

# Leeds Studies in English

## Article:

T. L. Burton, 'On the Current State of Middle English Dialectology', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 22, (1991), 167-208

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# On the Current State of Middle English Dialectology

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## 1. *Introduction*

The publication in 1986 of *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* marked the culmination of over thirty years' work on Middle English dialects by Angus McIntosh and M. L. Samuels, assisted since 1972 by Michael Benskin (see the Preface to the *Atlas*, Volume I, pp. vii-viii).<sup>1</sup> It would be hard to overestimate the importance of this book, and of the series of articles on dialectology and associated fields published by the editors during its preparation:<sup>2</sup> the *Atlas* is to dialectology what the *Middle English Dictionary* is to lexicography.<sup>3</sup> In it are put into practice the theoretical principles first propounded by McIntosh in his ground-breaking studies 'The Analysis of Written Middle English' (1956) and 'A New Approach to Middle English Dialectology' (1963), and the sorts of application of these theories first demonstrated by Samuels in his companion piece to the latter, 'Some Applications of Middle English Dialectology' (1963), and subsequently developed in various other directions.<sup>4</sup> It is time now to pause and consider the current state of Middle English dialectology. How has it been affected by the long-awaited publication of the *Atlas*? The answer to this question rests substantially on the reliability and useability of the *Atlas* itself, which are examined below.

## 2. *Arrangement and general principles of the Atlas*

The *Atlas* is in four volumes. Volume I contains the General Introduction, an Index of Sources, and a series of Dot Maps. The Index of Sources is arranged in two lists: the Repository List gives details of all documents used in the compilation of the *Atlas*, listed under the repository in which they are housed; the County List

shows for each county, under separate heads, (1) Sources Mapped, i.e., those documents (whether 'local' or 'literary') actually placed on the dialect maps in Volume IV, 333-39, with grid references for each, and of which the Linguistic Profiles are printed in Volume III, (2) Local Documents, i.e., documents originating from the county in question but not placed on the maps, and for which no Linguistic Profile is given, (3) Associated Literary Manuscripts, i.e., literary manuscripts of which the language is suggestive of the county in question but not with sufficient certainty to enable them to be placed with confidence on the dialect maps. The Dot Maps are small scale maps (four to a page for the whole country, six to a page for items considered only for the north, eight to a page for items considered only for the south) on which are entered one dot for each locality in which certain classes of form for given key words are found (for the word SUCH, for example, there are eleven maps, numbers 65-75, one showing all localities with spellings in initial 'sw-', another those with medial '-o-', etc.). Volume II contains Item Maps for selected key items. These differ from the dot maps in Volume I: they are large scale maps showing one sixth of the country per page, and on them are entered the actual forms found in each particular locality ('such', 'soche', 'swilke', 'syche', etc., for SUCH). Volume III contains (see further below) the Linguistic Profiles, county by county, for the 'Sources Mapped' in Volume I. Volume IV, the County Dictionary, is an item by item index to the distribution by county of the various forms found for each item considered in the compilation of the *Atlas*. Thus for SUCH each form found is listed separately, accompanied by a list of the counties where, and the sources in which, that form was found: 'sqwyche' is found only in Norfolk, and in only one document; 'suche', in contrast, is more or less universal. All volumes except Volume II contain the questionnaire used in eliciting information from the texts considered, together with notes on the questionnaire and (invaluably) an alphabetical index to the items and sub-items contained in it.

The principles on which the *Atlas* is based are set out in the General Introduction and the introductions to the major subsections (Index of Sources and Dot Maps) in Volume I, and may be briefly summarized here. The first step is the identification of a set of 'local documents' for each county which give direct *non-linguistic* evidence of their origin at or association with particular localities in that county. These documents serve as the 'anchor' texts (I, 9, 2.3.2), the position of which is fixed by statements such as 'Gyfen at the namptwyche the ix day of Octobre The yere of the regne of kyng henry the sext after the conquest the xxxiiii<sup>ti</sup>' (I, 45a; for another example see the colophon to document 5 in Appendix 2 below).

The language of each anchor text is analysed by means of the questionnaire, the responses to which provide a Linguistic Profile (LP) for that text, in which are recorded the written forms in the text corresponding to a set of preselected items such as SHE, THEY, SUCH, WHICH, EACH, THOUGH, etc. (Throughout this article, adopting the practice of the *Atlas*, I use capitals to denote an item from the questionnaire; for the realization(s) of each item in a given text I use single inverted commas.) There are a large number of these items – some 280 – since the larger the number of items examined, the more accurately texts can be placed in relation one to another. The items to be included on the questionnaire are chosen on the grounds that they are of frequent occurrence, and are therefore likely to be found in many texts, and that their forms vary greatly from one region to another, which makes them useful for diagnostic purposes (I, 7a, 2.1.1). We are throughout concerned with *written* forms, irrespective of phonological considerations, on the assumption that spellings vary from region to region, and that each locality has a spelling system peculiar to itself (I, 5-6, 1.4.1-7). The LP for a document from a known locality gives evidence of the spelling system peculiar to that locality and can be used diagnostically: it can be assumed that other texts which have very similar LPs but of which the provenance is not known are in fact from the same region as the document in question.

Since, however, the lexical range of the anchor texts (usually legal documents) tends to be somewhat restricted, it is desirable to expand that range by finding literary texts, with their much wider vocabulary, which can also be used as anchor texts. Since authorial holographs which can be tied to a particular locality are very rare (the *Ayenbite* of Michael of the Northgate being probably the most famous example) it is necessary to find literary texts with LPs similar to those of the anchor texts, or which can be placed *in relation* to them: literary texts placed on the map in this way become anchor texts in their own right (secondary anchors, as it were) and are then used in the placing of other unlocalized texts (I, 10, 2.3.3).

### **3. *Local documents and primary anchors***

It will be obvious from this summary that the identification and the correct location of the primary anchor texts – the local documents – is crucial to the construction of the dialect map. If one of these anchor texts is seriously misplaced, chaos ensues: one wrong placing affects all secondary and subsequent texts with

similar spellings; each of those texts in turn contributes to the misplacing of other texts. It follows that the non-linguistic evidence for locating the primary anchor texts must be unassailable; and users of the *Atlas* have a right to know which of the texts listed in the Index of Sources in Volume I were used as those primary anchors (located on non-linguistic grounds) and which ones were subsequently placed (on linguistic grounds) by means of the 'fit' technique (I, 10-12, see Section 6 below). Users without this information cannot test the reliability of the *Atlas*, but the information is not given and its omission is puzzling.

The presentation of the information given in the County List in the Index of Sources (I, 173-291) is also puzzling. It is divided into three sections, as indicated in Section 2 above: (1) Sources Mapped, (2) Local Documents, (3) Associated Literary Manuscripts. The problem is that insufficient information is given for the texts in Sections (1) and (2). As already stated, we are not told which of the sources mapped (Section 1) were the primary anchor texts, which the secondary ones, and which of the local documents in Section (2) were in fact used as anchor texts, even though their LPs are not given and they are not entered on the maps in Volume IV. Some of these documents could not have been used in this way, since their language is described as 'largely standard' or 'near-standard', or as having 'little' or 'no' dialectal interest (I am quoting from the Index of Sources for the County of Wiltshire, I, 249); but that *some* of the local documents in Section (2) were used as anchor texts is the only reasonable conclusion to be drawn from the paucity of obviously local documents amongst the sources mapped for some counties. Of the twenty-five sources mapped for Herefordshire, for example (I, 199), only *one* might fairly be described as a local document: the register of John Trefnant, Bishop of Hereford (LP 7400). (Two others, 7481 and 7510, are literary texts of which the manuscripts happen to contain miscellanea or arms associating them with Herefordshire, and part of one other, 7361, is a translation 'said to have been made by J. Lelamour, a schoolmaster of Hereford'; but these are not 'local documents' in the specific sense used in the *Atlas*. For one other, Douce 78 from the Bodleian Library, there is, uncharacteristically, no description of the content either here or in the Repository List in the Index of Sources, I, 147: it turns out, on inspection, to be a collection of lyrics and medical recipes.) Since it is hardly likely that twenty-four non-local texts could have been placed in various parts of the county with reference to only one fixed point (7400), it would appear that some of the local documents in Section (2) *must* have been used as primary anchors. Why, then, are their LPs not given in Volume III and why are they not placed on the map in Volume IV? Why, in

short, is the evidence for the location of the twenty-four secondary anchors suppressed when the editors must have had that evidence to hand in order to locate those texts in the first place? Or can it be that twenty-four of the twenty-five sources mapped for Herefordshire were in fact located with reference to fixed points not within, but outside, that county?

As for those sources mapped which *were* used as the primary anchors – so far as this can be deduced from the information given about the manuscripts – how good is the evidence that they belong to the locality at which they have been placed? Is it, indeed, unassailable? Two convenient test cases are two documents with unusually short LPs, numbers 5390 and 5400 for the County of Wiltshire (from Salisbury Cathedral MS 82, f. 271v and MS 126, f. 5, documents 14 and 15 respectively in Appendix 2 below). Both are in fact literary rather than documentary (the first a paternoster in English, the second a poem), but the linguistic evidence is in each case so thin that one must assume they have been placed at Salisbury on the non-linguistic grounds of their association with the place (they appear to me to be of 'the "Document relating to —" type', I, 42, although this is not stated). To take the paternoster first. The LP (III, 546, reproduced in Appendix 2) lists forms for five items from the questionnaire: 'eh' for EACH (item 12), 'vram' for FROM (28), 'hiwel' for EVIL (114), 'good-' for GOOD (139), '-lich' for -LY (278). If one accepts for the sake of argument the evidence of the *Atlas* as given in the County Dictionary, Volume IV, not one of these forms is attested in any other text from Wiltshire, with the exception of '-lich', which is widespread throughout the south and midlands and therefore of little diagnostic value, except perhaps in ruling out (or rendering unlikely) the north as the place of origin. Of the remaining four forms one ('vram') is found in Gloucestershire, Hampshire, and Kent; two are unique to this manuscript ('eh' and 'hiwel', although other forms of EVIL with initial 'h-' are found in Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Kent and Suffolk); and one ('good-') appears in Bedfordshire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, the West Riding of Yorkshire, and one unlocalized northern manuscript. The last form, 'good-', with its northern occurrences (if indeed it does appear in the paternoster, where I am unable to find it), appears to contradict the evidence of '-lich'; but how much notice can we take of it? Are inflected or compound forms of GOOD insufficiently attested in manuscripts to be used in dialectal analysis? If so, we might perhaps discount the last form; but on what grounds can we make such a decision? I do not know the answer to this question, and I do not think it is to be found in the *Atlas*.

