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NOTES ON ATHELSTON

(continued from III, 29).

The Language of the Poem.

1. OE. *ā* remains in *wate* 108: *late*: *state*: *gate* (OE. *wāt*, OE. *late*, OF. *estat*, ON. *gata*), and *hale* 674: *bale*: *sale*: *tale* (OE. *hāl*, *balu*, *sæl*, *talū*).

wan 512: *tan*, is inconclusive, cf. *tone*: *grone*, Sisam V, 91 *Sir Gaw.*, and *totz*: *clos*, Sisam VI, 152, *The Pearl*, and see Sisam's note to this on page 226. In Athelston, *tan* is used exclusively.

Similarly *Athelstane* 185: *name* (OE. *-stān*, *nama*), is inconclusive, the Western *nome* being possible, if unlikely (cf. *manne* 670: *Anne*, *hand* 53: *vacant*, *lande* 125: *tydande stande* 431: *leuande*: *hande*).

2. There is no certain instance of OE. *ā* being rounded.

Ihon 761: *Athelstone*: *wone*: *gon*, the two forms *Ion* and *Iohan* occur in ME., in *Havelok* for example, and *Iohan* may be the form here: cf. *Havelok* vv. 1111-2:

She answerede, and seyde anon,
Bi Crist, and bi saint Iohan.

wone 755 (also 238, *wane* 104, *wan* 512, all from ON. *ván*) rhymes in other ME. texts with either *ā* or the rounded vowel, as here: Hence the North. forms with *a* are possible here.

com 417: *anon*, is inconclusive. ME. had *cōm*, *cām*, and the original rhyme may have been *cam*: *anan*. (*Cōm* is proved in rhyme with *sone* 92, OE. *sōna*, and elsewhere in the poem).

þer-upon: *ffount-ston* 678 (OE. *upon*: *stān*), is the likeliest to show the change of *ā* but here again the instance is not free from doubt as *upan* forms are found in ME. See NED.

tolde 193: *wolde* is inconclusive, *talde*: *walde* being possible.

Rhymes such as *ylkon* 25: *Athelston*, are inconclusive, both *ā* and the rounded vowel being possible (*ylkan*: *Athelstan*).

3. Anglian *ē*. *here* 123: *zere*: *in fere*: *dere* (OE. *hēran*, *gēr*, *gefēran*, *dēore*).

rede 383: *stede*: *nede*: *lede* (OE. *rēdan*, *stēda*, *nēod*, *lēdan*).

4. There are several instances of earlier \bar{e} rhyming with \bar{e} , e.g. *dede* 171: *stede: rede: dede* (OE. *dēad, stede, rēd, dēad*).

rēde is certified, *rede* 204: *spede: hede: spede* (OE. *spēd*, stem of OE. *hēdan, spēdan*).

clene 426: *sene* (OE. *clāne, gesēne*).

clene 677: *wene* (OE. *clāne, wēn*).

The same phenomenon is seen in Havelok, *clene:grene* 995-6, *reden: leden* 244-5, *mede:lede* 685-6, *menes: wenes* 597-8.

'In NE. Midland and Northern texts some \bar{e} sounds which we should expect to be distinguished as open and close rime together, especially before dental consonants, e.g. *zede* (OE. *ēode*): *lede* (Anglian *lāda(n)*) I 152-3.' (Sisam, p. 283).

5. *dy* 143: *slyly* (ON. *deyja, slæg-r + ly*), shows the Midland change of \bar{e} to \bar{i} before $ʒ$ + vowel.

yze 803: *hyze: lye: dye* (OE. *ēge, hēh, lyge*, ON. *deyja*), is inconclusive as the rhyme may have been in *ei*: cf. Havelok *leye* 2117.

