Leeds Studies in English

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THE ORIGINAL DIALECTS OF THE HARLEY LYRICS.[1]

We are probably safe in assuming that the forty English lyrics[2] contained in MS. Harley 2253 have come down to us in the handwriting of a single scribe.   It is probable too that the scribe lived in some part of the West Midlands, since the prevailing dialect in all the lyrics has marked West Midland features, and agrees with that of the Katherine Group in most essential respects, when allowance is made for the difference in date.[3]   As has been pointed out by Dr. C. T. Onions,[4] the arguments of Thomas Wright[5] for assigning the text to Leominster are inconclusive, but they offer useful support for the evidence of dialect.

There are, however, many forms, especially in rime, which are not characteristic of the West Midland dialect, and these are best explained by supposing that some or all of the lyrics were not composed by the scribe of the Harley MS., but were copied by him from MSS. written in other dialects.   The view that all the poems are not the work of one man is supported by their wide variety, both in subject matter and date, and by the fact that different versions of several of the lyrics are found in other MSS.   Böddeker, in his edition, assigned most of the lyrics to one dialect or another, but gave little or no evidence;   A. Schlüter[6] discussed the dialects of the lyrics much more systematically, but did not deal with the political poems, which

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[1] I am indebted to Professor E. V. Gordon and to Professor Bruce Dickins for suggestions about the arrangement and subject matter of this article, though the responsibility for mistakes is mine.

[2] Edited by K. Böddeker in *Altenglische Dichtungen des MS. Harl.* 2253, Berlin, 1878; references to the lyrics in this article are to this edition.

[3] Mary S. Serjeantson, *The Dialects of the West Midlands in Middle English*, in R.E.S. III, 324.

[4] R.E.S. III, 62 note.

[5] *Specimens of Lyric Poetry* (Percy Soc., 1842), p. vi.

[6] *Über die Sprache und Metrik der mittelenglischen weltlichen und geistlichen lyrischen Lieder des MS. Harl.* 2253, in Herrigs Archiv, LXXI, 153 *ff.*

present many interèsting problems, and based some of his conclusions on doubtful etymologies,[7] while he often failed to allow for the existence of variant forms in Old English;[8] Dr. J. P. Oakden[9] has discussed the dialects of some of the lyrics, but the scope of his book allowed of only a slight treatment, and here too evidence is sometimes based on unlikely etymologies.[10]

Various attempts have been made to fix boundaries for Middle English sound changes; recent lists of dialect features with boundaries are those given by Dr. Serjeantson and Oakden in the works cited, and that given by the editors of the projected Middle English Dictionary.[11] But it is doubtful whether any change can be so clearly localized as the drawing of such boundary lines would imply. The proper boundary of any dialect features would seem to be not a line but a belt (often of considerable width) where that feature, though not in general use, would be known and might be used to satisfy the demand of rime. Moreover, the scarcity of our evidence causes us to describe as characteristic of a certain dialect forms which may have occurred in other areas that are not adequately represented by texts. It therefore seems better to be content with general indications of direction in locating changes, and not to regard any ascription of a poem to a certain area as proved unless it is supported by the evidence of several tests. Those forms that can be fixed by rime are most valuable for our purpose, though a few others may be admitted in corroboration of other evidence.

[7] e.g. at G.L. XVI, 28 he follows Böddeker in deriving *hawe* from O.E. *heáh* (p. 158), whereas it is almost certainly from O.N. *agi*; at G.L. III, 60 he connects *fyle* with OE. *fylan* (p. 157), whereas it is more probably to be derived from O.F. *vil* (see Jordan, *Handbuch der mittelenglischen Grammatik*, para. 215 Anm.).

[8] e.g. in his comment on G.L. II, 25 he ignores O.E. *nōmon*, beside *nāmon*; G.L. VI, 4, *noht*, beside *nāht* (p. 158).

[9] *Alliterative Poetry in Middle English: The Dialectal and Metrical Survey*, Manchester, 1930.

[10] e.g. at W.L. X, 4 f. he derives *bowes* from O.E. *boga*, and *wowes* from O.E. *wāg*, whereas the etymons are probably *bōg* and *wōgian* respectively.

[11] Samuel Moore, Sanford B. Meech, and Harold Whitehall, *The Middle English Dictionary*, in P.M.L.A., XLVIII, 281.

The chief difficulties of using words occurring in rime for the purposes of this investigation are, first, that many of the poems are so short that there are few rimes significant for dialect, and, second, that we can never be sure how careful a poet was in his use of rimes.   For example, final -*e* seems to be ignored at P.L. VIII, 17 *ded*: *sayde*, and at W.L. VII, 25 *ywisse*: *blisse*: *cusse*: *his*.   Nor can we be sure that a poet will not rime together open and close *ē* or *ō*; O.E. *a*(*o*) before a nasal consonant seems to rime with both open and close *ō* at P.L. V, 129 *fon*: *bigon*: *y-don*, and a rime of close *ē* with open *ē* occurs at G.L. XVII, 58 *kéép*: *dungheep*.   But where the form of one dialect gives a much better rime than that of another we are probably fairly safe in assuming the original dialect of the poem in which the rime occurs.

The method followed will be to give the approximate distribution of each dialect feature, followed by a list of the rimes in the Harley Lyrics that illustrate it.   From the data thus collected the approximate original dialects of most of the lyrics will be suggested.   Lastly such corroborative evidence as is supplied by the vocabulary, allusions, or subject matter of the lyrics will be given.

(1)   Early M.E. *ā* became *ȩ̄* in the South and Midlands at the beginning of the thirteenth century, but remained in the North until the fifteenth century.   In North Midland dialects *ā* might occur as a concession to rime, and is found in Myrc, Audelay, and Robert Mannyng.[12]

(a)   The northerly form is fixed by rime in:—

G.L. VI, 3 care: bare: sare.

(b)   In three other poems we have the rime of O.E. -*āw*- with O.E. or O.N. -*ag*-.   This rime was common further south than that of *ā* and *a* in other positions, but may be taken as suggesting northerly origin.   The examples are:—

P.L. VI, 9 to-drawe: yknawe: sawe: lawe, also v. 177;

P.L. VII, 34 crawe: mawe: lawe: drawe;

G.L. XVI, 26 drawe: hawe (O.N. agi): knowe: lowe.