If we were trying to locate the text on linguistic grounds rather than treating it

as a local document, what would we be able to say about it on the evidence provided by its responses to the questionnaire? That it has two layers, a midland/northern one ('good-') and a generally southern one ('vram', 'hiwel')? Or (if we ignore 'good-') that it appears to come from somewhere in the south, perhaps the south east (Kent), perhaps the south west midlands (Gloucestershire/Worcestershire), possibly Hampshire? I do not know; but surely the one thing one could *not* say on linguistic grounds would be 'This text was written by a Wiltshire scribe and we will use it to help locate other texts from that county'? That is, however, what the editor of the southern corpus of texts is saying, apparently on the *non*-linguistic grounds of its association with Salisbury. Yet those grounds, as presented in the *Atlas*, are merely that the text appears in a manuscript belonging to Salisbury Cathedral. If there are in fact stronger grounds than this, why are they not stated?

Much the same objections can be raised concerning LP 5400 (Appendix 2, document 15), a poem 'scribbled by Thomas Cyrcetur, canon residentiary of Sarum, *ob.* 1452'. The LP (III, 547, reproduced in Appendix 2) lists forms for eleven items from the questionnaire: 'þey' for THEY (7), 'hem' for THEM (8), 'mannus' as a genitive form of MAN (14), 'buþ' for ARE (17), 'w-' for WH- (44), 'wen' for WHEN (55), 'ask-' for ASK (73), 'chyrche' for CHURCH (98), 'heer *rh*' for HEAR (144), 'Hy' for I (158), and 'pryde' for PRIDE (206). There is nothing here linguistically to attach this text to Wiltshire: according to the *Atlas* the only form found in *other* texts from Wiltshire (apart from 'þey', 'hem', 'buþ', 'w-', 'wen', and 'ask-', which are all very common) is 'pryde', a form widespread throughout the south and midlands and occurring in one other Wiltshire manuscript. 'Hy' and 'mannus' are unique to this text and therefore of no help in placing it (although other genitive forms of MAN ending in '-us' are found in Berkshire, Hampshire, Somerset, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, and one other Wiltshire manuscript); 'chyrche' is widespread throughout the north and south, but is not found in other Wiltshire texts; and 'heer', which cannot be trusted to reflect the writer's own dialect, since it is a rhyme word, is found only in Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, and Suffolk amongst southern and midland texts. (The northern distribution of 'heer', 'Hy', and 'pryde' is not given, since the items they represent do not appear in the northern questionnaire.) I do not see how this text could be placed on linguistic grounds at all; if it were, it would surely *not* be in Wiltshire, 'chyrche' suggesting any of twenty-one counties other than Wiltshire, 'Hy' possibly suggesting Essex, Kent, Herefordshire, or Gloucestershire (in each of which are found forms of 'I' with initial 'h-' or 'H-').

One must assume, then, that this text was placed on non-linguistic grounds, on the strength of the poet's having been canon residentiary of Sarum. If we knew nothing of the poet other than that, we still would not know whether he was born in Salisbury, whether he grew up there, or even whether he came from Wiltshire at all. 'Men travelled, and so did their language,' as Benskin says: 'it is always possible that the language of a document does not belong to the place with which, on all other counts, the document itself is firmly associated. When, however, the language of a document so placed conforms to general expectations for the area in question, then there is at least a reasonable basis for regarding that place, rather than some other, as the dialectal locus' (I, 41-42). This sounds an eminently sensible principle, and is persuasively put; but is it not a circular argument? How does one have 'general expectations' for a given area until one has local documents recording its language? And how does one know that such documents truly reflect the language of the area in question unless one already knows what kind of language to expect? Unless, in short, one falls back on the old generalizations (Northern, East Midland, West Midland, etc.), one has nothing whatever to go on.

If these old generalizations *are* accepted in the initial stages, Benskin's argument will hold, and if it leads to occasional marginal misplacings, what harm is done? 'The misplacing by twenty miles of a document in Warwickshire has no bearing on the placings for, say, Cheshire' (I, 46b). But neither of the two 'Salisbury' texts we have been considering can be said to be 'firmly' associated with Salisbury on non-linguistic grounds; and if we take into account what the *Atlas* does *not* tell us about Thomas Cyrcetur – that he was canon of Wells as well as of Salisbury; that he was at some time vicar, rector, or prebendary of several other places in Somerset, Dorset, and Wiltshire; that he was educated at Merton College, Oxford; and that (as his name implies) he was born in Cirencester;<sup>5</sup> in short, that there is no reason to suppose that he spoke or wrote like a native of Salisbury – such non-linguistic evidence as there is begins to point in several directions *other than* Salisbury. Since, moreover, the linguistic evidence provided by the *Atlas* itself (as I have argued above) suggests that the language of these two texts does *not* conform to 'general expectations' for Wiltshire, how can they be placed there, and as anchor texts? And since it is possible that both documents have been placed in the wrong county altogether rather than misplaced by a mere twenty miles, the consequences could be very serious.



#### 4. *The collection of data from the questionnaire*

Appendix 2 contains a list of nineteen documents I have examined in an attempt to establish (amongst other things) the accuracy of the data from which the Linguistic Profiles in Volume III of the *Atlas* were compiled. One is at once struck, on reviewing this list, by the observation that for only two of the nineteen documents examined (numbers 8 and 11) is the information collected entirely free from error. A closer look at these errors reveals, however, a marked difference between the northern and the southern corpuses. The errors for the north (numbers 1 to 8) and for the area jointly surveyed (9 to 11) are all minor and inadvertent – some slips in referencing (3, 4, 6, 10); some errors originating from the uncharacteristic use of a transcript rather than an original (2); a few forms misspelt (1, 5); a few forms overlooked for items collected (1, 7, 9); a few items from the questionnaire missed altogether (1, 2, 4, 5). Such things are inevitable in this kind of work: they are the precise equivalents of the scribal errors frequently encountered in medieval manuscripts. Their number is statistically small, and their effect on the reliability of the *Atlas* proportionately slight.

The errors for the south (numbers 12 to 19), however, are a different matter. There are, of course, slips of the same kind; but their effect is more serious. It perhaps matters little if an occasional noun plural ending in '-s', '-es', or '-is' is overlooked (7, 9), or if '-u-' and '-v-' are interchanged (1), or a common form such as 'lif' for LIFE (1) is missed; it is more damaging when rare forms such as 'ffless' (FLESH) and 'ʒoue' (GIVE *pt-sg*) are allowed to slip through the net. These are both from number 16. The first is not recorded in the County Dictionary at all (unless initial 'ff-' is assumed under 'f-', in which case it is recorded only for three counties in the far north, Northumberland and the North and West Ridings of Yorkshire); the second is recorded only for Norfolk. The mistakes in numbering are no more than irritating for the north; the looseness of referencing for the south is at best puzzling (whence exactly *was* the LP for 13 compiled? and whence come the items for 15 that do not appear in the nominated poem?); at worst it is downright misleading. Number 16 is a clear illustration. The wording 'Hand of ff. 66v, 139v, 141v, 148v, 166v-167r . . . Ed. C. Brown, . . . pp. 51-56' must surely imply (though it does not unequivocally state) that the LP covers all the poems on the folios and pages listed; as shown in Appendix 2, however, it in fact covers only the poems on the first four folios mentioned, which are judged to come from Kent. The LP I have given in Appendix 2 for the poem on fol. 166v (Brown, no. 39) shows

(on traditional grounds) that this poem cannot be from Kent; on the contrary, it is almost certainly from somewhere in the north or north midlands. Scholars who accept without query the impression given by the *Atlas* entry that all these poems are from Kent are going to be horribly mistaken. (It is a very great pity that the poems on fols 166v-67r were *not* analysed: not only do they show at work one of the rare scribes who were *literatim* copyists rather than translators (see *Atlas*, I, 13, 3.1.3), and who must have been compiling his anthology from different sources; they also contain some rare forms, such as 'þinge' for THINK (item 49), a form not recorded in the County Dictionary at all.)

The number of ghost entries for the southern corpus, moreover, is very alarming. If we exclude document 15, on the assumption that the forms listed in the LP but not occurring in the nominated poem are to be found elsewhere in the manuscript, we are still left with forms listed for 14, 16, and 19 that do not occur in the texts. And one cannot rely, for the southern corpus, even on the correct use of the editors' own conventions for the entering in the *Atlas* of the material collected (see the comments on ANY for document 13, THEM and MAN for 15, and WAS for 19).

The contrast between the northern and southern corpuses appears most strikingly in the thoroughness with which items from the questionnaires have been collected. Whereas a few forms for items collected have been overlooked in the northern corpus, and a few items missed, it is nevertheless clear that in the north a dedicated effort has been made to collect absolutely everything listed on the questionnaire. This is not so for the south, where (as shown in Appendix 2) large numbers of forms for items collected have been ignored and even larger numbers of items have been omitted altogether. One cannot know whether these omissions result from inadvertency, from conscious policy on the part of Professor Samuels, from work allotted to research assistants and not checked or checked only cursorily, from work done early in the life of the project and not subsequently revised, or from some other cause: no matter what the cause, however, the consequences for the *Atlas* are very alarming. Since no indication is given that the full information required by the southern questionnaire has not consistently been sought, we have no way of knowing which forms and which items are omitted. In short, we do not know how far we can trust the Linguistic Profiles for the southern corpus any more than we know, without checking, to what extent we can trust the locating of the texts used as primary anchors for the south. The claim that the *Atlas* 'provides access to a very large corpus of reliably placed Middle English texts'<sup>6</sup> may very well be true for

the north; it is clear, however, that it cannot hold for the south. And if the work for the south cannot be trusted for the short documents such as the Salisbury paternoster and the fragment of *Ipotis*, what faith can one have in the work done on the major literary masterpieces from the south, such as the Harley lyrics, *Piers Plowman*, and the *Canterbury Tales*?

### 5. *Mapping Problems*

I have spoken thus far in terms of forms being found in certain counties. I have not attempted to draw maps illustrating these comments because I have not been able successfully to put into practice the 'fit' technique described in the *Atlas*:

Suppose, to take an example from the modern language, we encountered a speaker who said *min* for 'man' and *far* for 'where', we could discover the linguistic origins of our speaker. We could cross out all those parts of the map for 'man' in which *min* was not recorded. Similarly, we could cross out all those parts of the map for 'where' in which *far* did not appear. The remaining area, free of cross-hatching, would be the provenance of our speaker. The more characteristics of his speech we took into account, the more narrowly would the area be restricted; with each successive crossing out, the blacker would appear those areas to which it was least likely that the speaker belonged. This indicates the importance of using as many different criteria as is feasible (cf. 1.2.2), and the prime diagnostic value of assessing items *in combination*. (I, 10a, 2.3.3.)

