The Owl and the Nightingale*, ed. J. W. H. Atkins (Cambridge, Eng., 1922), pp. xxvi, xxix–xxxi; W. Breier, *Eule und Nachtigall*, *Studien zur englischen Philologie* 39 (Halle a. S., 1910), pp. 49–52.

⁶ Angus McIntosh, "The Textual Transmission of the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*," *English and Medieval Studies Presented to J. R. R. Tolkien on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Norman Davis and C. L. Wrenn (London, 1962), pp. 231–39.

differentiations has increased — so much so that Angus McIntosh and Martyn Wakelin were able to isolate nineteen varieties of West and Central Midland English in a single manuscript, sixteen of those types being perpetuated by a single hand.⁷

The methodology behind this sort of study is most fully set out in an article by Michael Benskin and me in the *Festschrift* for Angus McIntosh.⁸ This article is now substantially reproduced in *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*.⁹ The present paper is designed to exemplify some of the basic principles outlined in that article. It illustrates the steps by which we may reach conclusions about scribal practices and a scribe's attitudes towards his exemplars, and it provides some clues towards the unraveling of linguistically composite texts.

Angus McIntosh first defined the three possible procedures followed by a medieval scribe copying an English manuscript in a dialect other than his own.¹⁰ A scribe may (a) copy the spellings of his exemplar *literatim*, producing an exact transcription; (b) transform the language of his exemplar into his own kind of language, producing a complete translation; (c) produce a mixture of the spellings of his exemplar and his own spellings, creating a so-called *Mischsprache*, a form of language not consistent with any one regional variety. Texts of type (b), representing the genuine individual usage of a particular writer of Middle English, are valuable as primary source material for dialect mapping. Texts of type (a) are also useful where the copy has been made from a dialectally homogeneous text. An exact copy does not, of course, tell us about the language of the copyist, but only about the usage of the scribe from whose work he is copying, whether it be mixed or homogeneous. Indeed it is impossible to tell from an isolated example of scribal text whether or not it is an exact copy of its exemplar. It is only in cases (such as that of Robert Thornton, noted above) where there survive examples of several different types of language written in a single hand that we can deduce that the scribe is a *literatim* copyist. Texts of type (c) are not usable as primary source material for dialect maps.

Linguistically composite texts may often seem to be of type (c) — random mixtures of two or more varieties of language. In many such texts, however,

⁷ Angus McIntosh and Martyn Wakelin, "John Mirk's *Festial* and Bodleian MS Hatton 96," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 83 (1982), 443–50.

⁸ Michael Benskin and Margaret Laing, "Translations and *Mischsprachen* in Middle English Manuscripts," *So many people longages and tonges: Philological Essays in Scots and Mediaeval English Presented to Angus McIntosh*, ed. Michael Benskin and M. L. Samuels (Edinburgh, 1981), pp. 55–106; hereafter cited as Benskin and Laing.

⁹ Angus McIntosh, M. L. Samuels, and Michael Benskin, *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, 4 vols. (Aberdeen, 1986); hereafter cited as *LALME*. In the general introduction to vol. 1, sections 2.2.2–4 of chap. 2, sections 2–5 of chap. 3, and the appendices are substantially as in Benskin and Laing.

¹⁰ Angus McIntosh, "Word Geography in the Lexicography of Medieval English," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 211 (1973), 55–66 (p. 61).

the apparent *Mischsprache* turns out to consist of separable layers of language, and very often it is possible to isolate stretches of dialectally homogeneous usage. When dealing with linguistically composite texts it is important to realize that one scribe may produce examples of all three kinds of copying within a single long text.

In the course of studying the dialect material of medieval Lincolnshire¹¹ I had reason to make detailed dialectal analyses¹² of two manuscripts containing copies of Richard Rolle's *English Psalter*.¹³ They are Bodleian Library MS Bodley 467 and Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, MS 89 (D.5.3). Rolle's *English Psalter* consists of his prose translation of the book of Psalms together with a commentary. The work seems to have enjoyed great contemporary popularity, judging from the number of copies which have survived and their dialectal distribution across the Midlands and into the south as well as in the north of England. Thirty-five complete copies of the *English Psalter* are known,¹⁴ sixteen of which contain interpolations by other commentators. Eight of these interpolated copies contain material which is distinctly Lollard in character. In spite of its admixture in these cases with heretical material, Hope Emily Allen considered that Rolle's *Psalter* was probably the orthodox English Psalter up to the Reformation.¹⁵ Bodley 467 and Sidney Sussex 89 are both examples of Rolle's original uninterpolated commentary, though Bodley 467 lacks the Canticles commonly present at the end of the text. Bodley 467 is written in three different hands; Sidney Sussex 89 is in a single hand. The four hands happen to display very clearly the types of scribal procedure described above. The following studies, therefore, may together serve as an exemplum, illustrating how some scribal practices by comparison illuminate others, and leading to conclusions about localization of manuscripts and the use and distribution of exemplars.

¹¹ See Margaret Laing, "Studies in the Dialect Material of Mediaeval Lincolnshire," 2 vols. (Ph.D. diss. Edinburgh, 1978, unpub.).

¹² These were analyses of the kind designed by Angus McIntosh and Michael Samuels for the Middle English Dialect Project. They are made by means of a questionnaire consisting of a predetermined set of categories or items for which information is elicited from a scribal text. For the most part the items are lexical, though some are morphological or phonological. A completed questionnaire is called a "Linguistic Profile" (LP). LPs representing genuine regional usage form the data from which dialect maps are made. These data are printed both as maps and in LP form in *LALME*.

¹³ See H. R. Bramley, ed., *The Psalter or Psalms of David Translated by Richard Rolle of Hampole* (Oxford, 1884).

¹⁴ Bramley used only twelve manuscripts in his edition. Many more were noted by Anna C. Paves in *A Fourteenth Century English Biblical Version* (Uppsala, 1902), pp. xxiv, xlv (n. 2), and li (n. 4). (The revised 1904 edition does not include this material.) Dorothy Everett, expanding Paves's work, added two more manuscripts: see Dorothy Everett, "The Middle English Prose Psalter of Richard Rolle of Hampole," *Modern Language Review* 17 (1922), 217–27. This material is most conveniently summarized in Hope Emily Allen, *Writings Ascribed to Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hampole and Materials for His Biography* (London, 1927), pp. 169–77.

¹⁵ See Hope Emily Allen, ed., *English Writings of Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hampole* (Oxford, 1931), p. 3.

BODLEIAN LIBRARY, MS BODLEY 467

This is a manuscript of the first half of the fifteenth century and is the work of three hands.

