

June 27 [June 6], 2003

CLASS 5: Regional Varieties of Middle English

External History: The Middle English Period (1066-1500)

Middle English (ME) is the name of the period of the language from **1066 to 1500**. The language underwent **many important changes** in this period (*sound change* ⇒ *morphological breakdown* ⇒ *syntax*), and was also subject to **extensive French influence** (*vocabulary*).

Externally, Anglo-Norse England is **conquered** by William, Duke of Normandy, at the **Battle of Hastings** (1066). The **language and culture of Normandy** (northwestern France) and **Paris** come in contact with Anglo-Norse culture.

King Edward (aka the Confessor)

- spent half his life in *exile in Normandy* (northern France) (while Cnut and sons ruled England)
- placed *Norman friends in high offices* in England
- had *little interest in ruling* the country
- had *little interest in marriage*
- *moved the capital* from Winchester to London
- *died in 1066*, leaving no children and no clear choice of heir

Three contenders for England's throne

- Harold Godwinson
 - son of Edward's main advisor
 - chosen to be king by England's earls
- Harald Hardraade
 - King of Norway & Denmark
 - claimed Edward had promised throne
- Duke William of Normandy
 - William was Edward's distant cousin

Who were the Normans?

- *Norsemen* ('Norman'), i.e. 'northmen' = Vikings who invaded northern France in early 900s
- *adopted* language, religion, and customs of the French
- ruthlessly *suppressed* rebellious French barons
- William, a Norman, became *Duke of Normandy* in 1035
- *befriended Edward* during Edward's exile in France

Yet another Germanic conquest of England: The Norman Conquest

- William prepares to invade England, *summer of 1066*; delayed by weather
- Harald Hardraade invades *first in the north*
- Godwinson defeats Hardraade's army at *Stamford Bridge*, Oct. 25
- wind changes; the Normans *sail for England*, Oct. 27
- Godwinson and his army must *march south* to fight the Normans
- the English *lose at Hastings*; Godwinson dies
- Duke William of Normandy becomes *king of England*
- the *Bayeux Tapestry* [<http://hastings1066.com/baythumb.shtml>]

Norman rule in England

- the "Channel State": England and France one empire under William
- William replaced *English earls, abbots, bishops* with French ones
- the Normans ruthlessly *suppress English resistance*
- *Norman feudalism* established in England; cements social-class divisions
- general *linguistic outcome*:
 - French becomes the language of church rulers, the government, the military, and the shires
 - vast majority of English people remain English-speaking
 - BUT writing in English virtually ceases for 200 years

History makes literature

- 1133-1189: *rule of Henry II*
 - born in Angers, France; French-speaking; possessed Dukedom of Normandy
 - 1153: married Eleanor of Aquitaine, a well-educated ruler of a huge chunk of Southern France; had been married to the King of France

Milestones of the Middle English period

- 1095: beginning of the *Crusades*
 - win Holy Land back from Muslim conquerors
 - control trade routes for valuable Eastern commodities: silk, spices, etc.
- *age of pilgrimages*
 - England (Canterbury)
 - Europe: sites in Spain, Rome
 - ultimate: Jerusalem
 - ⇒ linguistic effects:
 - loanwords from Arabic; from lands along Crusade & pilgrimage routes
 - in England: travelers from different dialect areas mix for long periods of travel together; could this lead to decrease of dialect differences?
- 1348: *Black Death* (bubonic plague) arrives in England
 - kills 1/3 of the population (all social statuses)
 - causes a labor shortage
 - increases bargaining power of laborers, therefore wages
 - increases migration to cities; urban populations grow
 - destabilization of rigid feudal social structure
 - one aspect of move towards class mobility: the ability to rise in social status
 - ⇒ linguistic effects:
 - movement to urban areas brings other dialects to cities, especially London
- 1348-1385: *schools* for youth shift to *teaching in English*, not French or Latin
- 1362: - *parliament* decrees English as *language of courts*
 - conducts *legislative sessions* in English
 - ⇒ linguistic effects:
 - increases use of English in high-function domains
 - cements legacy of French contact
 - French loanwords, spellings carry over in these functional domains