[12] Oakden, pt. 6; Luick, *Historische Grammatik der englischen Sprache*, para. 369.

(c)   Rimes suggesting southerly origin are:—

P.L. I, 12 wyndesore: more, also v. 21;

P.L. II, 39 wost: arost: chost;

P.L. V, 129 fon: bigon: y-don;

P.L. VIII, 22 namore: ycore, also v. 65;

W.L. IV, 25 wot: lot: blod;

G.L. I, 57 sore: namore: lore: frore;

G.L. VIII, 77 so: do: wo: fro;

G.L. IX, 9 non: Symeon;

G.L. XII, 37 sor: tresor;

G.L. XV, 33 sore: forlore: ybore: þer-fore;

G.L. XVIII, 10 more þer-fore: sore: ore.

(2)   Prim. O.E. *æ*, except when affected by combinative changes, gave *a* in the North and North Midlands and *e* in the South in Middle English; in the South Midlands both forms were common, and some of the Harley Lyrics have both *a-* and *e-* forms fixed by rime in the same poem, e.g. P.L. VI, G.L. II. From the beginning of the thirteenth century forms with *a* begin to replace those with *e* in the South, so that *e-* forms are more certain indications of dialect than *a-* forms, though it may be noted that *wes* sometimes occurs, owing to lack of stress, in texts that have *a* in other words.[13]

(a)   Evidence of a southerly dialect is to be found in:—

P.L. VI, 33 pes: les: wes: res;

W.L. X, 35 lasteles: wes: nes, also v. 58;

G.L. II, 39 pees: wees: lees, also v. 55;

G.L. III, 26 beste: faste, also v. 52.

(b)   Evidence of a more northerly dialect is to be found in:—

P.L. II, 38 wax: tax: lax: borstax;

P.L. V, 33 was: gras: pas: cas: bras: glas;

P.L. VI, 197 alas: was, also v. 6;

W.L. VI, 13 caste: laste: faste;

W.L. VII, 7 glad: bad: bistad;

G.L. II, 19 bistad: bad;

G.L. XVIII, 30 fast: ycast.

[13] Serjeantson, pt. 1; Oakden, pt. 18.

(3)   O.E. $\overleftarrow{æ}^1$ and $\overline{æ}^2$ became open or close $\bar{e}$ in different dialects in Middle English,[14] but since the dialectal distribution of forms is uncertain, and since, as we have seen, a careless poet might rime open $\bar{e}$ with close $\bar{e}$, the evidence from the development of O.E. $\overline{æ}$ has not been used here.

(4)   The conditions governing the dates of the shortening of O.E. $\overline{æ}^1$ and $\overline{æ}^2$ are at present too uncertain to allow this to be used as a test of dialect.   Pogatscher[15] and others have shown that the shortening of O.E. $\overline{æ}^1$ to a is generally a southerly feature in place names, but the evidence of texts is contradictory.[16]

Serjeantson[17] says that the Harley Lyrics have a for the shortening of O.E. $\overline{æ}^2$; it may be pointed out that, though a is the usual spelling, forms with e are also found, fixed by rime, e.g. G.L. XII, 24 *led*: *bed*, G.L. XIV, 19 *mest*: *rest*.

(5)   O.E. y, $\bar{y}$, were unrounded and written i or y in the East Midlands and North; in South-Eastern they had become e, $\bar{e}$, already in late Old English; in the West Midland and South-Western dialects a rounded vowel remained until well into the fifteenth century, though unrounded forms spread to these areas during the fourteenth century.   At the date of MS. Harley 2253, however, we are probably safe in regarding rimes of O.E. y with i as indicating East Midland or Northern origin.   The evidence of some of the rimes in section (a) must be accepted with reserve, since palatal consonants (including O.E. *-nn-* < Gmc. *-nj-*) tended to favour unrounding in all dialects; and the many rimes of *kyng* with *-ing* must be ignored, since the form *cing* occurred in Old English.[18]

(a)   The Northern or East-Midland form is fixed by rime in the following cases:—

W.L. VII, 25 ywisse: blisse: cusse: his.   This is supported

[14] Serjeantson, pts. 2 and 3; Oakden, pts. 12 and 13.
[15] Anglia XXIII, 302.
[16] Oakden, p. 24.
[17] p. 189.
[18] Serjeantson, pt. 4; Oakden, pt. 5; Luick, para. 281; H. C. Wyld, *A Short History of English*, paras. 122, 158, 159.

by the rime *bryd*: *hyd* at v. 53, where O.E. *bridd* seems a more likely etymon than O.E. *brȳd* suggested by Schlüter;[19]

W.L. XI, 17 blynne: kynne: synne: wynne, also v. 21;

W.L. XIV, 10 munne: kunne: sunne: ywynne;

G.L. X, 22 synne: blynne;

G.L. XIII, 5 byginne: wynne: blynne: synne;

G.L. XVI, 18 fylle: ylle: stille: wille.

(b)   Two rimes probably show South-Eastern forms.

P.L. I, 27 synne: warynne: fenne: henne.   As the usual form of the proper name has *e* in the second syllable, and as the rime scheme of all the other stanzas in the poem is aaaa, this is probably a South-Eastern rime.   In the next stanza *waryn* rimes with O.E. and O. Fr. -*in*, but this is probably an example of the liberties taken with proper names to secure a rime.

P.L. V, 44 *prude*: *drede*.

The rime *deye*: *beye* at G.L. IX, 13 would be unlikely in the South (see point 16) or in westerly dialects.   The form *beye* seems to indicate a border dialect between South-Eastern and East Midland, but the original may have had *dye(n)*: *bye(n)* (see point 10).

(c)   The rime *wolle*: *fulle* at P.L. II, 45 as it stands is a West Midland or South-Western rime.   But the original may have had *wille*: *fille*, which would be possible in the East Midlands or North.   We can only say, therefore, that the rime makes South-Eastern origin unlikely.