Hand A is a large, clear Anglicana script¹⁶ and is quite cursive. A uses a single symbol for *þ* and *y*, namely, *y*.¹⁷ His text runs from folio 1r to folio 92v (foot); this is from the beginning of the prologue up to Psalm 72, the middle of verse 1. The text breaks off in mid-sentence: "how gude god of Israel to yaim yat ar of ryght herte ye prophet sekand. . . ." The dialect of this text belongs to South East Lincolnshire.

Hand B is a smaller, squarer script, also Anglicana. B also uses a single symbol for *þ* and *y*, namely, *y*. His text runs from folio 93r to folio 120r, line 11, stopping halfway through the line; this is from Psalm 72, middle of verse 1, continuing the sentence from hand A: "endelese ioy and reprehendand hymself yat lufed erthly thyng," to Psalm 90, verse 13: ". . . with stynkand smeles of hys ille ensampelle slaese menne yat come nere." The language of this text is in general of a provenance more northerly than Lincolnshire, but it contains near the beginning a few forms of a more southerly distribution which may be assignable to South Lincolnshire.

Hand C is an Anglicana script with some Secretary features. Unlike hands A and B, C does not confuse *þ* and *y*. His text runs from folio 120r, line 11, to the end of the manuscript, folio 171r; this is from Psalm 90, verse 13: ". . . and whit euele hand þ^t is with venemose word slaas þe herere . . .," to the end of Psalm 150. The dialect of this text belongs to South East Lincolnshire.

Under the colophon, "Explicit psalterium dauid," and in a later hand is "Iste est liber domini Hugonis Eyton supprioris monasterii sancti Albani Anglorum prothmartiris." On folio 171v is "W.S [?] ex do: fa: St. Non. 1639" and "Liber Thomae Barlow è coll. Reg: Oxon ex dono amicissimi domini Wheate de Glimton in agro Oxoniensi armigeri III Calend: Sept: M.DC. LVI."¹⁸ In spite of these later associations with St. Albans and Oxford, the linguistic evidence suggests that the manuscript is the work of at least two South Lincolnshire scribes, and possibly of three, and by implication therefore that it was produced in South Lincolnshire.

The language of A's text is almost certainly a translation from the dialect of an exemplar into that of the scribe. In other words, it is an example of a (b) type text. Commonly the language of a scribe who translates becomes

¹⁶ For classifications of script, see Malcolm B. Parkes, *English Cursive Book Hands 1250–1500* (Oxford, 1969).

¹⁷ Whether or not the scribe of a late Middle English text distinguishes the symbols *þ* and *y*, maintaining their separate functions, or confuses them as a single (usually *y*-like) symbol provides a powerful dialectal discriminant. See p. 93 below and n. 23; see also the following maps in *LALME*, 2: 2 "THESE," 7 "THEY," 8 "THEM," 9 "THEIR," 31 "THAN," 32 "THOUGH," 54 "THROUGH," 188 "NEITHER + NOR," and 235 "THITHER."

¹⁸ For further description, see F. Madan and H. H. E. Craster, *A Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford*, 2 (Oxford, 1895), p. 392.

increasingly self-consistent as his text proceeds, perhaps reflecting a shift from copying by eye to copying via the mind's ear, once the scribe has got into his stride;¹⁹ over the first few folios he may well create a (c) type or mixed text, reproducing in his copy some forms which do not belong to his own dialect but rather to the dialect of his exemplar(s). Indeed such relict forms may be very common, and even dominant, in the early part of a text, before being displaced absolutely by what is evidently the scribe's own usage. The (c) type text gradually evolves into a (b) type.

In the first ten folios of A's text there appear a few relict forms which suggest that the dialect of the exemplar for A was of a more northerly kind than that of A himself; these relict forms are of very infrequent occurrence (see Table 1). It is of course possible that the scribe of hand A copied from a text whose more obviously northern forms had already been modified, but in the absence of any positive evidence, it is here assumed that at no point are we dealing with a scribe who produced an exact *literatim* copy of his exemplar.²⁰

B writes throughout in a very much more northerly dialect than A, and its provenance is from further north than Lincolnshire. The language is internally consistent, except that near the beginning of the block of text written by B a few forms of a generally more southerly distribution appear, which are displaced by their more northerly equivalents as the text proceeds. In at least eleven cases of the twenty-eight noted (see Table 2), the displaced forms seem to have been added later, often with an omission mark, and it is possible that some of these are inserted by a different hand.

On the linguistic evidence of B's text alone, B's behavior seems identical with that of A; in other words, B was also a translator. If this were so, it would follow that B's own dialect was of a northern type, and the displaced forms are relict ones from an exemplar in a dialect of a more southerly variety of Middle English. Since Rolle was born in Yorkshire and apparently spent his entire life there,²¹ his original version of the *English Psalter* can be assumed to have been written in a Yorkshire dialect. B would then have been translating the text from the dialect of a southernized exemplar back into a dialect more like that of the original. Such dialectal progression is, however,

¹⁹ A scribe who habitually translates the language of his exemplars into his own dialect clearly will make no attempt to copy letter by letter. His smallest unit of copying will in general be the word; and as he works into his task, translating with more and more fluency, he will begin to take in larger units at a time before referring back to his exemplar. The result is that the copyist works to his own dictation, using his own familiar spellings for each phrase as he reads it. See Benskin and Laing, §4.2.2 and §7.1.6.

²⁰ There are indications that such *literatim* copying is rare (see McIntosh, "Word Geography," n. 13). Moreover it is evident that cursive script does not lend itself well to letter-by-letter copying. If the flow of cursive writing is to be maintained, there is considerable pressure on the copyist to make his units of copying larger — at least no smaller than the word. Cursive script and the habit of translating between dialects can be seen to go together in the history of Middle English, and even a word-by-word copyist cannot be assumed to have preserved the orthographic details of his exemplar's language.

²¹ Apart from a brief sojourn in Oxford, and two possible visits to the Sorbonne; see Allen, *Writings Ascribed to Richard Rolle*, pp. 430–526.

TABLE I
Relicts in the First Ten Folios of Hand A

Item	Usual Form in Hand A	Number of Attestations	Suspected Relict	Number of Attestations
SHALL	schal	80+	sal	1
-OLD (cold, hold, etc.)	-old	15+	-ald	1
-AND (hand, stand, etc.)	-ond	30+	-and	2
-ONG (long, wrong, etc.)	-ong	25+	-ang	2
OE \bar{a}/\bar{o}	o	40+	a	3
			ai	6
			ay	2

by no means unprecedented in the course of several stages of copying a text:²² it cannot be assumed that the dialect of the exemplar for any given copy of a text was more like that of the original composition merely on the grounds that the exemplar is, by definition, prior to the copy in the textual stemma.