This sounds a simple procedure, but it involves a considerable act of faith: one must be confident of having scoured very thoroughly the areas one is eliminating before one can be sure that there are *no* speakers hidden away in them who say *min* or *far*. With a modern language one might achieve a moderate degree of such confidence by interviewing large numbers of speakers in all parts of every region; but with a medieval language, where one is dealing only with such written evidence as survives, one's confidence must be considerably weakened. And what happens when there are *no* areas free of cross-hatching after the completion of this

procedure? Does not this force the conclusion that the text under examination does not exist? Would it not therefore make better sense to use a process of accumulation rather than one of elimination, shading in areas where forms *are* found rather than those where they are not, and deducing that the LP in question is most likely to originate from the area with the *heaviest* cross-hatching?

If the elimination procedure described above is followed, there will be no areas free of cross-hatching in which to place a text containing a unique form, or indeed a text containing a combination of rare ones. The problem will not arise with local documents, of course, since at that stage one is not doing any crossing out, but rather entering on the map at specific points the forms that will enable one to make *subsequent* eliminations. (This makes it all the more important to use as large a number of local documents, and to record from them as wide a range of forms, as is possible – so that I find puzzling the non-use of documents such as number 10 in Appendix 2, with its several unusual forms.) But as soon as one gets to literary texts, the problems begin. One is all the time making judgements about which conflicting pieces of evidence to believe. At what point can one say, for example, 'This text has "schoy" for SHE, which is recorded only in the West Riding of Yorkshire, but I'm not going to put the text there because the other evidence favours Lincolnshire'?

The process of elimination described in the extract just quoted assumes, in fact, two prior stages before the crossing-out is begun: first a dot must be entered on the map for each locality in which *min* is recorded; second a boundary line (an isogloss) is drawn separating those areas where *min* is recorded from those where it is not. These two stages are different in kind: the first is relatively objective, the second plainly subjective. 'Isoglosses are in fact interpretative, and it is notorious that no two cartographers will draw precisely the same isoglosses for the same set of data', as the editors remind us (I, 19b, 3.5.1) in the words used by Benskin and Laing in the *festschrift* for Angus McIntosh.<sup>7</sup> The third stage, that described in the extract quoted, is a metacritical exercise in the interpretation of interpretations: one is balancing against each other the hypothetical areas marked out by one's isoglosses. Now it is a remarkable thing that the *Atlas* does not show any isoglosses: there are the 'dot maps' in Volume I and the 'item maps' in Volume II (see Section 2 above); but in Volumes III and IV we proceed directly to the conclusions based on the data on those maps (that such and such a text belongs to such and such a locality) without being shown the working-out (the isoglossing and cross-hatching) on which those conclusions are based.

The decision not to print isoglosses is defended by Benskin in the introduction to Volume II on several grounds: that 'monochrome severely restricts the number of isoglosses that can be attempted on a single sheet'; that 'when very many distributions are to be highlighted . . . even colour is inadequate'; that to print them separately, on transparent overlays, 'is bulky and expensive'; and that the interpretation offered by the dot maps 'is less subjective than that of hand-drawn isoglosses' (II, ix). The last of these claims is deceptive, concealing the fact that not all the dots on the map belong to the primary anchor texts: all those that represent secondary anchors have been placed on the map by means of the isoglossing and cross-hatching of the 'fit' technique: their positioning is itself dependent on isoglosses drawn by the editors but not shown to readers. It is surely disingenuous to claim that the dot maps are 'less subjective' than maps showing 'hand-drawn isoglosses' when some of the dots are themselves dependent on subjectively drawn isoglosses: it is a claim which confers on the dot maps a spurious objectivity. Not to show the isoglosses is tantamount to suppressing some of the evidence: unless readers are shown them, they cannot judge whether their own isoglosses coincide with those of the editors. To find any of the editors' isoglosses, one has to look not in the *Atlas* but in some of the articles leading up to it: Samuels's 'Some Applications' or 'The Dialect of The Scribe of the Harley Lyrics', for example, or Benskin's 'The Letters <þ> and <y>'.<sup>8</sup> But the reader wants maps showing both dots *and* the isoglosses that have led to the placing of all those dots that do not represent the localities of the primary anchors.

To return to Benskin's argument, however. Colour and transparencies may indeed have to be ruled out on the grounds given (though the latter would have obvious advantages), but I cannot see that the objection to monochrome is valid. If isoglosses for different forms are printed on different maps (as in Samuels's 'Applications') one gets round the problem of rendering a single sheet indistinct. And this could be done without increasing the bulk of the *Atlas* at all, simply by adding the appropriate isoglosses to the existing dot maps. Two purposes would thereby be achieved: (1) the evidence for the placing of the secondary anchors would be brought into the open for examination; (2) readers of the *Atlas* would be able to make use of the editors' isoglosses (assuming, that is, that they agreed with their positioning) in the locating of their own texts.

## 6. The 'fit' technique

The demonstration of the 'fit' technique accompanying the description of it quoted above (I, 10-11, 2.3.4) is in my view too schematic to be very helpful.<sup>9</sup> What the reader cries out for is a complete demonstration of the 'fitting' of one actual text – one with a short LP would suffice, especially if it were a problematic one, such as the fragment of *Ipotis* from Bodleian MS Eng.poet.c.3 (document 19 in Appendix 2). This particular text demonstrates several of the theoretical problems discussed in the preceding section. It contains, according to the County Dictionary, three unique forms: 'waʒ', 'fleus', and 'wyʒ-oute'. If we go through the cross-hatching procedure, we will have no space free of cross-hatching in which to place the document. Very well: these forms must be ignored. Let us move next, then, to some of the rare (but not unique) forms – I assume that this is a sensible order of proceeding, since rare forms will allow larger areas to be crossed out than common ones, and will thus lead more quickly towards an approximate placing. The rarest forms are two of those for SHE (ignoring the spurious 'e' and the very common 'he'): 'hi', found only in Kent (at Rochester and Canterbury), and 'hee', found in one eastern location, Suffolk (at Ipswich), and in several western and central areas, Cornwall, Herefordshire, Wiltshire, Hampshire, and the west of Sussex, as shown in Figure 1. This fragment has to come from an area where both 'hi' and 'hee' are acceptable, but Figure 1 suggests that no such area exists.<sup>10</sup>

Must we, then, ignore these forms, too, or should we, instead, consider *categories* of form, as on the dot maps for SHE (I, 307-09, numbers 10-20), rather than the *actual* forms given on the relevant item maps (II, 12-14)? There are difficulties here. To begin with, how does one decide *when* it is acceptable to think in terms of categories and *when* it is essential to consider actual forms? The whole philosophic thrust of the *Atlas* is towards the importance of individual forms (and in some notable instances, as, for example, in Samuels's 'Harley Lyrics', where a line is drawn on the map separating 'euch' from 'uch', very slight differences in spelling are treated as crucial);<sup>11</sup> yet in the present instance it is impossible to place this fragment if we insist on dealing only with the actual forms. The theory on which the *Atlas* is founded insists that all spelling differences are significant; but some, evidently, are less significant than others. The question is, what is it, other than mere expediency, that *makes* some spellings less significant than others?

If we bow to expediency and accept that we must deal in categories of form when a text cannot be placed on the strength of its *actual* forms, we still have to



Figure 1: 'hee' and 'hi' forms of SHE  
⊖ hee ⊖ hi \* location of LP 6310

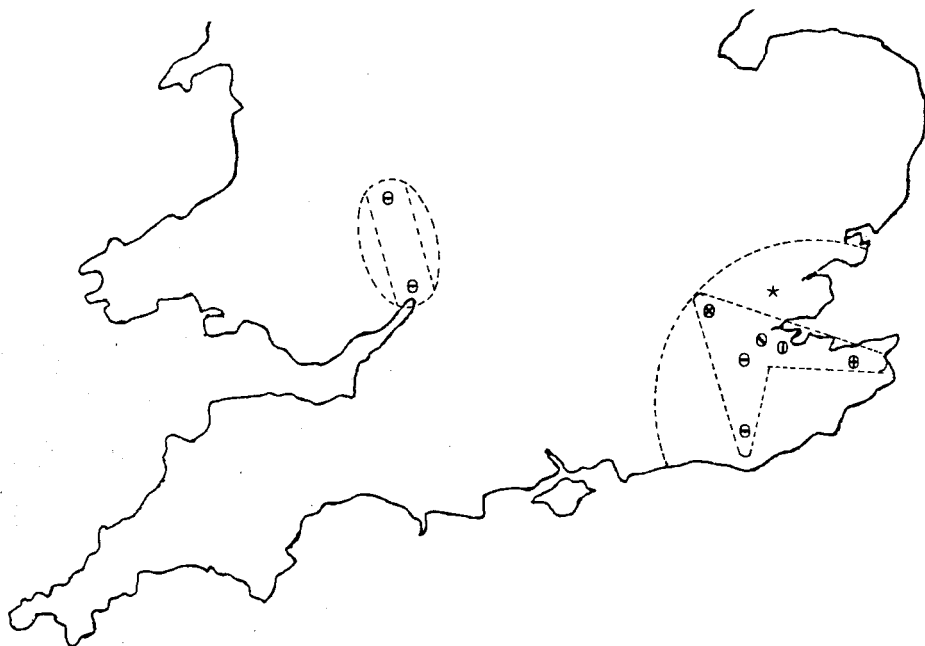


Figure 2: 'hi(j)' and 'hy(e)' forms of SHE  
h hi h hij h hy h hye \* location of LP 6310