Similarly, the assonance *tocknynge*: *mankynde* at G.L. VIII, 53, and *wepinge*: *kynde* at G.L. IX, 7, which Schlüter[20] gives as evidence of Midland or Northern origin, can be taken only as excluding the likelihood of South-Eastern origin, since -*unge*: -*kunde* might have been considered sufficient assonance. Schlüter also cites the rime *ȝynge*: *mynge* at G.L. XIV, 22 as evidence of northerly origin, but *ȝunge*: *munge* might have been considered sufficient assonance in westerly dialects, so that this too excludes only South-Eastern.

[19] p. 157.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 156.

(d)   The significance of the rimes *wiste*: *truste* at P.L. VI, 158, and *hure*: *syre* at P.L. IV, 19, is not clear, but perhaps points to some rounding influence of *s* on *i* similar to its influence on *e* in late West Saxon.[21]   Oakden[22] derives *hure* from O.E. *hȳr*, but the sense shows this to be unlikely; a more probable etymon is O. Fr. *hure*, ' hair of the head,' hence ' cap,' suggested by N.E.D.

(6)   The retention of a rounded vowel from O.E. *eo*, *ēo*, during the fourteenth century is a feature of the West Midland and South-Western dialects,[23] but it seems clear, as pointed out by Oakden,[24] that unrounded forms began to spread into these areas before the spread of the unrounded forms for O.E. *y*, *ȳ*, (see above, point 5).   A count of some nine hundred forms in the Harley Lyrics shows that for late O.E. *eo* and *ēo* unrounded forms (represented by *e*) predominate.   Since the MS. is probably the work of a West Midland scribe, the high proportion of unrounded forms illustrates the danger of assuming that unrounded forms, when fixed by rime, are proof of Eastern origin.   Such rimes, however would probably not be found in lyrics written in the extreme South-West, especially as there is reason to suppose that some of the lyrics are considerably older than the extant MS.

(a)   Rimes showing an unrounded vowel from O.E. *eo*, *ēo*, occur in the following lines (only one example is given from each of the fourteen lyrics that show the unrounding in rime):—

P.L. V, 57; VI, 153; VIII, 58; W.L. III, 3; V, 51; VII, 37; XII, 1; G.L. V, 3; VIII, 1; X, 48; XI, 2; XII, 51; XV, 9; XVII, 3.

(b)   One westerly form is perhaps fixed by the imperfect rime:—*swore*: *heore*: *þere-fore* P.L. IV, 49.   It is unlikely that the original had *hore* at v. 50, since that form is not otherwise recorded in the Harley Lyrics and since *heore* seems the distinctive form of the gen. pl. in this lyric.   (It occurs seven times in P.L. IV, but nowhere else in the Harley Lyrics).

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[21] Luick, para. 282.

[22] p. 111.

[23] Serjeantson, pt. 15; Oakden, pt. 14.

[24] p. 25.

(7)   The rounding of O.E. *a* before a single nasal consonant is at the date of this MS. characteristic of the West Midlands,[25] though some rounded forms occur elsewhere, notably in the " Lambeth Homilies," which Wyld[26] assigns to a Central Southerly dialect, perhaps that of Middlesex.   This possibility is of importance for our purposes, since P.L. V has a rounded vowel fixed by rime at v. 129, but has some south-easterly features.

(a)   Rounded forms are fixed by rime in:—

P.L. V, 129 fon: bigon: y-don;

(b)   Unrounded forms are fixed by rime in:—

P.L. V, 125 game: Iame: shame, *cf.* v. 68 (not fixed);

W.L. XI, 13 man: am: sham: lemman;

G.L. X, 45 shame: blame;

G.L. XIII, 9 wan: man: ycham: can.

(c)   The following rimes suggest West Midland or Northern origin, since in Northern we should have $a: \bar{a}$, in West Midland $o: \rho$, but elsewhere $a: \rho$.

P.L. VI, 222 mon: gon;

W.L. XIV, 16 anon: mon;

G.L. XI, 42 mon: non: lemmon: gon, also v. 37.

(d)   In one poem we have two examples of assonance of *man* with *cam* and *nam*, analogical preterite singulars of the verbs which were in Old English *niman* and *cuman*. .This does not give any certain indication of dialect, as an original -*mon*: *cōm*: *nōm* might be considered as giving sufficient assonance.   It is probable, however, that these forms point to non-West-Midland origin, since the forms as they stand give better assonance, and since they do not accord with the dialect of the MS. as a whole, which nearly always has -*on*, -*om* (except in the conjunction *ant*). The examples are:—

G.L. XIV, 25 wynman: cam: man;

G.L. XIV, 49 wymman: cam: nam.

(8)   Prim. O.E. *a* before *l* + consonant was not fronted and fractured in Anglian in Old English.   In Anglian the *a* was

[25] Serjeantson, pt. 10; Oakden, pt. 1.

[26] *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*, VI, 136, 139.

lengthened befòre *ld* and certain other consonant groups in late Old English, and fell in with O.E. $\bar{a}$, i.e. it became $\bar{\varrho}$ except in the North. In the South the fractured form gave $\tilde{\varrho}$ in Middle English, but Anglian forms early began to spread to the Southern area.[27]

(a)   The following rimes would be regular only in the Midlands:—

P.L. VI, 65 bolde: sholde: golde, also v. 129,

G.L. I, 42 folde: vnholde, also v. 50, etc.

(b)   The rime at P.L. IV, 37 *malle*: *alle*: *falle* would be regular in the North or Midlands.

(c)   Rimes of *wolde* (verb) with O.E. *-áld-* would not be usual in the South, but would be possible in either Midland or Northern dialects, since the Anglian dialects of Old English had *walde* beside *wolde*. Such rimes occur at:—

P.L. VI, 227 tolde: wolde;

W.L. IV, 50 wolde: colde: holde: nolde;

W.L. V, 3 wolde: bolde: tolde: folde;

W.L. X, 27 holde: wolde; folde;

G.L. I, 46 holde: tolde: wolde: bolde: colde;

(d)   The rime at G.L. III, 37, *helde*: *felde*: *gelde*: *elde*, may show the Southern development of *-eald-* to *éld-*, since v. 40, in which *felde* occurs, is almost a repetition of v. 21, and is very similar to W.L. X, 29, where the text has *folde* (riming with O.E. *-áld-*). It is possible, however, that *felde* should be regarded as a causative with *i* -mutation.