The view that B was a translator would also require that the exemplar for the writer of northern dialect, B, was in a more southerly type of language than B's own dialect: the forms appearing in the early part of the text which are displaced in the later part are of a more southerly distribution than the forms of the later homogeneous northern dialect and would therefore have to be accounted for as relict from B's exemplar. The exemplar for B could then not have been in the same dialect as the exemplar for A. For the relicts in A's text are of a northern type of language, and were A a translator, as is here assumed, then it is his own dialect that belongs to South East Lincolnshire, whereas that of his exemplar must have been northern. A shared northern exemplar would then fail to explain the southerly relicts in B.

²² One example is Corpus Christi College, Oxford, MS 236: Richard Misyn's translation of Rolle's *Incendium amoris* and *Emendatio vitae*. These texts seem to have gone through a stage of copying into a more northerly dialect before being retranslated into a language which cannot be far different from Misyn's own Lincoln usage.

TABLE 2
Dialectal Mixture of Hand B

Item	Usual Form in Hand B	Number of Attestations	Displaced Form	Number of Attestations
SHALL	sal[l]	100+	schall[e]	8
OE \bar{a}/\bar{o}	a	50+	o	6
	aa	6		
3 sg.	-es	40+	-ith	2
pres.	-ys	5+	-eth	2
ind.	-s	10+		
FROM	fra	30+	fram	1
			fro	1
HAS	has	30+	hath	1
DEATH	ded[e]	25+	deth	1
THEY	yai	25+	yei	1
WHEN	when	20+	whan	1
-OLD	-ald	15+	-old	2
WOULD sg.	wyld	8	wold	2
	wald	6		

Brackets condense information, indicating two forms of equal frequency.

B takes over copying from A in the middle of a sentence, albeit at the end of a folio; and C takes over copying from B in mid-sentence, mid-line, and mid-folio. Clearly the scribes A, B, and C were working in close contact with one another, and their manuscript was evidently put together in one place. Since two of the scribes wrote in dialects of South Lincolnshire (the dialect of C as well as that of A belongs in South East Lincolnshire, though they differ slightly from one another), it is reasonable to suppose that the manuscript was put together in South Lincolnshire. If, as has so far been assumed, the northern dialect of B's text is indeed B's own dialect, then he must have been a northern scribe working in South Lincolnshire. B's access to an exemplar in a more southerly dialect than his own (albeit an exemplar different from that of his fellow copyists) would then be easily explained; indeed all the relicts in the early part of B's text are attested in dialects belonging in or adjacent to South Lincolnshire. The forms that seem to have been added later, probably in the course of subsequent correction of the text, could have been added as forms directly copied from the exemplar, either by B himself or by some other scribe.

There is no reason to doubt that scribe A translated from the dialect of his exemplar with increasing consistency into his own: this is the obvious interpretation of the familiar shift from a somewhat mixed language to an internally consistent usage in which many of the variants attested in the earlier text have been filtered out in favor of equivalent forms. The practice of scribe C, however, throws considerable doubt on such an interpretation of B's apparently similar behavior.

C begins by producing a text in a dialect which, over the first four or five folios, is rather like the dialect of B's text (which has so far been assumed to

be B's own). After about folio 124 the language of C's text begins to incorporate certain forms that are not of northern origin, and after about folio 135 it has become a firmly established and homogeneous language characteristic of South East Lincolnshire. At folio 154v (the beginning of Psalm 119) there is a change in ink color. Although neither the hand nor the script changes, the language once more becomes mixed, reintroducing some of the more northerly forms characteristic in hand B. Without at this stage taking account of the language and possible copying practice of B, the best interpretation of C's behavior is probably as follows. C had an exemplar in a northern dialect, which he began by copying precisely. After a few folios he ceased to reproduce, more or less unchanged, the language of his exemplar and produced a section of text in a mixed language containing some forms from the dialect of the exemplar and some from his own dialect: in other words, he began to translate, but at first only half-heartedly. Increasingly, however, this became a thoroughgoing translation, and the forms of the exemplar became filtered out altogether, so that after folio 135 C's text is a consistent representation of his own dialect. The change in ink color at folio 154v indicates a break in the continuity of copying. A possibly quite long interval before its resumption might well explain the break in the continuity of the translation and the reappearance of some of those forms assumed to be from the dialect of the exemplar. This interpretation of C's behavior is the most satisfactory explanation for the two sections of mixed usage. To engage in exact and sustained copying is likely to be the result of a conscious decision so to do: it requires close visual attention to the spelling, as well as to the textual content, of the exemplar. C gave such attention over a mere five folios of his text and then drifted increasingly from the usage of his exemplar. The *Mischsprache* reflects the gradual development of the scribe's independence of the exemplar's spellings, here attained over some eleven and a half folios; once used to the language of his exemplar, he copied in units conceptual rather than orthographic. A thoroughgoing translation represents the culmination of this process; here the translation extends over twenty folios, until the change of ink and evident break in copying. It is most unlikely that the first five folios represent translation, which only gradually (over eleven and a half folios) was abandoned in favor of an exact copy: a scribe capable of copying exactly, once he had decided to do so, would surely switch abruptly from one kind of language to the other — there is no obvious motivation for a drift from translation to exact copying, whereas with the progression from exact copy to translation, a drift is precisely what one would expect. The last section (over seventeen folios), begun after some interval since the translated section was completed, is a *Mischsprache* approximating more closely to the scribe's own dialect than to that of his exemplar, and it represents the scribe's getting back into his stride as a translator, without, however, there being sufficient length of text for him to regain his former consistency. I shall therefore assume that C, like A, was a scribe belonging to South East Lincolnshire, copying from an exemplar written in a more northerly dialect.