- London *emerging* as England's major city:
- *political*: Royal court & government bureaucracy in London
 - e.g., government documents office (the *Chancery*)
- *cultural*: *aristocracy* (even earls of distant earldoms) maintain presence in London
- *economic*: *thriving* commerce outgrows other English cities
- *intellectual*: major centers nearby of
 - religion (Canterbury)
 - scholarship (Oxford, Cambridge)
- 1476: *William Caxton* sets up Britain's first *printing press* in Westminster, close to royal court
 - ⇒ general linguistic effect by the end of the ME period:
 - dialect of London area's elite is primed to become the most prestigious dialect
- the first *printed* book in English:
 - Caxton's translation from French of the *History of Troy*, printed 1473 (in Europe)

Internal History: The Middle English Period (1066-1500)

The Middle English period...

- *divides* roughly in two:
 - early half, 1066-c.1300
 - later half, c.1300-late 1400s
- *Early ME period*
 - strong political and cultural ties between England's ruling class and their territories in France
- *Later ME period*
 - 1204: King John of England loses Normandy
 - earls of England must choose between lands in England and in Normandy
 - in continued wars (Hundred Years War), English earls lose all lands in France by 1453
 - English aristocracy begins to self-identify as English; growing animosity towards France

Linguistic consequences of the Norman Conquest

- English always *outnumbered* Normans
 - aristocrats gradually *lose French identity* (1200-1400)
 - *triglossia* arose: French & Latin 'high', English 'low'
- Multilingualism: The individual vs. the society**
- *individual bi- or multilingualism*: - a person commands more than one language
 - *societal bi- or multilingualism*: - several languages are used in one society
 - but some/many individuals may command only one
 - in England, *early ME period*:
 - peasant majority was monolingual (English)
 - aristocracy was monolingual (French)
 - clergy/scholars bilingual (French/Latin)
 - 'interface' classes bilingual (French/English)

Diglossia and triglossia: Societal multilingualism

- *diglossia, triglossia*
 - condition of a multilingual society in which different languages occupy different social niches
- 'high' functions:
 - 'high' culture: government, law, religion, education, literature, science, arts, 'high society'
- 'low' functions:
 - 'common folk': home speech, folk/popular songs, tales, everyday commerce

Linguistic consequences of the Norman Conquest: Triglossia in the ME period

Early ME period

- high functions in Latin:
 - religious and government documents
 - university teaching, scholarship
 - literature
- high functions in French:
 - everyday speech of royal court, aristocratic families, their higher servants;
 - some 'high art' (romances; poetry)
- low functions in English:
 - everyday speech of peasant majority, many townfolk;
 - folk tales, songs
- commerce in English and French:
 - buying/selling served both aristocracy and common folk

Linguistic trends of later ME period

Later ME period

- English begins to permeate high-function domains:
 - aristocracy shifts to English as ties to France decline
 - increased government, education, and arts in English
- French becomes a 'taught' language; few native speakers
- Latin retains importance in church, government, scholarship

Language in the later ME period: Who spoke what?

- *English* re-establishes itself as England's primary language:
 - English has remained the language of the *common folk*
- aristocracy undergoes a gradual *language shift* from *French to English*
- French retains prestige as *language of high culture*, but is learned in schools, not at home
- Latin retains role of primary language of *government writing, scholarship/education, religion*

Middle English: French influence on spoken and written English

- on spoken English:
 - new sounds* (ex. from Chaucer's *Prologue to Canterbury Tales*)
 - /v/ *vertu, veyne, devout, aventure*
 - /z, s/ were not phonemic in OE!]

new words

- reflect nature of cultural contact:
 - a. government, law, military, war
 - b. aristocratic titles
 - c. 'high culture'
 - arts, fine manners, religion, fashion
 - d. class divisions
- Anglo-Saxon: *cow, sheep, swine, calf* ['on the hoof']
- French: *beef, mutton, pork, veal* ['on the plate']
- French: *master, servant, dinner, banquet, supper*
- French spelling practices replace Anglo-Saxon (A-S = OE) ones:
 - A-S *cw* > *qu* [*cwen* > *queen*]
 - A-S *sc* > *sh* [*biscop* > *bishop*]
 - A-S *c* > *ch* [*cirice* > *church*]
 - A-S *hw* > *w, wh* [*hwæt* > *what*]
 - A-S *æ* > *a, e* [*hwæt* > *what*]
 - A-S *u* > *ou* [*hus* > *house*]
 - A-S *h* > *gh* [*niht* > *night*]
 - A-S *cg, gg* > *dg* [*brycg* > *bridge*]
- Over time, *runes cease to be used*
- thorn* and *eth* (runic symbols) > *th* [*that*]
- wyn* > *w, uu* [*uurecce* 'wretch']