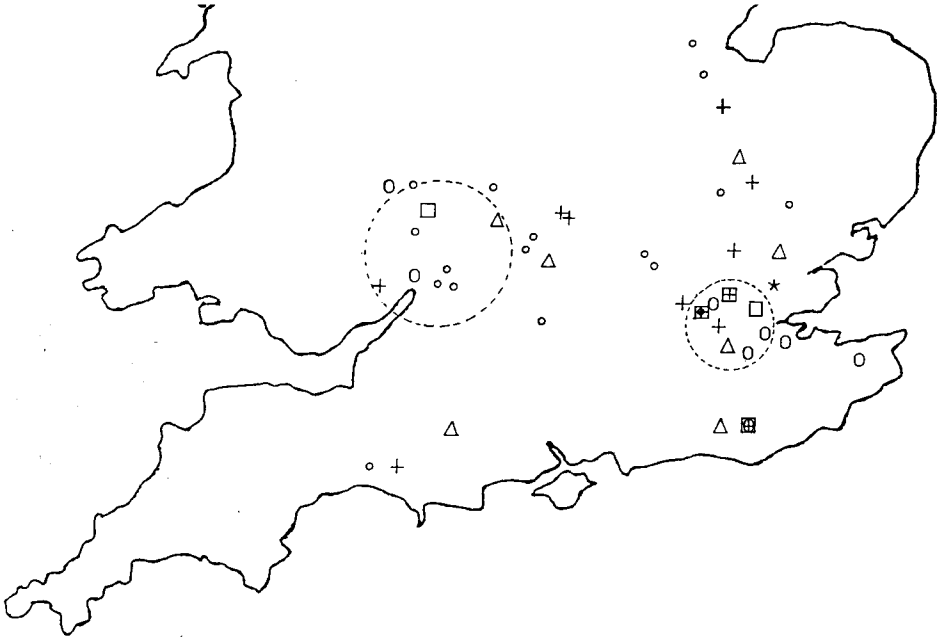


Figure 3: □ pat-ilche    △ purw    + willen *pl*    ○ par-  
0 hi(j) or hy(e)    \* location of LP 6310

decide *what constitutes a category*. In the present instance the decision is already made for us in the *Atlas*, where 'hee' and 'he' are treated as one category (dot map 16, I, 308) and 'hi', 'hij', 'hy', and 'hye' as another (dot map 18, I, 309). But even if we accept these categories, we are still faced with the problem of drawing isoglosses for them. What shape will the isogloss(es) for the '-i-/-y-' forms be (see Figure 2)? The two western occurrences, one in Gloucestershire, one in Herefordshire, are relatively simple, suggesting a narrow corridor (or perhaps an ellipse) running north and slightly westwards from the tip of the Bristol Channel; but what of the southeastern occurrences in Sussex, Kent, and Middlesex? Do we draw a narrow isogloss keeping close to the locations where the forms are actually found? This will produce the acute-angled boomerang shape shown in Figure 2, which rules out most of Essex, including the point at which the *Atlas* places this fragment. Perhaps, then, we should be more generous, and say that we can expect to find '-i-/-y-' forms anywhere in the southeast corner of England bounded by the semicircular line in Figure 2? But on what basis does one make such decisions?

No matter how we draw these isoglosses, we are still in a dilemma about the placing of this fragment. We now have two possible areas at opposite sides of the country, a southeastern one and a south west midland one ('he' is found in both these areas, though somewhat more thickly in the west). What then? The next rarest forms are, in order of rarity, 'pat-ilche', 'purw', 'willen pl', 'par-'. Their distributions are shown in Figure 3 (excluding a few northern occurrences of the last two). I cannot see, however, that we are any closer to placing this fragment. The only areas where all four of these forms are found in combination with both an '-e-' and an '-i-/-y-' form of SHE are, again, a south west midland one and a southeastern one. Neither is in quite the same position as before, and neither will include the point at which this fragment is placed by the *Atlas*, unless the isogloss encircling the southeastern area is drawn less narrowly than that shown in Figure 3. (The 'he-' forms of SHE, which are relatively common, are not shown on this map. There are several locations with this form in the area marked by the western circle; only one in that marked by the eastern circle, coinciding with the most southerly of the three locations for 'hi(-)/hy(-)' forms found in this area.) But how does one decide which of these two areas is the right one? The remaining forms are no help, since they are all very widespread. And is it not rather disturbing that our two possible areas are *on opposite sides of the country*? If we choose the wrong one, a misplacing of this magnitude will be serious indeed. How can a fragment of this kind be placed with any confidence in one of these areas rather than the other, and

how, after that, can it be located precisely *within* that area? The purpose of these questions is not to suggest that the editors have placed this fragment wrongly, but to ask for a demonstration showing precisely, step by step, how their placing was accomplished. Such a demonstration (which would incidentally reveal the methodological errors in my own attempts to place the text) would go a long way towards easing readers' doubts and facilitating their use of the *Atlas*.

The incorporation of a demonstration like this into a revised edition of the *Atlas* would require: (1) a reference to the LP for the text in question, to be found in Volume III; (2) a series of maps showing isoglosses for the relevant forms (references to the appropriate maps in Volume I would suffice if the isoglosses were already shown on those maps); (3) one master map on which the information from (2) was brought together, with the impossible areas eliminated, leaving one area, that of the text in question, either 'free of cross-hatching', or perhaps with less cross-hatching than any other area. If isoglosses were already shown on the dot maps printed in Volume I, this demonstration would increase the bulk of the *Atlas* by one page only, the page showing the master map (or perhaps by two or three pages, if it were necessary to show maps for which there were not already dot maps). Why offer a highly schematized *hypothetical* demonstration of the technique that has been so crucial to the compilation of the whole *Atlas* when the editors must have at hand innumerable *actual* examples that they have put through the process themselves?

In addition, as a back-up to the 'fit' technique, it must surely be possible to devise some form of computer-assisted technique for comparing Linguistic Profiles and hence for locating the texts from which they are drawn. It should likewise be possible, and would be extremely useful, to make available in electronic form all the data collected during the life of the project (whether or not that data is published in the *Atlas*).

## 7. *The questionnaire and the County Dictionary*

Researchers who wish to establish the provenance of a text not treated in the *Atlas* will be dismayed to find that two different versions of the questionnaire have been used in the compilation of the *Atlas*: one for the north, one for the south, with an overlap in the midlands. Which is the appropriate version for use with their own text? Unless the text in question is *obviously* northern or *obviously* southern on

traditional grounds, it is clear that they must collect items from both versions of the questionnaire to compile an LP for their text. Having done so, they face difficulties when attempting to use that LP to locate the text. Consider item 151, HILL, which appears only in the southern questionnaire. Is it not misleading to find the form 'hill' listed in the County Dictionary (IV, 198) only for Buckinghamshire, Essex, Kent, and Worcestershire, and the form 'hyll' only for Hampshire, Norfolk, and Suffolk, when both forms (one assumes) were widespread in the northern counties? It would indeed 'look neater', and would have been much more helpful to subsequent investigators, if the editors *had* produced something 'which stated unequivocally that such and such a form occurred only in Devon and part of Somerset, and that another form was universal elsewhere' (I, 7, 2.1.4). But this procedure has been ruled out, on the grounds that it 'would be highly uneconomical' – uneconomical, I take it, in terms of the unnecessary labour expended collecting forms with medial '-i-' and '-y-' for the north. But in that case, would it not be a service to users of the *Atlas* to indicate briefly, at the head of each item collected for only one part of the country, why it was *not* collected for the other, namely that such and such forms (in this case presumably those with '-i-' and '-y-') are the rule there, and that no others are found in that area. (For if others *are* found, surely they are worth collecting?)

But even if that were done, I would still be uneasy about the use of sub-questionnaires for particular parts of the country – unless, of course, there were questionnaires in two stages: (1) an initial questionnaire, used on all unlocalized texts, to establish their approximate provenance, north, south, or midlands; (2) a sub-questionnaire for each of these regions, to establish the precise provenance of each text within the region to which it had been assigned on the evidence of the initial questionnaire. It looks as if the editors had such a procedure in mind at one time: 'Most of the items in Part I [items 1-64] were collected for both the NOR and SOU material. The second part [items 65-280] is historically an expansion of the original questionnaire . . . . The northern and southern versions of the questionnaire naturally diverged' (III, xi, 6.6). But this plan appears to have been abandoned, since now, even among the first sixty-four items there are some that are collected for one part of the country only, e.g. THE and THOSE (1 and 3), collected only for the north, ART (20, 2sg present indicative of the verb 'to be'), collected only for the south. What happens when one meets a form outside its expected area? There is one such case in the fragment of *Ipotis* discussed above (Appendix 2, document 19), in which the form 'staned' (i.e., 'stoned') appears in line 570. This belongs under

item 47 (A, O) i.e., the reflex of OE long 'a') in the questionnaire, but it is not recorded in the LP since the 'A/O' distinction is collected only for the north. The reason, I assume, is that '-o-' is expected throughout the south, so that this item is not worth collecting there. Yet here is '-a-' in (we are told) Essex. Is this an aberration? Or a relict, i.e. 'a form not part of [the] scribe's own dialect, but an exotic that is perpetuated from an exemplar whose dialect differs from that of the copyist' (I, 13, 3.2.1)? Or is '-a-' in fact an acceptable form in the county to which this fragment belongs? These questions cannot be answered from the *Atlas*, since the information has not been collected for the southern counties.

### 8. *Conflated LPs and related matters*

Some of the other practices that are adopted in the interests of saving space in the *Atlas* seem to me of questionable propriety. One of these is the conflation of two or more LPs into one for the purposes of mapping, which results in the creation of pseudo-texts; another is the conflation of two or more texts thought to be by the same scribe into a single LP. The most glaring example of the latter is LP 6400 (III, 299), a profile compiled jointly from the Hengwrt and Ellesmere manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales*, which are declared bluntly to be 'Two MSS in the same hand'. Samuels's views on this matter are well known, and are sufficiently indicated by the title of his article on the problem in *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* (1983), 'The Scribe [singular] of the Hengwrt and Ellesmere Manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales*'.<sup>12</sup> These views are evidently shared by his co-editors, who speak of 'the Hengwrt-Ellesmere scribe' (I, 25, 4.2.5). But the matter remains open in so far as it is incapable of absolute proof; and to pre-judge so important an issue by creating a hybrid LP for a non-existent text (\*Hengwrt-Ellesmere) is false economy. Moreover, if the editors are right, their case would be *strengthened* by the printing of two LPs, one for each of the manuscripts: readers would then be able to see that the two profiles were virtually identical, and would be the more inclined to accept the view that they were by the same scribe. And since the identification of two or more manuscripts by a single scribe is given as one of the applications to which the *Atlas* may be put (I, 23, 4.1.2), is it not self-defeating to jump straight to the conclusion and to suppress the evidence on which that conclusion is based?