The view that C started by copying his exemplar exactly and then drifted

TABLE 3
 Similarities between the Usages of B and the First Five Folios
 of C's Text, Contrasted with Later Usage in C

Item	B's Usage	C's Usage in Folios 120r-124r	C's Usage in Folios 135v-154v
THESE	yere	þere	þere
THOSE	ya, yaa	þa ((þha))	þoo
THEM	yaim, yam	þam	hem
THEIR	yair[e], yar[e]	þair[e], þar[e]	her[e]
WHICH	ye-whyk[e]	þ ^e /þe-whilk[e]	þ ^e /þe-whiche, wheche
FROM	fra	fra	fro ((fra))
THEN	yan	þan	þanne
THAN	yan	þan	þanne
SO	swa, sua, sa	swa, sua, sa	soo, so
OE <i>ā/ō</i>	a	a	oo, o
-OLD	-ald	-ald	-old, -ald
AMONG	I-mang	I-mang	among
-ONG	-ang	-ang	-ong
BY	by	by	be
CHURCH	kyrke	kirke	chirch[e]
DIE	dye	dye	die
HOLY	haly	haly	holy
KNOW	knaw[e]	knaw[e]	know[e]
-LESS	-lesse	-lesse	-les
LORD	lard	lard	lord
SOUL	saule	saule, sawle	soule, sowle

Double parentheses indicate that the form is a minor variant. Brackets condense information, indicating two forms of equal frequency.

to a translation into his own dialect casts a different light on the previous interpretation of B's behavior, namely, that B was a northern scribe translating from a more southerly exemplar. The first few folios of C's text are linguistically very similar to B's text: they are in a northern dialect of Middle English as opposed to the South East Lincolnshire usage of C's later text (see Table 3).

Such similarities in usage indicate that the dialect of C's exemplar was very similar to the dialect written by B. (There are some differences between B's usage and the usage of the early folios of C's text, which will be discussed below.) If it is assumed that the main sections of text by A and B and the third section of C's text are translations, then it follows that A was a South East Lincolnshire scribe, working from an exemplar written in a northern dialect; B was a northern scribe, working from an exemplar in a more southerly dialect (possibly from South Lincolnshire); C was a South East Lincolnshire scribe, working from an exemplar in a northern dialect, possibly the same exemplar as that for A, which was in a language similar to B's dialect; and B was probably a sojourner in South Lincolnshire.

This is not a very satisfactory reconstruction. It may be conjectured that a northern scribe, B, traveled from northern England to a religious house in

South East Lincolnshire and brought with him a copy, in northern English, of Rolle's *English Psalter*. With the help of A and C, he then made a copy for the Lincolnshire community during his stay there; that would reasonably explain the northern relicts in A and C and his own contribution in a dialect of northern Middle English that differed but little from that of the book he brought to Lincolnshire. This, however, fails wholly to account for the southerly relicts in B's own section of the copy: these presuppose a southerly — perhaps South Lincolnshire — exemplar for B's text. That the South Lincolnshire scribes, A and C, should be translating from B's northern copy, while B himself translated from a southerly copy of the same book to fill in the text between A's contribution and that of C, is thoroughly implausible.

In these circumstances a simpler and more plausible interpretation is that all three scribes originated from and worked in South Lincolnshire and used the same northern exemplar. A translated, only letting through some of his exemplar's forms, and those near the beginning. B was a fairly faithful copyist, though to start with he very occasionally wrote a form belonging to his own dialect. The other more southerly forms, the words that were added later, many as insertions, may have been written by B or another South Lincolnshire scribe, possibly without recourse to the exemplar. C, perhaps attempting to continue the language of B's precisely copied northern English, began by copying fairly faithfully but after a few folios had drifted into translation: it is possible that C, having taken up B's text in mid-sentence and mid-folio, sought to achieve a smooth transition rather than an abrupt break between his language and that of B's text, perhaps with a view to easing the task of reading aloud from it.

There are a few differences between B's text, which as it now appears was a fairly faithful copy from his exemplar, and the first five folios of C's text, indicating that if they did share an exemplar, at least one of the two scribes modified his copy to some extent. Since C introduced considerable linguistic modifications after only a few folios, it is not unreasonable to suppose that even at the beginning C's copy was not precise. In the absence of the exemplar, it is impossible to determine how close was B's copy; but the odd occurrences of South Lincolnshire forms indicate that anything B contributed himself is probably of South Lincolnshire origin, and by this criterion he left the language of his exemplar very much as he found it.

The differences between the usages are as follows:

(1) B uses the symbol *y* in both [ð-θ] and [ɪ-i-j] contexts, whereas C distinguishes *þ* from *y*, using *þ* and occasionally *th* and *þh* in [ð-θ] contexts. Note that in four places, all within ten lines of each other, C writes *þ^e* for "ye." This is quite possibly a hypercorrection of *y* to *þ* from an exemplar which did not distinguish the symbols, and insofar as the dialect of the exemplar can be assumed northern, it is highly unlikely that *þ* and *y* were there distinguished.²³ *þ^e* is one of C's regular spellings for "thee," and grammatical

²³ In the northern dialects of English (including those of Scotland and parts of Lincolnshire and East Anglia), *þ* and *y* had fallen together by the late fourteenth century, and their separate functions are realized by a single symbol which may be *y*-like or (less commonly) *þ*-like in

function notwithstanding, the hypercorrection may have thus been compounded.

(2) B tends to use *y* in vocalic contexts, whereas C tends to use *i*.

(3) In [j-] contexts B uses *ȝ* and occasional *y*, whereas C uses *ȝ* and occasional *ȝh*.

(4) There is some variation between B and C in the use of final *-e*.

(5) For “not” B has *noth* ((*not*, *noght*, *noht*)), and C has *noth* (*noȝt*) ((*nat*, *not*)).²⁴ Neither *noȝt* nor *nat* appears at all in hand B, and both forms become less frequent in the translated section of hand C, *nat* almost disappearing, but reappearing after folio 154v. Since these forms do not occur in B’s text, the postulated common exemplar cannot be responsible for their appearance in C’s text: they must belong to C’s own usage. *Noȝt* is a common South East Lincolnshire form, and *nat* is attested in two Lincolnshire scribal dialects very close geographically to where C’s dialect belongs.²⁵

(6) For “but” B has *bot*, whereas C has *but*. Either the exemplar had both *bot* and *but*, and B and C each selected only one of these forms,²⁶ or one or other of B and C for this item translated into his own usage. Since *but* is C’s regular usage throughout his text, it may be taken as the usage of his own dialect.

(7) For “flesh” B has *flesch*[e], whereas C has *flessh*. Since *flessh* is C’s regular usage throughout his text, this form is to be taken as his own usage. *Flesch*[e] is to be taken as B’s own usage and/or that of the common exemplar.