6. OE. *y* appears as *i*, *synne* 3: *wynne: þerin* (OE. *synn, gewinnan, þērinne*).

kynde 15: *lynde: fynde: bynde* (OE. *gecynd, linde, findan, bindan*); *kyn* 221: *wyn* (OE. *cynn, winnan*).

kynne 362: *inne: hym: chyn* (OE. *cynn, inne, him, cinn*).

synne 772: *gynne* (OE. *synn*, OF. *engin*).

The frequent rhymes *Cauntyrbery* 97: *mery*, are inconclusive as the original forms could have had *i*.

sterte 790: *smerte*, 'Before *r* + consonant *e* is sometimes found in all dialects, e.g. *schert* (OE. *scyrte*)' (Sisam, p. 280). Hence the ground-form need not be a Kentish **stertan* (OE. *styrtan*).

7. OE. \bar{y} appears as \bar{i} , *hyde* 536: *abyde: ryde: wyde* (OE. *hȳdan, abȳdan, rȳdan, wȳd*).

lyte 799: *wyte* (OE. *lȳt, wȳte*).

But *feer* 631: *prayer* (OE. *fȳr*, Kt. *fēr*). Elsewhere in the poem *fyr* 568 etc., is used.

(*Sere* 62, and always in "Athelston" (OF. *sire*, ME. *sire*), is

common in ME., probably arising as an unstressed form, or from the oblique case of OF. *sire*, *sieur*, see NED. under *Sir*.

Wyld, in his "South-Eastern and South-East Midland Dialects in Middle English" (*Essays and Studies*, vi, 113), says: 'On the other hand, the development of OE. \bar{y} , y (from \bar{u} - i , u - i) to e , \bar{e} , which, so far as our present information and evidence go, was confined in the eleventh century to the dialects of Kent and Suff.¹ is found already in the thirteenth century to have extended to Essex, Cambs., and S. Lincs., and in the fourteenth to Norf. . . . On the other hand, this feature is not found at all in the Bestiary or in Genesis and Exodus, which on other grounds we are inclined to assign to Norf., nor did I find any e , \bar{e} , spellings in the forms of Norf. place-names of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, although the Norf. Gilds of 1389 exhibit a certain number of e forms, and a few still remain in the modern Norf. dialect.'

'It is at first sight rather puzzling that these forms should appear so comparatively late in Norf. when we find quite a respectable list of them in Robert of Brunne's *Handlyng Synne*, eighty years earlier. Since, however, we find traces of e in the Cambs. place-names we may perhaps assume that the forms spread to Lincs. through this area from Suff. in the first instance, and to Norf. later, from Suff. and from Cambs. as well.'

Jordan, *Handbuch der mittelenglischen Grammatik*, § 40 Anm., has: 'Der Reimmöglichkeit wegen werden \bar{e} , e -Formen < \bar{y} , y , namentlich vor nd , nt wie *kende*, *dent* und *fēr* 'Feuer' oft entlehnt, in Romanzen bis in den Norden (Tristram, Yw., Gaw.); vgl. Material bei Morsbach, §129, an. 2.'

8. *radde* 712: *badde*, *i-redde* 366: *bledde* (OE. *bledde*), *adred* 736: *cornfed* (OE. *fedde*).

Havelok has *radde*: *cladde* 1353-4, *adradde*: *ladde* 1786-7, *bed*: *adred* 1257-8.

Sisam says, at pp. 269-70 and footnote; 'a line between Norwich and Birmingham gives the Northern limit for *Stratton* forms as against *Stretton*.

¹ Miss Serjeantson of Liverpool University has now (Dec. 1920) discovered an e form in a tenth-century Cambs. Charter.

The evidence of place-names does not agree entirely with the evidence of texts. *Havelok*, which is localized with reasonable certainty in North Lincolnshire, has (a)*dradd* in rimes that appear to be original, and these indicate a North-Eastern extension of the area in which OE. *stræt*, *drædan* appear for normal Anglian *strēt*, *drēda(n)*. This evidence, supported by rimes in Robert of Brunne, is too early to be disposed of by the explanation of borrowing from other dialects, nor is the testimony of place-names so complete and unequivocal as to justify an exclusive reliance upon it.