(9)   Prim. O.E. *a* in the group *al* + consonant + *i/j* gave *e* in most of the non-South-Western dialects in Middle English; in the northerly part of the West Midland area *a* was the usual development. South-Westerly dialects generally had *u*, though, as in the changes described under points 8 and 11, *e-* forms tend to spread to the South-Western area.[28]   Rimes that show *e* fixed by rime are:—

P.L. V, 116 telle: felle;

[27] Serjeantson, pt. 7, Wyld, para. 165.
[8] Serjeantson, pt. 8; Oakden, pt. 2.

W.L. VI, 9 helde: kelde;

W.L. VII, 39 telle: welle: helle;

G.L. I, 35 welde: belde: felde: gelde: helde;

G.L. III, 37 helde: felde: gelde: elde.

(10) Wyld, Serjeantson and Oakden,[29] deal with the development of O.E. *ēag*, *ēah*, (L.O.E. *ēg*, *ēh*) and arrive at the conclusion that it became *ī* in the Central part of the Midlands and South. But there seem no good grounds for confining this test to L.O.E. *ēg*, *ēh*, from O.E. *ēag*, *ēah*, since L.O.E. *ēg*, *ēh*, might come also from other sources, and one of the forms quoted by Wyld as an example of the development of O.E. *ēah-* is really an example of the development of *-ēoh-* (*thyis*, ' thighs '). Jordan[30] enumerates other possible origins for M.E. *-ēȝ-* which became *i*, but does not include O.E. *-ēog-*; Wright[31] does include examples of the development of O.E. *-ēog-* in describing this change. The rimes that give evidence are:—

P.L. VI, 37 þrye: lye, also v. 203;

P.L. VIII, 66 chiualerie: deye: heyȝe: crie;

G.L. VII, 25 dreȝe: marye;

G.L. XVII, 15 to-fye: lye; at v. 120 the spelling *lye*, which Böddeker emends to *leȝe*, is evidence of the same change.

(11) O.E. *ea*, *ēa*, were mutated to *ie*, *īe*, in West Saxon in Old English, and these were written *u* or *i* in the South-Western dialects of Middle English, but elsewhere became *e*, *ē*, when followed by *i/j*; Robert of Gloucester has *u* beside *e*, Trevisa had usually *u*, but in late Middle English Anglian forms spread south.[32] At the date of the Harley Lyrics, however, *e-* forms may be taken as evidence of non-South-Western dialect. This test may be applied also to the mutation of O.E. *eo*, *ēo*, followed by *i/j*, though with less certainty, since a few forms with *īo*, *ēo*, from Gmc. *eu* are found even in West Saxon.[33]

(a) The mutation of O.E. *ēa* rimes with *e* in the following cases:—

[29] Serjeantson, pt. 12; Oakden, pt. 17; Wyld, para. 172.   [30] para. 97.

[31] J. & E. M. Wright, *An Elementary Middle English Grammar*, para. 107.

[32] Serjeantson, pt. 11; Oakden, pt. 15.

[33] J. & E. M. Wright, *An Old English Grammar*, para. 138.

P.L. IV, 22 sleuen: breuen;

P.L. VI, 69 deme: ȝeme, also v. 110;

P.L. VIII, 81 stel: telle;

W.L. VIII, 27 breme: deme: seme: fleme;

W.L. IX, 19 leue: ȝeue;

W.L. X, 34 beste: heste;

W.L. XII, 9 speche: seche: eche: leche;

G.L. I, 64 fleme: queme;

G.L. III, 20 heste: leste;

G.L. IV, 45 best: rest: west: nest.

(b)　The mutation of O.E. *eo*, *ēo*, rimes with *e* in the following cases:—

P.L. III, 1 lede: nede: drede: bede;

P.L. V, 13 ene: tene: grene, also vv. 84, 113, 132;

W.L. IV, 58 nede: rede;

W.L. XI, 1 shene: sene: grene: mene;

W.L. XII, 13 bene: wene: sene: grene;

G.L. IV, 41 shene: bene: quene: sene;

G.L. VI, 11 grene: by-dene: sene:

G.L. IX, 46 nede: grede;

G.L. XIII, 17 lere: bere: dere.

(12)　Only the South-Western and South-West Midland dialects in Middle English show forms reflecting the Old English diphthongization after initial front consonants.[34]　The rime at P.L. VI, 45 ȝere: *duere* would be irregular in South-Western, since there the stem vowels in the two words would be *ẹ̄* and *ǖ* respectively.　An unrounded vowel in the second word might have been possible in the West Midlands at the date when this poem was composed (1306, see Böddeker's introduction to the poem; and see point 6 above), so that we cannot with safety exclude West Midland as a possible original dialect.

(13)　In southerly dialects *g* disappeared before *d* or *n* in late Old English, with lengthening of the preceding vowel, if this was short.　The boundaries of this feature in Middle English

[34] Wyld, para. 115.

are not clear; Jordan[35] gives it as ' ein wertvolles Dialekt-kriterium ' of the Southern dialects. Since the only poem where this change is fixed by rime seems by the weight of other evidence to be assignable to the North Midlands, we should perhaps assume that this feature had spread to the North Midlands by the date of this poem. The rime is: P.L. VIII, 17 *ded: sayde.*

(14) A rime that seems characteristic of the East Midlands area is that of *u* (< O.E. -*f*-) with *w* (< O.E. -*g*-). The change revealed by such rimes is illustrated by rimes in " Havelok the Dane " and is mentioned by Sisam in the note to v. 949 in his edition of that poem. I am indebted to Professor E. V. Gordon for pointing out that it is found also in the " Chronicle " of Robert Mannyng, e.g. v. 8629 *graue: lawe.* The only example of this change in the Harley Lyrics, and that an uncertain one, is *mawen: dawen: slawen: hauen* G.L. XIV, 43. It is not quite certain that v. 46 of this poem is intended to rime; the corresponding lines rime with the first three lines of the stanza in stanzas 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 10.