Other changes in spelling practices

- doubling of vowel symbol = long vowel
 - OE *god* > ME *good* 'good'
 - OE *swete* > ME *sweete* 'sweet'
- reduced suffixes > 'silent e' (sometimes pronounced, sometimes not in ME)
 - OE *nam* > ME *name*
- *u, v* interchangeable
 - haue, gyuen / have, give*
- ME pronunciation still different from Modern English:
 - queen, night, house, good*

Middle English writings

- many documents
- diverse dialects (north, midlands, south)
- diverse genres: prose, poems, plays, letters, songs
- *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* until 1154

[<http://sunsite.berekeley.edu/OMACL/anglo>]

Lexicon

- There are three common ways of defining the *lexicon*:
 - (i) one person's mental inventory of meaningful expressions
 - (ii) sum total of all speakers' inventories for one language
 - (iii) a written document (book, online) presenting a portion of (ii)
- *lexeme*: anything that has to be memorized, not constructed by rule
 - single words
 - fish, prestidigitation, on, compose*
 - word-parts
 - writer, prestidigitation, decompose, composing*
 - lexical phrases (meaning is clear from parts):
 - wash the dishes, go grocery shopping, that reminds me, make a mistake, won't do any harm*
 - idioms (meaning has to be memorized; can't be guessed from parts):
 - bought the farm, flew off the handle, off one's rocker, toss one's cookies*
- **Etymology**
 - etymology of a word = history of the word
 - origin (source language; épathi from source to English)
 - changes in meaning, pronunciation, spelling, part of speech
 - documented occurrences in texts
 - *Oxford English Dictionary* [<http://www.oed.com>]
 - how lexicographers develop etymologies
 - folk vs. expert etymologies
- **Folk etymology**
 - an unfamiliar word is re-interpreted as containing familiar parts
 - ME, ENE: *woman* > *woe-man*; *asparagus* > *sparrowgrass*
 - French: *crevice* > *crayfish* Spanish: *cucaracha* > *cockroach*
 - NE: *history* > *his story* *forced-air heat* > *four-stair heat*
 - next door* > *next store* *take for granted* > *take for granite*
 - surname* > *sir name* *old wives' tale* > *old wise tale*
 - a mine of information* > *a mind of information*
- *etymon*: ancestor of current word; earlier forms of word PIE **pod-* > English *foot*
- *cognate* words: words in different languages from the same ancestor word

English	German	Spanish	French	PIE
<i>foot</i>	<i>Fuss</i>	<i>pie</i>	<i>piéd</i>	* <i>pod-</i>
<i>father</i>	<i>Vater</i>	<i>padre</i>	<i>père</i>	* <i>pater</i>
<i>tooth</i>	<i>Zahn</i>	<i>diente</i>	<i>dent</i>	* <i>dont-</i>
<i>one</i>	<i>eins</i>	<i>uno/una</i>	<i>un/une</i>	* <i>oinos</i>
<i>two</i>	<i>zwei</i>	<i>dos</i>	<i>deux</i>	* <i>duwou</i>

- *doublets*: ‘twice-borrowed’ words: same word from different languages

Parisian French	Norman French	Latin
<i>guard</i>	<i>ward</i>	
<i>gauge</i>	<i>wage</i>	
<i>guarantee</i>	<i>warranty</i>	
<i>regard</i>	<i>reward</i>	
<i>chase</i>	<i>catch</i>	
<i>chattel</i>	<i>cattle</i>	
<i>lance</i>	<i>launch</i>	
<i>choir</i>		<i>chorus</i>
<i>prove</i>		<i>probe</i>
<i>frail</i>		<i>fragile</i>
		<i>ounce/inch < Lat. uncia</i>

Norse	Old English
<i>skirt</i>	<i>shirt</i>
<i>scrub</i>	<i>shrub</i>
<i>dike</i>	<i>ditch</i>
<i>hale</i>	<i>whole</i>

Where has English gotten its words from?