Two other points may be made about this particular LP. (1) The normal practice in the *Atlas* is to specify the pages or folios from which an LP has been

compiled, unless the text is so short that the whole of it has been analysed. Thus for LP 6380, on the facing page (BL Harley 2387, *Scale of Perfection*), we are told 'Analysis from ff. 1-16, 104-130'. This information is not given for LP 6400, so that *we cannot check the accuracy of the work on Chaucer*. (2) This LP, though longish, is incomplete, in the sense that it does not record a form for every item on the southern questionnaire that occurs in the *Canterbury Tales*: there are no forms, for example, for items 106 DREAD/ SPREAD, 127 FLESH, or 162 LAND (all of which occur in the Knight's tale).<sup>13</sup> For diagnostic purposes, no doubt, this does not matter: there are quite enough items to place the text(s) by means of the 'fit' technique. But diagnosis of dialectal origins is not the sole purpose of the *Atlas* (see Chapter 4 of the General Introduction, I, 23-27): another fairly obvious one (though it is not mentioned in the chapter just noted) might be to act as a register of linguistic usage for the manuscripts of the major authors. Would it not be worthwhile, with a figure of Chaucer's stature, to analyse more than the usual number of pages, so as to construct the fullest possible LP for each manuscript?

## **9. *Desiderata for a revised edition***

If the arguments above are accepted, the changes listed below should be incorporated into the next edition of the *Atlas*. (Numbers in parentheses at the end of each item indicate the section above where the relevant argument will be found.)

**9.1** The documents which were used as the primary anchor texts should be clearly indicated (whether or not they are at present amongst the sources mapped). (3)

**9.2** Where this has not already been done, the full details which link the primary anchor texts to their particular localities should be given. (3)

**9.3** The LPs of and map references for all those documents that *were* so used, but which are not at present marked on the maps and of which the LP is not given, should be given. (3)

**9.4** All LPs should be checked against the original documents (or against microfilms of the originals) to rectify errors, omissions, and inconsistencies in the use of editorial conventions. (4) (Ideally this work should be undertaken for the

whole country; if that proves impossible, however, it must be done for the southern corpus at least. The labour could profitably be shared amongst volunteers from all over the world, using microfilms of the original texts. It would be an excellent experience for postgraduate students, whose work could be checked by their supervisors; it would give interested scholars an opportunity to make a worthwhile contribution to a potentially invaluable research tool; it would enable the enormous task of checking to be accomplished relatively quickly.)

**9.5** All referencing should be checked, both of repository catalogue numbers and of folios and pages indicated in LPs, and corrected or brought up to date where necessary. (4)

**9.6** All documents analysed from printed editions or transcripts should be re-analysed from the original manuscripts, where these are still available. (4)

**9.7** A greater number of those local documents that contain rare forms should be analysed and mapped. (5)

**9.8** The editors' isoglosses should be added to the dot maps. (5)

**9.9** The 'fit' technique should be demonstrated, step by step, with one or two complete examples actually used in the compilation of the *Atlas*. (6)

**9.10** Some form of computer-assisted technique should be devised for comparing LPs, and all data collected during the life of the project should be made available in electronic form. (6)

**9.11** Detailed advice should be given on the procedure to be followed in the initial diagnosis of texts not obviously belonging (on traditional grounds) either to the north or to the south. (7)

**9.12** Conflated LPs should be separated to give each individual text its own LP. (8)

**9.13** For those LPs from which this information is missing, the page or folio numbers from which the LPs were compiled should be given. (8)

9.14 LPs for texts of major authors should be expanded to include as many items as possible from the questionnaire. (8)

## 10. *Conclusion*

What, then, is the current state of Middle English dialectology? If the foregoing observations are just, it is parlous at best. The traditional methods of dialectal analysis have been called into question; the new method, put into practice in *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, has the potential to be astonishingly accurate, but it cannot fulfil that potential while doubts remain about the location of the texts used as primary anchors, the accuracy of the LPs recorded in the *Atlas*, and the operation of the 'fit' technique.

This article, accordingly, has concentrated on what seem to me to be flaws in the compilation and presentation of the *Atlas* and difficulties in putting it into use. I would gladly not have written thus. In common with innumerable other researchers in Middle English during the years when the *Atlas* was in preparation I visited Edinburgh to discuss dialectal problems with Angus McIntosh and Michael Benskin, and wrote to them from time to time with queries and specimen LPs. They treated me, as they have treated other enquirers, with inexhaustible courtesy, and were generous far beyond the call of duty with their time and encouragement. This is a poor way to repay that kindness; but if it leads, as I hope, to the clarification of matters that seem to me cloudy, and to a greater understanding and more fluent use of the book which is the monument to their labours, it will have been worthwhile. They will recognize, I am sure, that the combative tone in which my questions are couched arises not from animosity, but partly from frustration at the difficulties I have encountered in using the *Atlas*, and partly from the attempt to give forceful expression to my misgivings. If these turn out to result from my own incompetence rather than from flaws in the *Atlas*, no one will be gladder than I.

A balanced review (which this does not pretend to be) would have given due space to the vision behind the planning of the *Atlas*; to the astounding breadth of the enquiry (evidenced by the daunting inventory of texts listed in the Index of Sources, I, 59-171 – and these are only the tip of the iceberg, the documents actually used in compiling the *Atlas*: how many thousands of others were examined and discarded as being of no use?); to the faith and tenacity with which the work was pursued, over many years, in the face of what must at times have seemed insurmountable



difficulties (I, vii-x, Preface); to the ingenuity brought to bear on some of the problems of presentation (II, xiv-xvi, Production of the maps); even to the sheer labour involved in the proofreading. It would be superfluous for me to write of these things at length here, since that will already have been done in reviews many times over before this piece appears; and I hope it is sufficiently clear that my purpose is not to devalue the *Atlas*, but to suggest possible improvements for future editions. It would scarcely be too much to say (borrowing Bloch's comments on Leonard Bloomfield)<sup>14</sup> that 'every significant refinement' of dialectal analysis produced since the 1950s has come out of the work published by the editors during the long course of preparing the *Atlas* for publication, and that all future research on Middle English dialects must build upon the work now recorded in the *Atlas* itself.<sup>15</sup>

## APPENDIX 1

In this appendix are reproduced facsimiles of the following two documents from Appendix 2: numbers 4 (the more legible half of the indenture) and 10.



1188.

Handwritten text, possibly a list or notes, including the word "List" and other illegible characters.



Facsimile of Shropshire County Record Office MS 356/MT/1316 (Appendix 2, document 10). Reproduced by kind permission of the owners and of the Shropshire County Record Office.

APPENDIX 2

*Documents examined*

Below are listed, with comments, the fifteen documents I was able to examine during two brief trips away from Adelaide, and four others examined in the interim from printed sources. The choice was purely pragmatic: since my time was limited, I looked only at short documents (which could be checked relatively quickly), in repositories at or near places where I had other business (the Huntington Library, the Bodleian Library, Salisbury Cathedral Library, two libraries in Shrewsbury); and, with three exceptions, I restricted myself to documents for which Linguistic Profiles are given in the *Atlas*. Within these limitations I tried, nevertheless, to examine documents from several different parts of the country, eight from the northern area of the survey, represented by Leicestershire and North Shropshire, eight from the southern area, represented by several counties from Devon across to Essex, three from the area of overlap between the northern and the southern areas, represented by South Shropshire. (We are told that the northern area, with LP numbers 1-2000 was 'the responsibility mainly of Professor McIntosh'; that the southern area, with LP numbers 5000-9999 fell 'mainly to Professor Samuels'; and that the area of overlap between the two, with LP numbers 4000-4999, was 'jointly surveyed'; see III, x, Sections 4.1 and 5.1. I have not been able to check any of the Lincolnshire material, which is described as 'mostly the work of Dr. Laing'.) It need scarcely be said that comments on 'errors' and 'omissions' are to be understood as preceded always by 'so far as I could see', and 'assuming I have interpreted the questionnaire correctly' (question marks preceding items indicate uncertainty as to whether those items should or should not have been collected). Where my numbering of documents differs from that given in the *Atlas*, the numbers recorded in the *Atlas* (with three exceptions, pointed out in documents 6, 10, and 19, which are straightforward errors) were temporary numbers used while manuscripts were awaiting cataloguing or re-cataloguing. Documents are listed in ascending order of LP number, those without LPs being placed next to the documents to which they have the closest relation. Except in the four instances otherwise stated (numbers 12, 13, 16, and 18) I have examined the original manuscripts.

NORTHERN CORPUS

1. **LP 81: Shropshire.** Shropshire County Record Office, Shirehall, Shrewsbury: 3232/13. 'Letter from the son of Jon Hullemore to a person unknown, concerning his father's disputed title to Eddysley . . . apparently before 1419.' See *Atlas* I, 163c; I, 233b; III, 425. This is a short document with a longish LP (III, 425). In the LP I can detect a single error, 'zeven' for MS 'zeuen' as *pt-pl* of GIVE (item 137: 'þey comen & zeuen vp hure verdict', lines 12-13) and two minor omissions: 'lif' for LIFE (item 169: 'to Isabell his wyf to þe terme of hire life', line 3); '-en' as a *Weak pt-pl* inflexion (item 61: 'occupyeden', line 9) to add to the other inflexions listed.

2. **LP 306: Shropshire.** Shropshire County Record Office, Shirehall, Shrewsbury: Shrewsbury Borough Records, 3365/2617/1 (so renumbered after the transfer of these documents from Shrewsbury Guildhall to the Shirehall in the 1970s). 'Letter from the bailiffs and burgesses of the town of Oswestry to the bailiffs and burgesses of the town of Shrewsbury . . . 2 April 1447.' See *Atlas* I, 162c (penultimate entry); I, 233b (last entry); III, 42. 'Analysis from transcript in possession of MED'; but an examination of the original reveals several errors and omissions in the LP (III, 429). Errors: the form recorded for the present participle (item 57) is '-yng', but the original has '-yng' or '-yngē' ('comyng', line 5, with a flourish on the '-g' which may or may not be an abbreviation for '-e'); 'haue' and '?have' are recorded for HAVE (item 142), but I can find no examples of 'haue' whereas there are three of 'have' (lines 3, 4, 5); 'nother' and '?nothe' are recorded for NOR (item 46), but I can find no examples of 'nothe' whereas there are two of 'nother' (lines 4 and 8, the latter with a long-tailed '-r'). Omissions: 'worshipfull' (line 1) for WORSHIP *adj* (item 260); 'oure' (line 9) for OUR (item 200); 'none' (line 8) for A, O (item 47).