Sisam suggests that the change may be parallel to the change of *h* to *f* before *t*, which is also illustrated by rimes in " Havelok,[36] and which seems to have been a northerly feature. Such a rime occurs in the Harley Lyrics at W.L. XIV, 7 *þohte: ofte.*

(15) The unvoicing of final *d* or *g* when preceded by a liquid or nasal is given by Jordan[37] as a characteristic of West Midland, but the boundaries of the change are not sufficiently well defined to make this a very reliable test of dialect; forms with unvoicing may occur sporadically in other dialects. The rimes that show unvoicing are:—

P.L. IV, 8 kyng: swyuyng: ferlyng: dryng;

P.L. IV, 21 lonke: songe: wlonke: þonke;

W.L. II, 9 yhent: sent: lent;

G.L. I, 56 seint: meind: for-wleynt: feynt.

(16) In Midland and Northern dialects of Middle English

[35] para. 191.
[36] v. 883; and see Sisam's note on this line.
[37] para. 158.

verbs containing -cg- in Old English were remodelled from the
2nd and 3rd sing. of the present indicative.[38]   Examples in
rime in this text are:—

    (a)   Anglian forms;

G.L. III, 7 fayn: layn (p.p.): seyn (inf.): meyn;

G.L. IX, 25 seye: deye, also v. 13;

G.L. XVI, 50 say (inf.): may: day;

G.L. XVII, 81 seyn (inf.): aȝeyn, also v. 15.

    (b)   Southern form. P.L. VI, 201 brugge: sugge.

    (17)   The ending -(e)s in the 2nd and 3rd sing. of the present
indicative of verbs is found only in northerly dialects at the
date of this MS.[39]

    (a)   2nd sing. W. L. I, 18 sys: bis etc.;

    (b)   3rd sing. P.L. VIII, 29 wys: lys;

W.L. IX, 1 dawes: plawes;

G.L. X, 12 ouerwerpes: werkes;

G.L. XII, 53 boures: shoures: floures: honoures (verb).

    At W.L. V, 27 -es occurs at the end of a line but is not fixed by
rime.   There is at present an imperfect rime owing to the poem
having been copied from one dialect into another; the riming
words as they occur in the MS. are: *ledes: spredeþ: bredes:
redes,* and, since *-eþ* is the usual ending in the MS. as a whole,
we should probably regard *spredes* as the spelling of the original.

    (18)   Syncopated forms in the 3rd sing. of the present
indicative are recognised as indicating a southerly dialect,
though the exact boundary is uncertain.[40]   They are fixed by
rime in:

    W.L. IV, 2 wyt: byt: lyt: syt;

    W.L. XIII, 1 strit: slyt: byd: syt.

    (19)   The ending of the plural of the present indicative is
normally -(e)þ in the South; -e(n) in the Midlands; and -(e)s in
the North; though Northern forms are found also in the North
Midlands, and -(e)þ is the usual ending in the South-West
Midlands, including the dialect of this MS.[41]

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[38] Wright, *E.M.E. Grammar,* para. 415.   [39] Serjeantson, pt. 16; Oakden, pt. 36.
[40] Oakden, pt. 37.   [41] Serjeantson, pt. 17; Oakden, pt. 38.

(a) The Southern or South-West Midland form is fixed by rime in:—

G.L. III, 41 loht: at-goht: cloht: wroht.

(b) The Midland ending occurs in rime in:—

G.L. I, 13 suete: vnsete: vnmete: hete: þrete, also v. 74;

G.L. VIII, 71 þe: me: be: þre;

G.L. IX, 37 leren: beren;

G.L. XVII, 15 to-fye: lye; also v. 16.

(c) The Northern form is fixed by rime in:—

P.L. IV, 3 biledes (vb.): redes (sb.): gredes (vb.);

W.L. IX, 4 bowes (sb.); wowes (vb.).

(20) The ending *-es* in the 2nd sing. past tense indicative of weak verbs is a northerly feature.[42] This ending occurs in *bohtes* G.L. V, 18, riming with *sohtest*. It seems clear that one of the two forms should be emended. Böddeker emends to *bohtes: sohtes*; Professor Carleton Brown[43] to *bohtest: sohtest*. Since the dialect of the Harley Lyrics as a whole shows a strong preponderance of forms in *-est* (13 *-est*: 2 *-es*), we should probably adopt Böddeker's emendation and regard the rime a an indication of northerly origin.

We can use with fair safety the evidence of points 1, 2, 5, 8a, b, and c, 9, 10, 11a, 12, 17, 19; we may use with reserve that of points 6b, 7, 8d, 11b, 14, 15, 16, 18, 20; that of points 3, 4, 6a, 13 is best not used at all in dividing the lyrics ·into groups. The rimes offer no good evidence of the original dialect of W.L. III; the only evidence for P.L. III, W.L. VIII, XII, and G.L. IV is that of point 11, which shows that these lyrics are not likely to be of South-Western origin; the remaining lyrics may be divided on the evidence of the rimes into three groups, though in some cases further subdivision might be undertaken with safety. The numbers after each lyric refer to the number of the test which supplies evidence.

A. *Northerly.*

P.L. VII 1b shows N. or N.Mids.

W.L. I 17a shows N. or N.Mids.

W.L. V 8c shows N. or Mids.; 17b shows N. or N.Mids.

[42] Oakden, pt. 41.   [43] Carleton Brown, *Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century.* p. 10.

W.L. VI 2b shows N. or Mids.; 9 shows not S.W.

W.L. VII 2b shows N. or Mids.; 5a shows N. or E. Mids.; 9 shows not S.W.

W.L. IX 11a shows not S.W.; 17b and 19c show N. or N.Mids.

W.L. XI 5a shows N. or E.Mids. (7b suggests not W.Mid.; 11b suggests not S.W.).

W.L. XIV 5a shows N. or E.Mids. (7c suggests W.Mids. or N.;. 14 suggests N. or N.Mids.).

G.L. V (20 suggests N. or N.Mids.).

G.L. VI 1a shows N. or N.Mids. (11b suggests not S.W.).

G.L. X 5a shows E.Mids. or N.; 17b shows N. or N.Mids. (7b suggests not W.Mids.).

G.L. XI (7c suggests W.Mids. or N.).

G.L. XIII 5a shows E.Mids. or N. (7b suggests not W.Mids.; 11b suggests not S.W.).

G.L. XVI 1b shows N. or N.Mids.; 5a shows E.Mids. or N. (16a suggests N. or Mids.).