The two *Mischsprachen* of hand C (folios 124v–135r, and folios 154v–171r) are characterized by the presence of an assemblage of forms found in folios 120r–124r, which are assumed to be from the exemplar, and other forms found in folios 135v–154v, which are assumed to be C’s own usage. As might be expected after a long stretch of translation, notwithstanding the interval between them, the second *Mischsprache* is more like C’s own usage than that of his exemplar. Apart from this, there is only one obvious difference between the two *Mischsprachen*. In the first, and this only between folios 125r and 134r, *pei* ‘they’ appears beside *pay* and *pai*. In C’s own usage, and in the second *Mischsprache*, only *pay* and *pai* appear. From the evidence of other South East Lincolnshire dialects, it can be assumed that *pay*, *pai*, and *pei* were all current in C’s own dialect; he wrote *pei* alongside *pai* at the beginning of the translated section, but later evidently settled for the forms common to

appearance. For an account of the distributions of *b*, *y*, and *th* in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries see Michael Benskin, “The Letters ⟨b⟩ and ⟨y⟩ in Later Middle English, and Some Related Matters,” *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 7 (1982), 13–30.

²⁴ Parentheses enclosing a form indicate relative frequency. Single parentheses denote reduced frequency, double parentheses a minor variant.

²⁵ These are Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Library, MS Eng. 8, hand B, fols. 147r–195v, and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 99, fols. 18r–27r. See *LALME*, 3, LP nos. 551 and 4289.

²⁶ Such selection is a common scribal practice. When two functional equivalents for a given item are of equal status in the dialect of the exemplar and a scribe’s dialect admits only one of the two variants, the copying scribe may well balk at reproducing the exotic variant and substitute its familiar equivalent in all contexts, thus producing one example of “constrained usage.” See Benskin and Laing, §5.

TABLE 4
Structure of Bodley 467

Hand	Folios	Type of Text	Dialect	Suitable as Primary Dialectal Source Material?
A	1r–92v	Translation	SE Lincs.	Yes
B	93r–120r	Copy	Northern	Yes
C	120r–124r	Copy	Northern	No
C	124v–135r	Imperfect translation	Mixed	No
C	135v–154v	Translation	SE Lincs.	Yes
C	154v–171r	Imperfect translation	Mixed	No

his own dialect and that of his exemplar (*bai* and *bay*, exemplar **yai*, **yay*). This interpretation is supported by the restriction of “they” forms to *bai* and *bay* in the first four folios of C, which are evidently copied fairly faithfully from C’s exemplar.²⁷

The dialectal structure of Bodley 467 is summarized diagrammatically in Table 4.²⁸

SIDNEY SUSSEX COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, MS 89 (D.5.3)

This is a manuscript of the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century,²⁹ and one of the oldest surviving copies of Rolle’s *English Psalter*. It is in a single hand, though the script and language are rather changeable throughout. The linguistic fluctuations of the text are extremely complicated. However, the preceding account of the behavior of the three scribes of Bodley 467, particularly that of hand C, can be used to throw some light on the copying practice of the scribe of Sidney Sussex 89.

Although the manuscript is by a single hand, the language shifts several times. There are, however, no clear-cut dialectal breaks such as those between the three hands of Bodley 467.

Sidney Sussex 89 is of particular interest here, because its language was used as representative of medieval Lincolnshire dialect by Samuel Moore,

²⁷ This represents another very frequently observed example of constrained selection in the output of a “translating” scribe. Three functional equivalents for “they” are known to him and since he is happy with the variants that he meets in his exemplar there is little incentive for him to employ the third variant — which may well belong to his own spontaneous usage — even though he is translating the language of his exemplar rather than copying precisely.

²⁸ Hands A and C of this manuscript appear in *LALME* with the respective LP numbers 75 and 62, and their dialects appear on the maps. The dialect of B’s copy has not been precisely localized.

²⁹ H. R. Bramley dates the manuscript “towards the end of the fourteenth century.” M. R. James and Hope Emily Allen suggest merely that it is fourteenth or fifteenth century. See H. R. Bramley, ed., *The Psalter*, p. xxi; M. R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge* (Cambridge, Eng., 1895), p. 73; Allen, *Writings Ascribed to Richard Rolle*, p. 172.

Sanford Meech, and Harold Whitehall and localized firmly in Theddlethorpe on the coast of North East Lincolnshire.³⁰ On this location depends the easterly course of their line delimiting the domain of the verbal suffix of the plural present indicative in *-(e)s*.³¹ This placing also has considerable bearing on their line which divides the “dialect area” of the North East Midlands from that of the Central East Midlands.³² Their use of the text and the localization they accepted for its language are both misleading.

Their reason for placing the language of Sidney Sussex 89 in Theddlethorpe is that the manuscript contains, on the second of the flyleaves at its end, copies of three Latin deeds concerning persons and property in Theddlethorpe and that vicinity. The first deed, which is dated 1311, concerns the transfer of certain lands from Philip the Vauntour (?) to Gilbert Wyles and his wife Elizabeth, all of whom belonged to Theddlethorpe. The second deed, dated 1320, is likewise a conveyance of lands, from the same Gilbert Wyles to Robert Agge of Mablethorpe; as in the first deed the land in question lies in Theddlethorpe. The third deed is an undated conveyance of land from Alan of Beesby to William of Witune (?), the land being in Wold Newton. Theddlethorpe, Mablethorpe, and Beesby lie within six miles of each other on or near the coast of Lindsey, North East Lincolnshire; Wold Newton is some sixteen miles to the northwest.

The originals of at least the first two deeds are likely to have been drawn up in Theddlethorpe. However, the deeds are no solid evidence for the localization of the dialect of the scribe who wrote the literary text to which they happen to have been attached. Scribes and manuscripts traveled, and as the preceding study of Bodley 467 shows, a text may sometimes be written in a dialect of a place very different from the place in which the manuscript itself was put together.³³ The presence of the Theddlethorpe deeds is at best

³⁰ Samuel Moore, Sanford B. Meech, and Harold Whitehall, “Middle English Dialect Characteristics and Dialect Boundaries,” *Essays and Studies in English and Comparative Literature*, 13 (Ann Arbor, 1935).

³¹ The third-person plural present indicative inflection has a complex history, for some account of which see Angus McIntosh, “Present Indicative Plural Forms in the Later Middle English of the North Midlands,” *Middle English Studies Presented to Norman Davis*, ed. Douglas Gray and E. G. Stanley (Oxford, 1983), pp. 235–44, and works there cited. For the present argument it suffices to say that the *-s* endings for the present plural indicative, both as major and minor variants, extend a long way further south than the line in the Moore, Meech, and Whitehall map suggests. They are to be found in the most southerly part of Lincolnshire beside Midland *-n* endings. See *LALME* 1:467, map nos. 652–53.