3. **LP 585: Leics.** Huntington Library, San Marino (California), HAD 404. See *Atlas* I, 91c; I, 209a; III, 250: 'HA-HMC Deeds L1-Z, Box 30. Indenture between (i) Sir Thomas Erdington, and (ii) John, Viscount Beaumont, of Quorndon, Leics. 16 March 1444. Made at Beaumanoir, Leics. Cf. another document (of 22 July) on the same subject in the same box.' An examination of the two documents reveals, however, that the LP given in the *Atlas* belongs to the document of 22 July, now numbered HAD 406 (see next entry), not to that of 16 March. The language of

the two documents varies in many particulars, a few of which are listed here as examples:

<i>Item</i>	<i>LP 585</i>	<i>HAD 404</i>	<i>HAD 406</i>
29 AFTER	aftur	after	aftur
59 <i>Pres 3sg</i>	-es	-eth	-es
82 BETWEEN <i>pr</i>	betwix	bitwix	betwix
92 BY	be	by	be
137 GIVE <i>ppl</i>	gyven	youen	gyven
142 HAVE	hafe	haue	hafe
<i>3sg</i>	has	hath	has
197 ONE <i>adj</i>	on	oon	on
218 SIX <i>ord</i>	sext	sexst	sext

4. **No LP: Leics.** Huntington Library, San Marino (California), HAD 406 (facsimile of one part of the indenture in Appendix 1). See *Atlas* I, 91c; I, 209a (last entry): 'HA-HMC Deeds L1-Z, Box 30. Part and counterpart of a bipartite indenture between John Viscount Beaumont, and Sir Thomas Erdyngton, 22 July 1444. Associated with Quorndon-Loughborough area . . . Leics.' **LP 585**, to which should be added 'tho' (line 3) for THOSE (item 3), belongs in fact to this document, not to HAD 404 (see preceding entry).

5. **LP 612: Leics.** Huntington Library, San Marino (California), HAP Box 2 (30). See *Atlas* I, 91c; I, 209a; III, 250: 'HA Family Papers L5-A1, Box 2. Marriage agreement between Leonard Hastings and Richard Byngham, given at 'Kerby' (?Kirby Bellars, Leics), 24 May 1453'. Errors: for 'her' (item 5) read 'here' ('at the tyme of here deth' line 28); for 'yeven' as the *ppl* of GIVE (item 137) read 'Yevyn', from the colophon, 'Yevyn at kerby the xxiiij day of Maye the yere of the reign of kyng herry the sext aftur the conquest of England .xxxj<sup>ti</sup>'. Omissions: 'to' for TO + *inf* + *c* (item 27: examples in lines 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 23, 24, 25, 27); 'days' (line 29) for the plural of DAY (item 101); 'olyfe' (lines 18, 28) for LIFE (item 169); 'name' (line 9) for NAME *sb* (item 182).

6. **LP 1300: Shropshire.** Shropshire County Record Office, Shirehall, Shrewsbury: 2028/ BO 1/2/12. 'Indenture written at Hynton, 26 Jan 26 Henry VI.' See *Atlas* I, 163c; I, 233c; III, 432. No errors apart from a small referencing error,

'box' for 'BO' in the catalogue number; no omissions.

**7. LP 1301: Shropshire.** Shropshire County Record Office, Shirehall, Shrewsbury: 322/ Box 4, 165. See *Atlas* I, 163c; I, 233c; III, 432: 'Acton Reynald no. 265. Indenture written at Shawbury, 21 Feb 37 Henry VI; sale of specified timber within "the park palis" of Shawbury Park'. A few minor omissions: '-us' and '-es' are recorded for substantive plural (item 56), but '-is' is overlooked (from 'the parke palis', line 2, a curious omission, since these words are quoted in the introductory comments, given above); '-uth' and '-th' are recorded for 3sg present indicative (item 59), but '-eth' (?'-oth') is overlooked ('foleweth' or '?folowoth', line 12). If the latter reading is correct, 'follow-' should be added to 'folew-' for FOLLOW (item 128).

**8. LP 1302: Shropshire.** Shrewsbury, Shropshire Libraries, Local Studies Department: Deed 2172. 'Indenture dated Michaelmas 31 Henry VI: lease . . . of a field called "þ<sup>o</sup> Newe lond" lying within the fee of Dorington.' See *Atlas* I, 163a; I, 233c; III, 432. No errors or omissions.

#### NORTHERN/SOUTHERN OVERLAP

**9. LP 4001: Shropshire.** Shropshire County Record Office, Shirehall, Shrewsbury: 356/ Box 520, Ludlow Borough Records. 'Will of John Parys of Lodelowe (Ludlow), 7 Nov 1449. An ample text in local language.' See *Atlas* I, 163c; I, 233c; III, 433. Minor omissions for two items: to the forms listed for MY (item 181) should be added 'my' for MY + *h* ('in my hole gode mynde', lines 1-2), 'my' and 'myn' for MY + vowel ('to my vse' line 11; 'to myn vse' 40); to the forms listed for substantive plural (item 56) should be added '-s' ('wardens' line 8, 'persons' 11, 16, etc.) and '-es' ('persones' 11).

**10. No LP: Shropshire.** Shropshire County Record Office, Shirehall, Shrewsbury: 356/MT/1316 (facsimile in Appendix 1). See *Atlas* I, 163b; I, 234b: '356/MT/316 (Ludlow Palmers' Gild Deeds, no. 1188). Indenture dated at Ouerton (2 m SSW of Ludlow), Feast of St Michael Archangel, 7 Edward IV . . . Local language, eccentric drafting.' Error in numbering: '316' for '1316'. Contains some unusual forms, e.g., 'effe' for IF (item 33), 'the Don' and 'the dother' for 'the one'

and 'the other' (items 197 and 199), 'ere' for the plural of YEAR (item 264), none of which is recorded in the County Dictionary.

**11. No LP: Shropshire.** Shropshire County Record Office, Shirehall, Shrewsbury: 1374/1/1407. See *Atlas I*, 163b; I, 234c: 'Letter ("this bille") from John Boerleie at Bromcroft (where, it appears, he was established), concerning the reeves-elect of Worefeld. (Broncroft, 8 m NNE of Ludlow; Worfield, 3 m NE of Bridgnorth.) In good local language, but a very meagre text.' The text is, nevertheless, much fuller than that used for LP 5390 (document 14 below), and both places mentioned in it are precisely located.

#### SOUTHERN CORPUS

**12. LP 5030: Devon.** Printed: HMC 3, *Fourth Report* (C.857 and 857-i of 1874), Appendix, p. 378. See *Atlas I*, 157a; I, 187b; III, 81: 'Two indentures, dated 1445 and 1456, from MSS of J. R. Pine Coffin, (Portledge, NW Devon), referring to Alwington, NW Devon.' (I have not seen the originals: these comments are based on the transcripts in HMC, to which references are given by column and line of p. 378.)

Forms for the following items from the questionnaire have not been collected:

12 EACH ('-ych': 'euerych' b:28); 19 IS ('ys' a:87, b:19, 25);  
51 THERE ('there-': 'therefore' b:33); 57 *Pres part* '-yng':  
'euerlastyng' a:78, 'longyng' b:22, 'beryng' b:33); 85 BOTH  
('bothe' b:30); 136 GET *ppl* ('-gete': 'be gete' b:4); 213 SELF  
('selfe' b:38); 278 -LY ('-ly': 'frely' b:4, 'competently' b:30).

The following are additional forms for items collected:

9 THEIR ('their' b:29); 24 WILL *sg* ('wylle' b:27, 29, 34); 56  
*Sb pl* ('-es': 'londes and tenementes' a:83, 90; 'heyres',  
'hayres' a:86, 91, etc.; '-s': 'forfathers' b:27).

The following form is erroneously entered:



137 GIVE *ppl* (entered as 'yeue', for which read 'Y-yeve' b:9-10).

**13. LP 5160: Dorset.** London, Public Record Office: Prob 11/2B, f. 316v. See *Atlas* I, 128c; I, 188a; III, 87: 'Register copy of the will of Thomas Broke of Olditch, Thorncombe. Made at Olditch, Saturday, the Vigil of the Holy Trinity 1415. Proved 5 Feb 1417. Ed. Furnivall, *Fifty Earliest English Wills*, pp. 26-28; and F. W. Weaver, *Somerset Medieval Wills 1385-1500*, publ. of the Somerset Record Soc. 16 (1902), p. 68 seq., whence analysed.' (I have not seen the original: these comments are based on the two printed editions mentioned.) There is some confusion here. The statement above implies that the analysis was made from *Somerset Medieval Wills*, p. 68 seq.; but only an abstract of the will is printed at that point. The full text is given in Appendix I, pp. 401-02, but with the orthography partially modernized (*u* and *v* normalized; *th* for *þ*; *g* or *gh* for *ȝ*): it is therefore impossible that the analysis, which contains forms for THEY and THERE with initial *þ*, was made solely from this source. On the other hand, the LP contains no forms with *ȝ*, which implies that it cannot have been made solely from Furnivall's edition or from the original. Whichever source was used, there are many omissions from the LP, and some errors, as listed below (forms and line references are from Furnivall; an italicized character in parentheses indicates uncertainty as to whether a flourish reproduced by Furnivall represents a contraction).

Forms for the following items from the questionnaire have not been collected:

2 THESE ('Thys' 28:11); 9 THEIR ('her(e)' 27:14; hir 27:23); 14 MAN ('man' 27:8, 15, 24; 'man' 27:21); 19 IS ('is' 26:20, 28:8); 24 WILL *sg* ('will(e)' 27:23); *pl* ('will(e)' 27:25); 28 FROM ('fram' 26:17); 33 IF ('ȝyf' 26:15; 'yf' 27:9; 'iff' 27:22); 45 NOT ('nouȝte' 27:13, 17, 26); 52 WHERE ('where' 27:19); 55 WHEN ('whanne' 28:4); 56 *Sb pl* ('-es': 'Lordes' 26:13, 'Torches' 27:5, 'Masses' 27:6, etc.; '-ys': 'taprys' 27:5, 'Plouwys' 27:13, 'bestys' 27:17, etc.; '-s': 'Capouns' 27:12; '-is': 'Lynis' 28:12); 57 *Pres part* ('-yng: 'prayng' 26:16); 78 BEFORE *adv* ('to-for' 27:20); 142 HAVE ('haue' 27:3, 7, 10, etc.); 149 HIGH ('hye' 26:16); 188 NEITHER + NOR ('nether(e)' (1st element) 27:4); 198 OR ('oper' 27:17, 28:3,

etc.; 'oþer' 28:2; 'or' 28:4); 202 OWN *adj* ('owne' 28:12); 251 WHETHER ('whether(e)' 27:24); 278 -LY ('-lych(e)': 'namelych' 27:22, 'Holelych' 28:1).