B. *Midland*.

P.L. II 1c shows S. or Mids.; 2b shows N. or Mids.; 5c shows not S.E.

P.L. IV 8b shows N. or Mids.; 11a shows not S.W.; 19c. shows N. or N.Mids. (6b suggests W.Mids. or S.W.; 15 suggests W.Mids.).

P.L. VI 1b shows N. or N.Mids.; 2a shows S. or Mids.; 2b N. or Mids.; 8a shows Mids.; 8c shows N. or Mids.; 10 shows centre of Mids. or S.; 11a and 12 show not S.W. (7c. suggests W.Mids. or N.; 16b suggests S. or S.Mids.).

P.L. VIII 1c shows S. or Mids.; 10 shows centre of Mids. or S.; 11a shows not S.W.; 17 shows N. or N.Mids.

W.L. II (15 suggests W.Mids.).

W.L. X 2a shows S. or Mids.; 8c shows N. or Mids.; 11a shows not S.W.

G.L. I 1c shows S. or Mids.; 19b shows Mids.; 8c shows N. or Mids.; 9 and 11a show not S.W. (15 suggests W.Mids.)

G.L. II 2a shows S. or Mids.; 2b shows N. or Mids.

G.L. III 2a shows S. or Mids.; 9 and 11a show not S.W.; 19a

shows S. or S.W.Mids. (8d suggests S. or S.Mids.; 16a suggests N. or Mids.).

G.L. VIII 1c shows S. or Mids.; 5c shows not S.E.; 19b shows Mids.

G.L. IX 1c shows S. or Mids.; 5b shows E.Mids. and suggests border of E.Mids. and S.E.; 5c shows not S.E.; 19b shows Mids. (11b suggests not S.W.; 16a suggests N. or Mids.).

G.L. XII 1c shows S. or Mids.; 17b shows N. or N.Mids.

G.L. XIV 5c shows not S.E. (7d suggests not W.Mids.; 14 suggests E.Mids.).

G.L. XVII 10 shows centre of Mids. or S.; 19b shows Mids. (16a suggests N. or Mids.).

G.L. XVIII 1c shows S. or Mids.; 2b shows N. or Mids.
C. *Southerly*.

P.L. I 1c shows S. or Mids.; 5b shows South-Easterly. (15 suggests W.Mids.).

P.L. V 1c shows S. or Mids.; 2b shows N. or Mids.; 5b shows South-Easterly; 9 shows not S.W. (7a suggests W.Mids. or Central Southern; 7b suggests not W.Mid.; 11b suggests not S.W.).

W.L. IV 1c shows S. or Mids.; 8c shows N. or Mids.; (11b suggests not S.W.; 18 suggests Southerly).

W.L. XIII (18 suggests Southerly).

G.L. VII 10 shows centre of Mids. or S.

G.L. XV 1c shows S. or Mids.

The most trustworthy evidence of the original dialects of the lyrics is that obtained from rimes, but some support for this evidence is to be obtained from other sources.

(a) *Forms not in rime*. Such forms provide evidence of stages through which a text may have passed, and suggest, but do not prove, conclusions about the original dialect. Character-istic southerly features, such as the retention of -*i*- in the second class of weak verbs, or syncope in the 3rd sing. present indicative of verbs, or the voicing of initial *f*, are fairly common, though not regular, in the dialect of the MS. as a whole, so that their occurrence in a lyric need call for no comment. But the

ending -(e)s in the 2nd and 3rd singular and in the plural of the
present indicative of verbs, and in the 2nd singular preterite
indicative of weak verbs seems to indicate a more northerly
dialect than that of the MS.   The forms with this ending that
occur, not in rime, in the Harley Lyrics are:—2 sg. pres. ind.
weldes G.L. XII, 53; 3 sg. pres. ind. *wetes* W.L. V, 70, *likes*
W.L. VIII, 24, *lumes* W.L. X, 23, *singes* W.L. XII, 1, *drynkes*
W.L. XII, 4, *haues* W.L. XIV, 13, *þenkes* G.L. X, 16, *gos* G.L.
X, 27; 3 pl. pres. ind. *þynkes* P.L. IV, 24, *wowes* W.L. VIII, 9,
springes W.L. XII, 2, *says* W.L. XII, 14; 2 sg. pret. ind.
mihtes W.L. XII, 11.   These forms support the ascription of
P.L. IV, W.L. V, XIV, G.L. X, XII, to a northerly dialect, and
show that W.L. VIII and XII, about which the rimes give little
evidence, were either composed in the North or have passed
through the hands of a northerly scribe.

  The usual ending of the plural of the present indicative in the
MS. is -(e)þ, so that forms with the Midland ending -e(n) may
be regarded as survivals of a more northerly stage.   The forms
with -e(n), not fixed by rime, are:—*sayen* P.L. IV, 26, *buen* P.L.
VIII, 29, G.L. XIII, 30, G.L. XVII, 132, *lyuen* W.L. IV, 27,
beyen W.L. IV, 40, *waxen* W.L. VIII, 15, W.L. XII, 1, G.L. IX,
8, *han* W.L. X, 59, 61, G.L. XVIII, 13, *ben* G.L. VIII, 189,
wepen G.L. IX, 9.[44]   All these lyrics have Midland forms fixed
by rime except W.L. VIII and XII, and they contain no rimes
that make Midland origin unlikely.

  The only forms of the 3rd person plural nominative of the
personal pronoun with the initial þ usual in Northern and East
Midland texts[45] are *þey* W.L. XI, 19 and *þei* G.L. XI, 9; both
poems are shown by the rimes to be northerly.

  The only forms of the genitive of the 3rd person plural of the
personal pronoun showing the -*a*-, which is characteristic of
South-Eastern (but is found occasionally elsewhere),[46] are *hare*
P.L. I, 17, and *ar* P.L. II, 27, 59.