³² As is clear from the study of dialects, both modern and medieval, during the last hundred years, the idea of “dialect areas” is itself misconceived. Dialect maps show a continuum, where different forms of language have overlapping distributions and each item (and therefore each map) displays a different distributional patterning. See Michael Benskin, “The Middle English Dialect Atlas,” *So many people longages and tonges*, pp. xxvii–xli, esp. pp. xxviii–xxix, and works there cited; and *LALME* 1, gen. intro., 1.2.2.

³³ For a discussion of the movement of scribes and texts, see McIntosh, “The Textual Transmission of the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*,” pp. 231–40; M. L. Samuels, “Some Applications of Middle English Dialectology,” *English Studies* 44 (1963), 81–94, esp. p. 94; and Michael Benskin, “Local Archives and Middle English Dialects,” *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 5 (1977), 500–514, esp. pp. 509–10.

evidence for the manuscript having been in some place where there were persons interested, perhaps indirectly, in the conveyance of property at Theddlethorpe. As the manuscript contains a learned religious text of a sort almost certainly the product of a religious house, it was perhaps owned in Theddlethorpe and copies of the deeds entered by a local owner on its previously blank flyleaves; there was no medieval religious house in Theddlethorpe, and it is unlikely that the manuscript was put together there. The priory of Alvingham and the abbey of Louth both owned land at Wold Newton, and Revesby Abbey (twenty miles to the southwest) owned Theddlethorpe rectory; it could have been written in any of these houses, and quite possibly the copies of Theddlethorpe deeds were there bound in as the original flyleaves.

Wherever the manuscript may have been put together, there is no guarantee that the scribe who wrote it was originally native to that part of the country. The linguistic composition of Sidney Sussex 89 is in fact extremely complicated, as will appear from the following account, and used uncritically, it is very unsuitable as a primary source text for dialect mapping. However, as with hand C of Bodley 467, it is possible to isolate at least one section of text as being in a homogeneous local dialect.

Sidney Sussex 89 is a large manuscript with two columns of text to the page. My study has for the most part been from a complete microfilm in Edinburgh University Library. The folios are not numbered; and the text, not counting the flyleaves, runs to 371 frames. References hereafter are counted from frames on the microfilm, by columns of text, and by Psalm numbers.

The early part of the manuscript is in a Textura script, which later becomes less formal and more cursive. The most obvious single change is in the shape of the letter *d*, which is at first Textura with a simple, straight ascender, but later changes to Anglicana with a looped ascender. On other letters, too, ascenders become more prominently looped. In spite of this drift to cursiveness, the manuscript is evidently written all in one hand, apart from two very short interpolations, less than half a column long, by a single different hand. These occur on frames 166 (Ps. 62.8–9) and 189 (Ps. 70.1).

From frames 1 to 25 (prologue up to Ps. 9.26) the language is of a northerly type, from Yorkshire or possibly North Lincolnshire. I shall call this language L 1. At frame 25 forms of a more southerly distribution begin to appear beside the northerly forms. At frame 30 (Ps. 11.1) the scribe begins to write Anglicana *d* beside Textura *d*. By frame 32 (Ps. 12.8) the transition from one letter shape to the other is complete and Textura *d* does not appear again. At the same time as the scribal mode is changing, the language is also changing. Over the next few frames, more and more nonnorthern forms appear, and by frame 36 (Ps. 14.1) the language has shifted completely and become a fairly self-consistent language of a very different character from that of the first twenty-five frames (see Table 5). I shall call this language L 2a: it continues as far as frame 85 (Ps. 34.2).

Within L 2a there is an internal shift in the form for the first-person singular personal pronoun. In L 1 and early L 2a it is written *i*, but at frame

TABLE 5
Some Differences between L 1 and L 2a

Item	L 1	L 2a
THEY	yai, yei	yei ((yai once))
THEIR	yaire, yeire	yeire, yeir
SUCH	swilke, swyche	swyche, siche (and variants in -ch-)
WHICH	ye-whylke	ye-whiche (and variants in -ch-)
MUCH	mekil, mekille	meche ((mekil))
SHALL sg./pl.	sal ((shal))	schalle, schal, shalle, shal
TO prep.	tille, to	to
-AY in day, may, say, way	-ay	-ey
PRAY	pray	pray, prey
HAS	has, haues	hath, hathe
pres. part.	-and, -ande	-ond, -onde, -and, -ande ((-end, -ende))
CHURCH	kirke	chirche
-LY	-ly, -li	-liche, -ly ((-li))

Double parentheses denote a minor variant.

62 (Ps. 24.12) "I" begins to be written *iche*; the *-che* is usually scrubbed or crossed out, whether by the original scribe or some other is uncertain. Otherwise, L 2a is internally consistent, except for the spelling of "shall," which will be considered later.

Matters of internal consistency apart, there is a further usage which requires comment. The spellings for "are" in L 2a remain unchanged from L 1, namely, *er[e]*. In the light of other developments in the language of this manuscript, this continuity is difficult to account for and will be considered later.

The next linguistic shift occurs at frame 85 (Ps. 34.3). I shall call this language, which continues to the end of the manuscript, L 2b, since, as will appear, it is not fundamentally different from L 2a. Evidently there was a break in the continuity of copying at this point. In the left-hand column of frame 85 is a small block of text in a neater, smaller writing, which on analysis of the script,³⁴ however, proves to be the same hand as that of the rest of the text. It is as though these few lines had to be inserted later into a gap that had been left for them, but which proved slightly too small to contain them. Moreover, while the inserted text has an average of nine words per line against the previous text's seven, the text following the insertion is in an appreciably bigger and more widely spaced writing, having only five or six words per line.

From the break at frame 85 "are" starts to be written *ar[e]* instead of *er[e]*. Within ten frames *ar[e]* has become the dominant form, and after that *er[e]* is extremely rare. This shift coincides with the completion of a change from

³⁴ For an outline of some possible taxonomic procedures for the classification of differences and similarities in scripts, see Angus McIntosh, "Towards an Inventory of Middle English Scribes," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 75 (1974), 602-24.

shal[le] to *schal*[le] 'shall'. *Shal*[le] is the regular usage of early L 2a, but *schal*[le] appears sporadically from frame 42 (Ps. 17.4), increasingly displaces *shal*[le], and finally ousts it completely at frame 83 (Ps. 33.9). Thereafter *schal*[le] is the regular usage of L 2b. From the break in copying at frame 85 (the end of L 2a), the language gradually becomes more mixed. Firstly *-ay* begins to appear beside *-ey* in "day," "may," "say," and "way." As the text proceeds, occasional forms such as *yai*, *yay* 'they'; *ye-whilke* 'which'; *kyrke* 'church'; *swilk*, *suilk* 'such'; *sal* 'shall'; *haues* 'has' appear, all of which are characteristic in L 1. Other forms, also of a northerly distribution, and which do not occur in L 1, appear beside them in L 2b: *yam* 'them'; *hali* 'holy'; and *saule* 'soul'. Between about frames 185 and 200 *iche* 'I'; *-liche* '-ly'; and *-onde* present participle ending become rarer and almost disappear.³⁵ Moreover by the end of the manuscript *yai* 'they' and *-ay* in "day," "may," "say," and "way" are as common or commoner than are *yei* and *-ey* respectively in these contexts. L 2b has thus become much more like L 1.