The following are additional forms for items collected:

6 IT ('hit' 28:3, three occurrences); 7 THEY ('they' 27:1); 8 THEM ('hame' 27:15); 51 THERE ('þer' 27:9); 98 CHURCH ('Chirch(e)' 27:21); 158 I ('ich(e)' 27:16).

The following (assuming the accuracy of Furnivall's transcript) are errors in forms for items collected:

- 15 ANY: entered as 'eny (any)', implying that 'eny' is the usual form and 'any' a variant; but in fact the forms are exactly equivalent, there being one example of each (lines 27:23 and 27:15 respectively). The correct entry is 'any, eny'.
- 32 THOUGH: entered as 'thouthe' where Furnivall has 'ʒouʒe' 27:13.
- 137 GIVE *ppl*: entered as 'ygeve' where Furnivall has 'yʒeue' 27:12.

**14. LP 5390: Wilts.** Salisbury Cathedral, MS 82, f. 271v: Paternoster. See *Atlas* I, 161c (last entry); I, 248c; III, 546. This prayer, which appears at the top of the penultimate page of the manuscript, is extraordinarily difficult to read, and I would not trust myself to produce an accurate transcript. The LP given at III, 546 is as follows:

EACH:	eh	GOOD:	good-
FROM:	vram	-LY:	-lich
EVIL:	hiwel		

I was able to identify 'eh', 'vram', 'hiwel' (to which must be added the alternative form 'ivel') and '-lich'; I could not, however, find any form for GOOD.

15. LP 5400: Wilts. Salisbury Cathedral, MS 126. 'Hand of f. 5'. 'Poem scribbled by Thomas Cyncetur, canon residentiary of Sarum, *ob.* 1452.' See *Atlas* I, 162a (first entry); I, 248c; III, 547. Folio 5r contains two columns: in the left-hand column is a table of contents, in Latin, followed by ten lines of English verse on the seven deadly sins and the ten commandments. The right-hand column begins with four lines in English, difficult to read at the right-hand edge, but which I take to be a continuation of the verses in the preceding column. These lines are followed by some Latin, partially erased; and the column finishes with an Apostles' creed in English, beginning 'hy by leue in god. fadur al myty schyppar of heuene. & of herþ'. The 'poem scribbled by Thomas Cyncetur' (who is named on fol. 1v as the donor of the manuscript) consists, I assume, of the ten lines of verse at the bottom of column 1 and the four lines at the top of column 2. These read, so far as I can make out (doubtful characters are enclosed in single angle brackets; ellipsis points within single angle brackets indicate several successive characters I cannot read):

Pryde wraþ & enuye/ sc<1>euþe  
 glotony & lechery  
 Couetyse ys moore of alle  
 lorde lete vs neffur on hem ffalle  
 þy lord of heuene loue wel  
 Tak not ys name yn ydul  
 hool<t> wel. þyn alyday  
 Worchepe þyn hyldron & þy lay  
 No mon þu ne s<c>le  
 ne no þeff þu ne be  
 þu schalt no lechery <. . . > [column 2]  
 ne no fals witnes be<e>r  
 þu schalt not couety<. . . >  
 ne no *mannus* goode vnrythffully

The LP given at III, 547 is as follows:

THEY:	þey	ASK:	ask-
THEM:	hem	CHURCH:	chyrche
MAN:	<i>mannus gen</i>		
ARE:	buþ	HEAR:	heer <i>rh</i>

WH-:	w-	I:	Hy
WHEN:	wen	PRIDE:	pryde

Forms for the following items from the questionnaire have not been collected: 45 NOT ('not' 6, 13); 139 GOOD ('goode' 14); 260 WORSHIP ('Worchepe' 8). On the other hand, only three of the items collected have forms in the lines quoted: THEM ('hem' 4), MAN ('mon' 9, 'mannus' 14), PRIDE ('pyde' 1); of these 'hem' and 'mannus' are incorrectly recorded (with the abbreviations not shown), and 'mon' is omitted. It is possible that the word I cannot read in the first line of column 2 is 'heer' (rhyming with 'beer' in the following line). It is likewise possible that 'hy' and 'chyrche' have been imported from the creed at the bottom of column 2 ('hy by leue in god . . . hy by leue y ze holy gost in holy chyrche'); but none of the remaining five items (THEY, ARE, WH-, WHEN, ASK), appears either in the verses or in the creed. One must assume that these items, which do not appear in the nominated poem, are taken from other writings in English in the same hand, found on folios 5v and 198v.

**16. LP 5950: Kent.** Oxford, Merton College 248. 'Hand of ff. 66v, 139v, 141v, 148v, 166v-167r.' See *Atlas* I, 153b; I, 201c (last entry); III, 196: 'Bishop Sheppey's Collection . . . Ed. C. Brown, *Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), pp. 51-56; whence analysed.' It appears, however, from an examination of the relevant poems in Brown's edition (numbered 35-41) that the LP has been constructed from the first four poems only (35-38, from fols 66v, 139v, 141v, and 148v of the manuscript). The language changes markedly with poem 39, as will be evident from a comparison between the LP given at III, 196 and that which I have compiled for poem 39, both given immediately below.

LP for the lyric on f. 166v of the manuscript (Brown, no. 39)

<i>FORMS COMMON TO NOR &amp; SOU</i>		<i>NORTHERN ONLY</i>	
IT:	yt, hit	WERE:	wor
THEY:	þai	TO + sb + c:	tyl
THEM:	þem	O, A:	o
THEIR:	þar	<i>Pres 3sg:</i>	-is
EACH:	ilke	<i>Pres pl:</i>	-ys

MAN:	man	Weak <i>ppl</i> :	-id
ARE:	er, ar, are	Str <i>ppl</i> :	-en
IS:	es ((ys, is))	ALL:	al
SHALL <i>sg</i> :	sal	DAY <i>sg</i> :	day
WILL <i>sg</i> :	wil	HAVE <i>sg</i> :	haues
THINK:	þinge	<i>pl</i> :	haue, as
THERE:	þer	LAW:	law
<i>Sb pl</i> :	-is	MY + <i>c</i> :	my
BUT:	bot	NEITHER <i>pron</i> :	neþer
LITTLE:	litel	OTHER:	oþer
-ER:	-yr	-DOM:	-dam
		-NESS:	-nesse, -nes

*SOUTHERN ONLY*

BURY <i>ppl</i> :	byrid
I:	I
LAND:	lande

LP 5950, reproduced from the *Atlas III*, 196

MANY:	manye	WHEN:	whanne, wan
ANY:	eny	<i>Sb pl</i> :	-us
MUCH:	muchel	CAME <i>sg</i> :	cam
IS:	is	GATE:	gate
ART:	art	GIVE <i>pt-sg</i> :	zaf
SHALL <i>sg</i> :	shal	GO <i>3sg</i> :	-geþ
WOULD <i>sg</i> :	wolde	HAVE <i>inf</i> :	habbe
FROM:	vram	<i>pt-sg</i> :	ad, adde
THEN:	þanne, þan	HIGH <i>cpv</i> :	heyere
THAN:	þanne, þan	I:	i, ich, I
STRENGTH:	strengþe	KIND <i>etc</i> :	-kynde
WH-:	wh-, w-	LAND:	londe
NOT:	naȝt	SEE <i>pt-sg</i> :	sayh
WORLD:	world	SIN:	sen-
THINK:	þenche	WHITHER:	wider
THERE:	þer	-ER:	-ore

THROUGH: þorw

The following comments, which refer to the LP given in the Atlas, are based on poems 35-38 in Brown's edition, to which reference is made by poem and line number. (I have not seen the manuscript itself.) Rhyme words are ignored.

Forms for the following items from the questionnaire have not been collected:

14 MAN ('-man': 'chapman' 36:7; 'man-': 'mankynde' 36:7);  
17 ARE ('ben' 38:12); 127 FLESH ('ffless' 36:1); 225 BRAKE  
('brak' 37:7); ? 265 YIELD *ppl* ('i-ʒolde' 38:6).

The following are additional forms for items collected:

56 *Sb pl* ('-es': 'wreches' 37:8, 'sterres' 38:2); 137 GIVE *pt-sg*  
(ʒoue' 38:4); 142 HAVE *pt-sg* ('hadde' 37:6, 38:5); 276 -ER  
('-ere': 'heyere' (which is recorded in its own right for item 149)  
38:2).

Two forms are entered for THEN (item 30) although they do not occur in any of the poems: 'þanne', 'þan'.

**17. LP 6030: Essex.** Huntington Library, San Marino (California), HM 114, ff. 184v-190v: *Susanna*. See *Atlas* I, 92a; I, 194b, and III, 115. This is a conflated LP, taken from 'two texts in the same hand' (III, 115), the other (which I did not see) being London, British Library, Harley 3943, hand A, fols 1-67, *Troilus and Criseyde*. The analysis of *Susanna* was made not from the manuscript but from Horstmann's edition of these folios in *Archiv*, 74 (1885), 339-44. My reading of the MS differs from Horstmann's in only a few minor particulars, none of which affects the LP. Additions to the LP are listed below (excluding forms occurring only in rhyme).

Forms for the following items from the questionnaire have not been collected (line references follow Horstmann):

50 WORK *sb* ('wyrk' 251, 'werkis' *pl* 265); 52 WHERE

('where' 29); 104 DO *pt-pl* ('ded' 174); 118 OE *fela* ('ffele' 98, 'fele' 129); 142 HAVE *pt-pl* ('had' 155); 159 KIND *sb* ('kynd' 184); 210 SAY ('sey' 203, 335; 'say' 289); 211 SEE *pt-pl* ('sawe' 44, 222; 'saw' 132); 258 WITHOUT *pr* ('wiþ-out' 181, 274, 326); 273 -ER ('-er': 'sorowfuller' 254, 'sorier' 255).

The following are additional forms for items collected:

5 HER ('hers' [? error: cf. 'here' Horstmann] 119); 7 THEY ('þey' 235); 8 THEM ('hem' 214); 10 SUCH ('suche' 169, 280, 292); 12 EACH ('euerych' 145); 14 MAN ('man' 216); 16 MUCH ('myche' 307); 17 ARE ('be' 138, 289, 291); 28 FROM ('from' 56); 30 THEN ('Tho' 183, 198, etc.; 'þhan' 314, 328); 31 THAN ('þan' 320); 49 THINK ('think' 292); 51 THERE ('þer' 3, 31, etc.; 'þer' 21; 'þere' 28, 95); 55 WHEN ('whan' 248, 328); 56 *Sb pl* ('-s': 'lorers' 68, 'Brytons' 97, 'losels' 161, etc.; '-ys': 'wittys' 55, 'gomys' 138, etc.); 78 BEFORE *pr* ('to-for' 302, 329, 356); 135 GATE ('gate' 228); 142 HAVE *inf* ('haue' 344); 149 HIGH ('hye' 6); 216 SIN *sb* ('synnis' *pl* 309); *vb* ('syn' 313); ? 248 WENT *pl* ('zedyn' 228); 278 -LY ('-liche': 'gayliche' 42, 95, 'sengeliche' 196).