  (b)   *Vocabulary*.   The evidence afforded by the vocabulary

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[44] Schlüter (p. 163) gives a list of Midland forms which is incomplete, but which
includes *haue* W.L. VI, 17, which is probably subjunctive.
[45] Oakden, pt. 28.   [46] Serjeantson, pt. 20; Oakden, pt. 30; Wyld, para. 213.

is slight.   Schlüter[47] quotes *til* W.L. IV, 3, and *clyngen* G.L. XI,
17 as words that are not found in the South.   But N.E.D.
shows that *til* in reference to time (as it is used in W.L. IV, 3),
was general English from c. 1300, and *clinge* occurs in the
" Owl and the Nightingale," v. 743.   In view of the scarcity of
Welsh loan words into English we may perhaps take the
occurrence of such words as suggesting that the poet lived near
to the Welsh border, though the etymology of two of the words
is not quite certain.   The words are:—*wolc* W.L. I, 24 (W
gwalch), *miles* W.L. VIII, 20 (W. *mil*), *crouþ* W.L. X, 45 (W.
crwth; this is the first recorded occurrence in English of a word
that later became fairly common).

(c)   *Allusions and subject matter*.   Böddeker[48] pointed out
that the fact that Sussex was the scene of the events described
in P.L. I supported the linguistic evidence for a South-Easterly
origin; the author gives the impression of being closely in
touch with the events he describes, and he assumes his
audience's familiarity with the places and the circumstances
(e.g. *þe mulne* at v. 16 is the first time a mill has been mentioned),
so that Böddeker's assumption seems reasonable.   It may also
be noted that most of Simon de Montfort's support came from
the south and east,[49] and the song was clearly written by one of
his supporters.   In the same way, P.L. V, which describes the
events leading up to the Battle of Courtray, might be assigned
most naturally to a South-Easterly region, where the people, by
personal contacts, would be most likely to be interested in
Flemish affairs.   This poem differs from Minot's poems on
Flemish affairs in that it describes events in which the English
were not directly engaged.

As Wright[50] and Schlüter[51] have pointed out, some of the
lyrics contain geographical names that provide some indication
of the district whence the poem may have come.   Most of these
geographical names occur in phrases of the type *from Irlond*

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[47] p. 164.   [48] p. 102.
[49] *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, eleventh edition, XVIII, 782.
[50] *Specimens of Lyric Poetry*, edited by Thomas Wright, p. vi.
[51] p. 154.

in-to ynde W.L'. IX, 12.   Sometimes, as in the example just quoted, the poet seems to have used two names almost at random, so long as they alliterated with each other.   But where both names represent places in the same part of the country we are probably justified in assuming that the poet lived in that district, especially if this conclusion accords with the linguistic evidence.   The identification of the places referred to is not always certain, but where there is doubt it happens that the different places that may be referred to are not very far apart.

W.L. I is shown by its rimes to belong to the North Midlands; the attribution to a Midland dialect is supported by v. 27, *ffrom weye he is wisist in-to wyrhale,* where *weye* probably refers to the river Wye that is tributary to the Severn, though the much shorter Derbyshire Wye that is tributary to the Derwent would accord better with a North Midland dialect.[52]   A West Midland origin for the poem is supported by the loan word *wolc* quoted above and, as pointed out by Carleton Brown,[53] by the acquaintance with Welsh legend shown in the last stanza.   At v. 33 of the same poem it seems likely that we should follow Carleton Brown[54] in reading *from lyne to lone* and in regarding *lyne* and *lone* as river names representing the Devonshire Lyn and the Lancashire Lune, though these rivers are rather far apart for one poet to have known them familiarly.   This interpretation is a further indication of West-Midland origin.

W.L. V, whose rimes suggest North-West Midland origin, begins with the words *Mosti ryden by rybbesdale.*

Topographical phrases occur also at W.L. IX, 30 *from Leycestre to Lounde,* and at W.L. XII, 17 *bituene lyncolne & lyndeseye, norhamptoun ant lounde.*   It is not certain what place is referred to by *Lounde.*   It may be Lound in Lincs. or Lound in Notts., both of which are near to the other places mentioned, or Lound in Suffolk, but all those are rather small.   There is some support for Böddeker's suggestion London, since *Lounde*

[52] Ekwall, *English River-Names,* pp. 451 *ff.*
[53] C. Brown, *English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century,* p. xxxix.
[54] *Ibid.,* p. 225; Ekwall, pp. 270, 274.

occurs at v. 3490 of the Auchinleck MS. of " Beues of Hamtoun," riming with *stounde*, where other MSS. read *London*. Whichever suggestion we adopt, the tags suggest East Midland origin for W.L. IX and XII.

G.L. XII 11 presents the line *from petres bourh in o more-wenyng* . . ., where Peterborough in Northants is probably referred to.

(d) *The evidence of variant versions.* In using this evidence we have to allow for the fact that the variant versions that exist are in many cases preserved in MSS. later than MS. Harley 2253, and have sometimes passed through the hands of several scribes. But it happens that many of the variant versions preserve more forms of the dialect suggested by the rimes as the original one of the poem than do the versions contained in the Harley MS., since the Harley scribe seems to have changed forms characteristic of other dialects with more consistency than was shown by most scribes.

Fragments of another version of P.L. VIII[55] are found in MS. Cbg. Univ. Lib. 4407 (19), and these fragments contain several northerly forms that support our ascription of this poem to the North Midlands, e.g. *aghtes* v. 9, *sare: mare* v. 20, *þei* v. 29.

G.L. IX seems to belong to the borders of the Midland and South-Eastern dialects; the version in MS. Digby 86[56] for the most part shows forms suitable to the south-westerly dialect of that MS.[57] though a few forms seem to suggest that the poem has passed through the hands of a more easterly or northerly scribe, e.g. *wimmanes* v. 44.[58]

Rimes suggest a northerly origin for G.L. XI, and the version preserved in MS. Digby 2[59] has many Northern forms, e.g. *wondis* v. 8, *waxin*[60] v. 8, *frendis* v. 16, *bledis* v. 43.

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[55] ed. Skeat, M.L.R., VII, 149.

[56] ed. Furnivall, E.E.T.S., 117. 763.

[57] C. Brown (*English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century*, p. xxxii) suggests that Digby 86 was written in Worcester, and describes the dialect as that of the South-West.

[58] The forms *mankyn* v, 21 and *monkin* v, 33 in the E.E.T.S. edition which might seem to be survivals of another dialect are not those of the MS., which has *monkun* in each case.