- internal sources: inheritance in a straight line from PIE through Proto-Germanic, OE, etc. to NE
- use of existing vocabulary to build new words
- external sources: words borrowed from a language in contact with English

Native words

- internal sources: native words
- retention of a word since Proto-Indo-European (PIE > PGmc > OE > ME > ENE > NE)
 - PIE **dheusóm* ‘breathing creature’ > PGmc **deuzam* ‘creature’ > OE *deor* ‘animal’ > NE deer ‘antlered ruminant’
 - PIE **pod-*, **ped-* ‘foot’ > PGmc **fot* > OE *foet* > ME *foet*, *foot* > NE *foot*
- creation of a word using existing resources (borrowed or native)
 - e.g. prefixes, suffixes, compounding, clipping, etc.
 - fix + ation* > *fixation* — *spin + doctor* > *spin doctor* — *professional* > *pro*
- external, non-native sources: borrowings from other languages
- different major and minor ‘lenders’ in different periods of English

Borrowed words

- source languages of borrowed words at different periods; each reflects nature of contact
- Common (Proto) Germanic period (before migration to Britain)
- unknown substratum language??
- Latin: trade, war

- Old English period (in order of quantity):
 - Norse: Danelaw settlers
 - Latin; Greek via Latin
 - Celtic (minor, except place names)
- Early Modern English period:
 - Latin (Renaissance/Enlightenment borrowings)
 - Greek (Renaissance/Enlightenment borrowings)
 - languages of the world (exploration/empire)
 - other European languages (high culture, trade)

Heavy borrowing from French occurred in two phases

1. *1066-1250*: About 900 words were borrowed during this phase, with most of them showing the effects of Anglo-Norman phonology. Examples from this source are:

Social: baron, noble, dame, servant, messenger, feast, minstrel, juggler, largess

Literary: story, rime, lay, douzepers

Church: The largest number of words were borrowed for use in religious services since the French-speaking Normans took control of the church in England.

2. *1250-1400*: The heaviest borrowing from French occurred in this period because after about 1250 there were more French speakers who began speaking English — remember the loss of Normandy in 1204. The words borrowed during this phase are found in many areas.

Government/Administrative: govern, government, administer, crown, state, empire, royal, majesty, treaty, statute, parliament, tax, rebel, traitor, treason, exile, chancellor, treasurer, major, noble, peer, prince, princess, duke, squire, page (but *not* king, queen, lord, lady, earl), peasant, slave, servant, vassal

Ecclesiastical: religion, theology, sermon, confession, clergy, cardinal, friar, crucifix, miter, censor lectern, abbot, convent, creator, savior, virgin, faith, heresy, schism, solemn, divine, devout, preach, pray, adore, confess

Law: justice, equity, plaintiff, judge, advocate, attorney, petition, inquest, felon, evidence, sue, accuse, arrest, blame, libel, slander, felony, adultery, property, estate, heir, executor

Military/Army & Navy: (Much of the fighting was done in France; many now-obsolete words for pieces of armor, etc., were borrowed at this time.) army, navy, peace, enemy, arms, battle, spy, combat, siege, defense, ambush, soldier, guard, mail, buckler, banner, lance, besiege, defend, array

Clothing: habit, gown, robe, garment, attire, cape, coat, collar, petticoat, train, lace, embroidery, pleat, buckle, button, tassel, plume, satin, taffeta, fur, sable, blue, brown, vermilion, russet, tawny, jewel, ornament, broach, ivory, turquoise, topaz, garnet, ruby, pearl, diamond

Food: feast, repast, collation, mess, appetite, tart, sole, perch, sturgeon, sardine, venison, beef, veal, mutton, port, bacon, toast, cream, sugar, salad, raisin, jelly, spice, clove, thyme

Social: curtain, couch, lamp, wardrobe, screen, closet, leisure, dance, carol, lute, melody

Hunting: rein, curry, trot, stable, harness, mastiff, spaniel, stallion, pheasant, quail, heron, joust, tournament, pavilion

Art, Learning, Medicine: painting, sculpture, music, beauty, color, image, cathedral, palace, mansion, chamber, ceiling, porch, column, poet, prose, romance, paper, pen, volume, chapter, study, logic, geometry, grammar, noun, gender, physician, malady, pain, gout, plague, pulse, remedy, poison