A broad view of the nature of these linguistic shifts suggests that the Sidney Sussex scribe's behavior was similar to that of Bodley 467, hand C. He began by copying and then drifted into translation; after a break of an indeterminate period he resumed his copy and thereafter produced a text in a mixed language, partly his own usage, and partly that of his exemplar. However, on several counts this interpretation proves to be oversimplified. It fails to account for the following anomalies:

(1) For "are" the form in L 1 and L 2a is *er*[e]. In L 2b it is *ar*[e]. If *er*[e] is taken to be the usage of the exemplar (represented by L 1) and of the Sidney Sussex scribe himself (represented by L 2a), then *ar*[e] is inexplicable. Even if it is assumed that the Sidney Sussex scribe's usage admitted both *er*[e] and *ar*[e], he would have no motive to shift from a form common to his dialect and that of his exemplar to a contrasting form, when for other items his language approximates more closely to that of his exemplar.

(2) The completion of the shift from *shal*[le] to *schal*[le] at the same point in the text as that of *er*[e] to *ar*[e] is inexplicable for the same reason as in (1) above.

(3) In L 2b *yam* 'them'; *hali* 'holy'; and *saule* 'soul' are assumed to belong to the exemplar's language since they do not appear in L 2a. However, neither do they occur in L 1, in spite of abundant contexts in which they could have appeared there.

³⁵ Possibly the earlier erasures of *-che* in "I" (L 2a) were an attempt to regularize the usage overall. This would assume that both *i* and *iche* were known variants in the dialect of the scribe of Sidney Sussex 89 but that *iche* was his preferred form. He began to introduce *iche*, along with other forms from his own dialect, as his copy progressed. But the complete absence of *iche* in his northern exemplar later influenced him to select only the *i* variants he found in front of him. Another possible explanation of the scribe's confusion over the form of "I" remains completely hypothetical. The dialect of his exemplar may have had *ich* for "I" before vowels but *i* in other contexts. (Compare the early northern Middle English use of *ik* before vowels and *h-* and of *i*, *I* elsewhere.) Encountering such a form in vocalic contexts may have caused the present scribe's initial switch to his own preferred *iche*. But his own dialect did not make the formal contextual distinction, and as his copy progressed, he preferred the consistency of using the more frequently encountered *i*.

These details of the linguistic shift from L 2a to L 2b suggest that there has been a change, albeit not great, in the dialect of the exemplar. The absence from L 1 of *yam*, *hali*, and *saule*, and from the Sidney Sussex scribe's own usage as attested by L 2a, argues such a change, and this view is supported by the evidence of the shift from *er[e]* to *ar[e]* and perhaps also by the completion of the shift from *shal[le]* to *schal[le]*, which are otherwise exceedingly difficult to account for. It need not be supposed that a major change had occurred in the language of the exemplar. It may well be that two scribes, both of whom had acquired their habits of written language in much the same area, cooperated to produce the exemplar, just as the scribes from South East Lincolnshire collaborated on Bodley 467. Or it may be that the exemplar was by a single scribe, who copied more or less faithfully from his own exemplar the language of such a collaborative effort. (There is some appeal in the view that the Sidney Sussex scribe's exemplar was the composite: the point at which one scribe took over from another would provide an obvious place to break off for a copyist nearing the end of his day's work. A change of hand, and perhaps therefore a change in size of script, in his exemplar might also have influenced the Sidney Sussex scribe's enlargement of his script in L 2b.)

The linguistic evidence is adequately accounted for by the following reconstruction. The Sidney Sussex scribe made his copy from an exemplar written in two very similar, but not identical, northern dialects; the first underlies Sidney Sussex 89 frames 1–85, the second, frames 85 to the end. The Sidney Sussex scribe evidently began by reproducing the language of the first part of his exemplar (L 1), but after about twelve folios (frame 25) began to drift into translating mode. He produced a linguistically mixed text for two or three folios, but soon got into his stride as a consistent translator (frame 30), producing language L 2a. Given the intervening *Mischsprache*, the drift is unlikely to have been from translation to copying for the same reasons as those discussed in the account of Bodley 467 (above, pp. 90–92). The linguistic shift from L 1 to L 2a accompanies a change in the mode of script. The very careful script of the earlier text gradually becomes more cursive. This change of mode would be consistent with a change from word-by-word copying to copying by the mind's ear, that is, from copying to translation (see pp. 87–88 and 90–92 above). It is here assumed that L 1 is copied language and represents the language of the exemplar and that L 2a is translated and is by and large the copyist's own usage: L 2a is a homogeneous dialect which is placeable in South West Lincolnshire. These assumptions are consistent with the linguistic evidence of the interpolating scribe's short contribution of frame 166 (Ps. 62.8 and 9). The second interpolated passage on frame 189 (Ps. 70.1) is too short to provide any useful information here, but the first contains *yai* 'they'; *sal[le]* 'shall'; and *tille* (prep.) 'to', common in L 1 but in L 2b only found very rarely, and even then right near the end of the manuscript. The scribe of the interpolations evidently reproduced the forms of the later exemplar (that underlying L 2b, here assumed to be common to both scribes), having no opportunity in such a short stretch of text to drift into translation, even supposing that was his habit; and the enclosing text,

by the main hand, contains the contrasting forms of the main scribe's own dialect, alongside those of the exemplar. The fact that L 2b becomes increasingly mixed cannot be explained wholly in the same way as was the second *Mischsprache* of hand C in Bodley 467 (see pp. 90–92 above), although there is a similar break in the continuity of copying. On the contrary, the Sidney Sussex scribe had eighty-five folios of text after his own break in which to regain his consistency of translation, but the language becomes increasingly more rather than less like that of his exemplar. In these circumstances the best explanation is that spellings which had by now (after forty or fifty folios of copying) become very familiar to the copyist of Sidney Sussex 89 were intruding into his own active usage. This interpretation is the stronger because all the forms that are in L 2b but not in L 2a are current in dialects adjacent to the area of origin for L 2a, and there are no forms in L 2b that are not attested in that area.