**18. LP 6070: Essex.** London, Public Record Office: Prob 11/3, fols 45r-v. See *Atlas* I, 129a; I, 194b; III, 116: 'Register copy of the will of William Hanyngfeld, 1426. Ed. Furnivall, *Fifty Earliest English Wills*, pp. 68-72; whence analysed.' (I have not seen the original: these comments are based on Furnivall's edition, to which page and line references are given.)

Forms for the following items from the questionnaire have not been collected:

56 *Sb pl* ('-es': 'londes', 'rentes' 69:25, 'prestes' 70:6, etc.; '-s': 'Executours' *passim*, 'comyns' 70:26, etc.; '-es': 'marces' 70:24, 'markes' 70:26, 'goudes' 71:2, etc.; '-ys': 'profitys' 72:9, one example only); 257 WITEN *3sg pres* ('wot' 71:1); 258 WITHOUT *pr* ('withoute' 70:1).

The following are additional forms for items collected:

51 THERE ('ther': 70:17, 71:14; ?'there': 71:14; 'þer-': 'þer-of' 70:6; 'þer-': 'þerof' 72:5); 57 *Pres part* ('-yng': 'singyng' 70:7, 'comyng' 72:9, possibly both with abbreviated final '-e'); 86 BRIDGE ('brigge' 71:5, replacing 'brigge' in the LP).

19. LP 6310: Essex. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Eng.poet.c.3. See *Atlas I*, 148c; I, 195a; III, 127: 'Eng.poet.c.1. Hand of f. 1: fragment of *Ipotis*. Cf. Josephine D. Sutton, *PMLA* 31 (1916), pp. 115-17'. The error in numbering ('c.1' for 'c.3') is repeated from *PMLA*, which perhaps suggests that the analysis was made from the transcript printed there; but this is not certain. The original is a fragment in extremely poor condition, and the transcript in *PMLA* contains many words that I cannot make out in the original; nevertheless, the transcript is accurate so far as I am able to see, apart from one error ('vnbounde' for 'on bounde' in line 614, the penultimate line) and one clearly visible character omitted ('.e' for 'þe' in line 605). (Line numbering follows that of the left-hand margin in the *PMLA* transcript.)

The LP given at III, 127 is as follows:

SHE:	he (e, hi)	CALL <i>ppl</i> :	cleped
HER:	hire, here	FIRST:	furst
MAN:	man	FLESH:	fleus
WAS:	wa3	I:	I
AFTER:	after	THE-SAME:	þat-ilche
THERE:	þar-	WITHOUT <i>pr</i> :	wy3-oute
THROUGH:	þurw, þur3		

An examination of this LP in conjunction with the County Dictionary in Volume IV and the transcript printed in *PMLA* gives rise to the following observations on forms corresponding to items from the questionnaire:

- 4 SHE: The LP gives 'he (e, hi)', i.e. 'he' is the preferred form, 'e' and 'hi' are secondary forms – and they are so entered in the County Dictionary, IV, 7, this being



the sole occurrence of 'e' for SHE. But in fact this form does not occur in the transcript at all: the forms for SHE are 'hee' (584), 'he' (585), 'hi' (587), one occurrence of each, so that each has equal status. The correct entry for the LP according to the system in operation in the *Atlas* is 'hee, he, hi'; 'e' is a ghost form and should be deleted from the County Dictionary.

21 WAS: The LP entry is 'waʒ', as if that were the only form in the text. In fact the transcript has six occurrences of 'was' (563, 566, 570, 575, 579, 592) and only one of 'waʒ' (559). The correct entry for the LP is thus 'was ((waʒ))' (the double parentheses indicating an occasional variant), and double parentheses should be inserted around this LP number in the corresponding entry in the County Dictionary, IV, 37 (where this is the sole occurrence of 'waʒ').

51 THERE: The LP entry has 'ɸar-', which must be from 'ɸarfore' (608). But the following forms should also be entered: 'ɸer' (588), 'ɸar' (600). The entry should read: 'ɸer, ɸar, ɸar-'.

Forms for the following items from the questionnaire have not been collected:

2 THESE ('ɸise' 609); 19 IS ('is' 562, 588); 24 WILL *pl* ('willen' 573); 28 FROM ('fro' 561); 30 THEN ('ɸanne' 582); 265 YIELD *pt-sg* ('ʒeld' 584).

NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Angus McIntosh, M.L. Samuels, and Michael Benskin, with the assistance of Margaret Laing and Keith Williamson, *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, 4 vols (Aberdeen, 1986).

<sup>2</sup> These articles (with exception of Michael Benskin's, which are to be published separately) are now conveniently collected in two companion volumes to the *Atlas: The English of Chaucer and His Contemporaries: Essays by M. L. Samuels and J. J. Smith*, edited by J. J. Smith (Aberdeen, 1988), and *Middle English Dialectology: Essays on Some Principles and Problems* by Angus McIntosh, M. L. Samuels and Margaret Laing, edited by Margaret Laing (Aberdeen, 1989). Other relevant essays may be found in *So many people longages and tonges: philological essays in Scots and mediaeval English presented to Angus McIntosh*, edited by Michael Benskin and M. L. Samuels (Edinburgh, 1981).

<sup>3</sup> *Middle English Dictionary*, edited by Hans Kurath *et al.* (Ann Arbor, 1954-).

<sup>4</sup> Angus McIntosh, 'The Analysis of Written Middle English', *Transactions of the Philological Society* (1956), 26-55, and 'A New Approach to Middle English Dialectology', *English Studies*, 44 (1963), 1-11; M. L. Samuels, 'Some Applications of Middle English Dialectology', *English Studies*, 44 (1963), 81-94. These articles are reprinted in *Middle English Dialectology: Essays on Some Principles and Problems*, at pages 1-21, 22-31, and 64-80 respectively.

<sup>5</sup> See A. B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A. D. 1500*, I (Oxford, 1957), 531-32. This has no mention of Cyrcetur's birthplace, but see further R. M. Ball, 'Thomas Cyrcetur, a Fifteenth-Century Theologian and Preacher', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 37 (1986), 205-39: '... in 1428 he [Cyrcetur] was licensed for a year to preach in the diocese of Worcester, probably while visiting his native town of Cirencester' (p. 224).

<sup>6</sup> Margaret Laing, in the introduction to *Middle English Dialectology: Essays on Some Principles and Problems* (see note 2 above), p. xii.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Benskin and Margaret Laing, 'Translations and *Mischsprachen* in Middle English manuscripts', in *So many people longages and tonges* (see note 2 above), pp. 55-106; see p. 76, 6.1.1.

<sup>8</sup> M. L. Samuels, 'Some Applications of Middle English Dialectology' (see note 4 above) and 'The Dialect of the Scribe of the Harley Lyrics', *Poetica* (Tokyo, 1984), 39-47, reprinted in *Middle English Dialectology: Essays on Some Principles and Problems* (see note 2 above), pp. 256-63; Michael Benskin, 'The Letters <p> and <y> in Later Middle English, and Some Related Matters', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 7 (1982), 13-30. In the reprint of 'Some Applications' some of the maps originally showing isoglosses are replaced by dot maps taken from the *Atlas*.

<sup>9</sup> Having now (December 1990) had the chance to discuss this and other problems raised here

with Middle English scholars at several universities in the twelve months since this article was first drafted, I find that I am not alone in this view. No one has yet been able to show me how to use the 'fit' technique correctly, or why my attempt to place the *Ipotis* fragment was a failure. I should like here (without wishing to implicate them in any of my comments) to express my gratitude to the scholars who arranged the seminars at which these problems were aired: Rosamund Allen (London), John Burrow (Bristol), Richard Hogg (Manchester), Anne Hudson (Oxford), Helen Phillips (Nottingham), Tom Shippey (Leeds), Gerry Wilkes (Sydney).

<sup>10</sup> The three figures appearing in this section are all based on information supplied in the *Atlas*: Figure 1 on dot maps 16 and 18, I, 308-09; Figure 2 on dot map 18, I, 309; Figure 3 on information from the County Dictionary, Volume IV. Some inaccuracy has doubtless been introduced in the process of copying. I have not attempted to reproduce the convention (useful though it is) by which the relative frequencies of given forms are indicated by the sizes of the dots marking their location (see I, 298).

<sup>11</sup> Line 1 on Figure 1 in 'The Dialect of the Scribe of the Harley Lyrics' (see note 8).

<sup>12</sup> M. L. Samuels, 'The Scribe of the Hengwrt and Ellesmere Manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales*', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 5 (1983), 49-65, reprinted in *The English of Chaucer and His Contemporaries* (see note 2 above), pp. 38-50.

<sup>13</sup> See *A Chaucer Glossary*, compiled by Norman Davis *et al.* (Oxford, 1979), s.v. 'drede' *n.*, 'sprede(n)' *v.*, 'fles(s)h' *n.*, 'lond' *n.*

<sup>14</sup> B. Bloch, 'Leonard Bloomfield', *Language*, 25 (1949), 87-98, quoted in H. H. Stern, *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching* (Oxford, 1983), p. 136.

<sup>15</sup> I am grateful to the University of Adelaide for the two short periods of leave during which much of the research for this essay was undertaken, to the Australian Research Grants Committee for funding towards research assistance, and to the Huntington Library and its staff for generous hospitality during my visits. Amongst individuals I wish particularly to thank Sabina Flanagan from the Department of History at the University of Adelaide for her work on the dialects of *Sidrak and Bokkus* which alerted me to some of the problems of dialectal analysis discussed here; Vida Russell, my friend and former colleague, for her searching comments on an earlier draft of this article; Derek Smith and Max Foale from the Department of Geography at the University of Adelaide for their helpful comments on mapping techniques; Mary Robertson of the Huntington Library; Suzanne Eward of Salisbury Cathedral Library; and the staffs of the Bodleian Library, the Shropshire County Record Office, and the Shropshire Libraries Local Studies Department. I take sole responsibility for the opinions expressed here.