Common words and expressions include *nouns* — age, air, city, cheer, honor, joy; *adjectives* — chaste, courageous, coy, cruel, poor, nice, pure; *verbs*—advance, advise, carry, cry, desire; *phrases* — draw near, make believe, hand to hand, by heart, without fail (*loan-translations*)

Middle English Dialects

There was **no standard form** of the language in the **ME** period, unlike **NE** obviously, and unlike **OE** too; as we have seen, West Saxon was a kind of standard OE. **Standard (British) NE** comes from the **East Midlands dialect**, an important one as it includes London, Oxford & Cambridge; see *Map 1*. There was also a standard based on the **Northern dialect** in the 15 & 16th centuries: **Scots**. Given the lack of a standard in ME, the texts show a great deal of **regional variation**.

The main **regional divisions** correspond roughly to those of **OE**:

- Kentish gives *South Eastern* dialects
- West Saxon gives *South Western* dialects
- Mercian gives the *Midland* dialects (*East & West*)
- Northumbrian gives *Northern* dialects

And the **OE dialects** correspond to an extent to the different dialects of the **Germanic settlers** (e.g. Kentish derives from the language of the Jutes).

To some extent, the OE and ME dialect divisions reflect the **Anglo-Saxon heptarchy**: Northumbria, Mercia, East Anglia, Essex, Sussex, Kent.

So the dialects aren't corruptions of or divergences from some pre-existing norm, but historically rooted forms — of which **Standard English** is just one which has **special privileges**, because its speakers did, from the 15th century onwards.

Principle Features of the ME Dialects

Phonology

OE /a/	>	ME /a, ai/	(North):	<i>ham</i>	'home'
	>	ME /o/	(Midlands, South):	<i>home</i>	
OE /y/	>	ME /i/	(North):	<i>brig(ge)</i>	'bridge'
	>	ME /e/	(Southeast):	<i>bregge</i>	
	>	ME /u/	(Southwest, Midlands):	<i>brugge</i>	
OE /æ/	>	ME /a/	(North, Southwest, East Midlands):	<i>dag</i>	'day'
	>	ME /e/	(Southeast, West Midlands):	<i>deg</i>	
OE /a/	>	ME /o/	[before a nasal] (West Midlands):	<i>hond</i>	'hand'

Orthography (which gives further indications about ME phonology)

Southern & West Midlands have *z* and *v* for initial /s/ and /f/: *zea, fox*

Northern has *g* and *k* where Southern & Midlands have various spellings (indicating affrication):
kirk (Northern) vs. *church* (Southern)

Northern & Scots have *q(u)(h)* for *wh*: *quhat* — Southern has *w*: *wat*

Morphology

- 1 present participle: *-and(e)* in Northern ME (e.g. *singand(e)* 'singing')
-ing(e) in Southeastern & Midlands ME
- 2 past participle: *y-* prefix in Southern & West Midlands ME
no prefix in Northern ME
- 3 *they / them / their*: a Scandinavian borrowing, spreads from North to South
• Chaucer (a 14c Londoner) has *they / hem / here*
- 4 *she / sho* (3SG.FEM): also spread south (replacing *hi / ho*) — obscure origin
- 5 verb endings: Northern ME has *-s* for 3SG and all plural persons
Southern ME has *-th* (also written with *thorn ð/þ*)
Midlands ME has *-th* in 3SG and *-en* in plural
- 6 case and gender: disappears earlier in Northern ME

Syntax

Very little is known about ME syntactic variation, but the **northern dialects** are innovative. Many **NE features** start there. However, how much is due to **Scandinavian influence** is still a debated question. **VO patterns** are found earlier in Northern ME, as is **decliticization** (Class 7).

Reading

Barber 1993: ch. 7 — Blake 1992: ch. 2 — Pyles & Algeo 1982: ch. 6

Middle English Texts

1568, Sir Thomas Fulwood, *The Enemy of Idleness*:

“If we speak to our inferior, we must use a certayne kynde of modest and civill authoritie, in giving them paynely to understand our intent and purpose. A marchant having many servantes, to his cheifest may speake or sryte by thys terme, *you*: but to them whome he less esteemeth, and are more subjec tto correction, he maye use this term, *thou*, or otherwise at his discretion.”