[59] ed. E.E.T.S., 117. 753.   [60] so MS.; Furnivall's text has *wexin*.

Another version of G.L. XIII is preserved in MS. Egerton 613,[61] but it contains no stronger indications of the northerly origin of the poem suggested by its rimes than does the Harley version.

An adaption of the first stanza of G.L. XV[62] stands at the conclusion of the " Ayenbite of Inwit," where the forms are naturally strongly South-Eastern. This suggests that the poem was current in Kent in the first part of the fourteenth century.

G.L. XVI has been shown to be of northerly origin; another version of the poem[63] exists in the Pratt MS., and this shows several northerly forms, e.g. *wittand* v. 15, *likes* v. 20, *werkis* v. 46.

G.L. IV and VIII belong to a class of lyric extant in several versions,[64] but as each stanza is a complete prayer in itself (probably intended to accompany the telling of a single bead of a rosary), scribes often incorporated in a single poem stanzas from various sources, so that we cannot treat the lyrics as unities.

Another lyric whose popularity led to such frequent copying that several versions[65] are extant, all showing a mixture of forms, is G.L. XVII. Here speculation about the original dialect is dangerous, but it may be noted that South-Eastern forms occur in the Digby and Laud versions, e.g. Digby: *lestneþ* vv. 7, 12, *swech* v. 122; Laud: *guod* vv. 58, 65. Significant also is the rime at v. 139 of the Harley version; Harley has *here: yfere*, Digby *here: I-fere* (O.E. *hēr: gefēra*), but Vernon has *hyr: helle-fyr*, where it seems likely that the original had *here: helle-fere*, with *fere* as the South-Eastern development of O.E. *fȳr*; the readings in Harley, Digby and Vernon would then represent different attempts to restore the

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[61] Printed by Böddeker, p. 458.

[62] ed. C. Brown, *Religious Lyrics of the xiv Century*, p. 49.

[63] ed. C. Brown, *English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century*, p. 158.

[64] C. Brown, *Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century*, p. 272; C. Horstmann, *Yorkshire Writers*, II, 9; Furnivall, E.E.T.S., 117. 449.

[65] E.E.T.S., 117. 511, 763; Anglia, III, 291.

rime when the poem was transcribed into non-South-Eastern dialects; this interpretation would make *þat fur* at v. 141 of the Harley version more natural.   But the textual and linguistic relation between the different versions of this lyric demand fuller investigation.

(e)   *The position of Lyrics in the MS.*   The position of poems in the MS. may sometimes furnish a clue as to which poems may have had a common origin.   Too much weight must not be attached to evidence of this kind, however, since the table given by Carleton Brown showing the position in MSS. Digby 86 and Harley 2253 of the pieces common to both MSS.[66] illustrates the ease with which the order of pieces could be changed in medieval MSS.

Most of the English lyrics of MS. Harley 2253 are fairly close together in the MS.; on ff. 58 *v.* to 83 *r.* there are 34 English lyrics and 13 other pieces.   Of the remaining six lyrics two (W.L. XIII, P.L. VII) are not near to any other lyrical poem, while the others are in two pairs: G.L. XVI and XVII at f. 106 *r.*, and G.L. XVIII and W.L. XIV at f. 128 *r.*   Although, as we have seen, G.L. XVII seems to have been ultimately of South-Eastern origin, some of the versions show northerly forms so that the MS. from which the Harley version was immediately derived may have been in a northerly dialect, and so would agree with that of the original of G.L. XVI.   The close connexion in form between W.L. XIV and G.L. XVIII makes it natural that they should occur together in the MS.; the rimes suggest a northerly origin for W.L. XIV and a Midland origin for G.L. XVIII.   Carleton Brown[67] quotes a variant version of each lyric, and northerly forms occur in both variant versions. There is therefore no obstacle to assigning all four versions to the North Midlands, though the relationship between them remains obscure.

On account of resemblances of style, metre, and subject

[66] C. Brown, *English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century*, p. xxxvii.

[67] *Ibid.*, pp. 235 f.

matter, ten Brink[68] and others have suggested that certain pairs or groups of lyrics might be assigned to the same author. The scarcity of texts, which leaves us uncertain how far particular phrases or stylistic features were conventional in the Middle English lyric, makes any such assumption of common authorship extremely perilous, but it is of interest to see how far such groupings as have been suggested accord with the linguistic evidence. Böddeker[69] (sometimes following ten Brink) suggested that each of the following groups could be assigned to a single author: W.L. I, III, and V; W.L. IV and G.L. I; W.L. VIII and IX; W.L. XI and XII; G.L. V, XII, and XIV; G.L. VII and XI. Carleton Brown[70] suggested common authorship for W.L. I, III, V and X. None of these groups is shown by linguistic evidence to be impossible, in view of the qualifications made above, but slight linguistic difficulties are involved by assigning W.L. IV and G.L. I to the same author. The position of the lyrics in the MS. favours the assigning of W.L. VIII and IX to the same author, and similarly with W.L. XI and XII, and these are perhaps the most likely of the groups for which common authorship has been suggested.

One result that seems clear is that many of the lyrics were originally written in a dialect more northerly than that of the Harley MS. Another group seems to belong to the South East or to the borders of that area. There is no evidence of the original dialect of W.L. III, and only slight evidence of that of P.L. III, W.L. II, XIII, and G.L. IV, VII. The other lyrics may be tentatively grouped as follows:—

Northerly. P.L. VII, W.L. VI, VII, XI, XIV, G.L. V, VI, X, XI, XIII, XVI.

Midland. P.L. VI, W.L. X, G.L. II, VIII, XVIII;

 North Midland. P.L. IV, VIII;

 North-West Midland. W.L. I, V, VIII;

 North-East Midland. W.L. IX, XII, G.L. XII;

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[68] e.g. *History of English Literature*, vol. I (trans. by H. M. Kennedy), p. 306.

[69] In the introductions to the lyrics concerned.

[70] C. Brown, *English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century*, p. xxxix.

West Midland. G.L. I, III;
East Midland. G.L. XIV.
South-Easterly or South-East Midland. P.L. I, II, V, W.L. IV, G.L. IX, XV, XVII.

G. L. BROOK.

Manchester.