If we assume that the language of the exemplar for Sidney Sussex 89 changes in some respects at the point in the text where L 2b begins, the change in usage from *er[e]* 'are' to *ar[e]* is now easy to explain. The exemplar underlying L 1 and L 2a had *er[e]*, whereas that underlying L 2b had *ar[e]*. Both *er[e]* and *ar[e]* are current in dialects geographically adjacent to L 2a and probably also, therefore, in the Sidney Sussex scribe's own usage; he thus perpetuated in his copy whichever he found in his exemplar.

The change of *shal[le]* to *schal[le]* may now be explained as follows. *Sal* is regular usage in L 1, though occasionally *shal* appears also. *Shal[le]* is regular usage in L 2a, though *schal[le]* begins to be written soon after the change from L 1 to L 2a and gradually displaces *shal[le]*. *Shal[le]* does not appear at all in L 2b. If we assume that both the *sch-* and *sh-* variants were familiar to the Sidney Sussex scribe — and this assumption is supported by the appearance of both forms in dialects geographically adjacent to L 2a — and that his exemplar had *sh-* but not *sch-*, the Sidney Sussex scribe's drift from *sh-* to *sch-* is a drift from tolerated to preferred usage. *Sal* was also in his exemplar but not at all in his own dialect;³⁶ and accordingly it does not persist in his text after the closely copied section of L 1. The scribe for the later part of the exemplar may or may not have used *sal*: it is wholly absent from L 2b. The absence of *sh-* spellings in L 2b, given the Sidney Sussex scribe's toleration of them in early L 2a, indicates that this second scribe did not use them at all; his forms were evidently *sch-* variants, and possibly *s* + vowel variants also.

The linguistic structure of Sidney Sussex 89 is summarized diagrammatically in Table 6.³⁷

To conclude, L 2a approximates to the Sidney Sussex scribe's own lan-

³⁶ Although in Middle English dialects overall, *s* + vowel usually occurs with *sch-* for [ʃ] rather than with *sh-*, there are some examples in North and Central Lincolnshire of *s* + vowel occurring with *sh-*. See *LALME* 1:340–41, map nos. 144, 145, and 148; *LALME* 2:95, 101, and 107, sheet 3 of map 22, "SHALL sg and pl" and map 23, "SHOULD sg."

³⁷ Language L 2a appears in *LALME* with the LP number 46. This homogeneous section of Sidney Sussex 89 has been used to provide data for South West Lincolnshire on the maps.

TABLE 6
Structure of Sidney Sussex 89

Language	Frames	Type of Text	Dialect	Suitable as Primary Dialectal Source Material?
L 1	1-25	Copy	Yorks. (?)	Probably not pure enough
L 1- 2	25-36	Imperfect translation	Mixed	No
L 2a	36-85	Translation	SW Lincs.	Yes
L 2b	85-end	Imperfect translation	Mixed	No

guage, but his spontaneous usage may include *ar[e]* 'are' and *schal[le]* 'shall' in greater frequency than they appear in L 2a. Although L 2a is a homogeneous dialect, the relative frequencies of some of its forms may not correspond precisely to those of the Sidney Sussex scribe's spontaneous usage; some of these may approximate more closely to those of L 2b.

The view that linguistically the majority of Middle English texts present merely *Mischsprachen*, perhaps encouraged by J. R. R. Tolkien's observations on early Middle English,³⁸ depends on the assumption that the distribution of linguistic forms in these texts is generally random. If, for instance, an index of forms was compiled for Sidney Sussex 89, or for hand C of Bodley 467, they would indeed appear to be *Mischsprachen*. What would not be clear is that they each contain two different layers of language (as well as mixtures of the two) and that within these the distribution is not random. In other words, not all later Middle English texts are hotchpotch; there are many apparent *Mischsprachen* which may be linguistically layered. One of the direct results obtainable from the analyses on which this paper is based is that we are able to isolate dialectally homogeneous components of much-copied texts and show that they are no less valid for dialectal studies than the most methodically written holograph. The corollary to this, as illustrated by the Sidney Sussex scribe and hand C of Bodley 467, is that a single scribal text may give evidence for more than one Middle English dialect.

In the case of Sidney Sussex 89 the benefits to the dialectologist of this degree of analytic detail are clear: the text is removed from its erroneous position in Theddlethorpe, and a section of its usage is confidently placed some fifty miles to the southwest. This sort of study may sound a caveat to the student who wishes to use dialectal analysis for the quick and easy localization of a manuscript; the process is not always simple. But it has the advantage of granting us insights into other matters. The Sidney Sussex scribe gives evidence, albeit through the veneer of his own usage, of an

³⁸ J. R. R. Tolkien, "Ancrene Wisse and Hali Meidhad," *Essays and Studies* 14 (1929), 104-26. But cf. Benskin and Laing, §7.2.

antecedent stage of copying involving two differing strands of northern language. The three hands of Bodley 467 illustrate the way in which three scribes may share the work of copying a book and in the process affect each other's copying practice. Hand B provides fairly accurate knowledge of the usage of their shared exemplar. These are small steps in the building of textual histories. But if similar analysis were given to the other seventeen uninterpolated texts of Rolle's *English Psalter*, it would be surprising if knowledge of their textual relationships were not considerably augmented.

Investigations of this kind may induce in some of us the exhilaration of a Sherlock Holmes, for whom the elucidation of the apparently complex is its own reward. However, scholars tend, understandably enough, to be more interested in the texts and manuscripts they themselves are working on than in other people's. Now that *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* is published, the data and methodology in it are available to everyone. Those who care to will be able to carry out similar investigations on any manuscript or text that may interest them. Such studies need no longer be the preserve of the dialectologist or linguistic historian alone; the integration of different disciplines can only help to increase our knowledge and understanding of manuscripts and their contents. The principles illustrated here are of service also to the editor and the textual critic, for it is the application of such principles to "unworthy" texts as well as to "good" ones that may lead to fresh insights into textual histories or authorial spellings. In the words of Ian Doyle: "It is impossible to pursue manuscript studies nowadays satisfactorily in individual isolation, for one cannot find all one ought to know by oneself and one ought not to keep all one knows to oneself; the jigsaw puzzle we are all working on is so big that it may need the help of every eye to try to fit a piece in it."³⁹

³⁹ A. I. Doyle, "Retrospect and Prospect," *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Cambridge, Eng., 1983), pp. 142–46.

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