9. *zelle* 425: *dwelle*: *felle*: *helle* certifies OE. *gellan*.

10. *he gos* 412: *aros* (OE. *arās*) certifies 3rd pers.sg.pres. indic. ending in *s*.

11. Plural of the pres.indic. in *e* is certified by:—

We fynde 21: *lynde*, *we rede* 383, 569, 623, 779: *stede*, *glede*, *drede* (noun), *glede*. There are no *n* forms in rhyme.

12. Pres. subj.pl. in *e* is certified, *3e spare* 374: *bare*.

13. Past tense sing. forms are certified:—

þou gaff 468: *staff*; *þou wate* 108: *gate* is probably subj.

þou schalle 281: *alle*; *þou may* 748: *day* is probably subj.

þou made 794: *hade*.

14. Past tense plural forms are all certified without final *-n*:—*þay rod* 754: *abood*; *þay may* 370: *palfrey*; *þay lyzt* 756: *ryzt*.

15. Past tense sing. subj.:—*were* 443: *enquere*.

16. The infinitive in *-n* is certified:—*slon* 518: *non*, *gon* 775: *Athelston*; these are the only examples in rhyme, and they are monosyllables. On the other hand, infinitives without *-n* are very frequent in rhyme. The following occur in one tenth of the poem:—

wyrke 4: *kyrke*, *wynne* 6: *synne*, *ende* 8: *hende*, *mete* 16: *strete*, *bynde* 24: *lynde*, *se* 37: *þre*, *couere* 41: *Douere*, *rede* 56: *stede*, *here* 63: *dere*, *calle* 76: *halle*.

17. Pres. part. in *-ande* is certified:—*leuande* 437: *hande* (cf. *tydande* 124: *lande*).

18. Past part. of strong verbs preserves *-n* for the most part:—

born 482: *þorn*, *done* 247: *soone* (also 708, 720 *done*: *come*), *igon* 95: *anon*, *tan* 768: *gan*, *gon* 764: *Ihon*, *slayne* 162: *trayne*, *tan* 495: *ylkan*, *tan* 509: *wan*.

Loss of *-n*:—*come* 259: *sone*.

Inconclusive:—*slawe*: *drawe* 706, 718, *born*: *forlorn* 388 (*gan*: *tan* 768, is conclusive as *tan*, pa.pt., does not lose its *-n*).

19. Final *-e* is very frequently certified as silent in rhyme, the following are a few examples:—

layne (inf.): *slayne* 162 (OE. *slægen*), *falle* (inf.): *schalle* 281 (OE. *sceal* for *scealt*), *beþouzte* (pa.t.sg.): *nouzte* 86, *sþrynge* (inf.): *kyнге*: *derelyng*: *dwellyng* 96, *hande* (dat.): *fande* 202 (OE. *fand*), *dy* (inf.): *slyly* 142, *wrouzt* (pa.pt.): *nouzt* 148, *plyzt* (inf.): *knyzt* 152, *bryng* (subj. sg.): *lettyng* 215, *dwelle* (inf.): *welle* (adv.) 234.

These are a selection taken out of about one third of the poem.

20. Final *-e* required by scansion:—

here (their) 15, *laste* (after *þe*) 31, *þe ferþe* 49, *here* (their) 75, *here* 82, *sþeke* (inf.) 90, *brynge* (inf.) 141, *name* (OE. *nama*) 147, *þy beste* 177, *graunte* (imp.sg.) 261, *þe nexte day* 263.

These examples are taken out of one third of the poem.

Localisation and Date.

The above data enable us to determine the original dialect of the poem.

The poem comes from a region 1) where OE. *ā* is preserved, 2) with Anglian ground-forms for *ē*, 3) but with possibility of *radde* forms, 4) with *i*, *ī* for OE. *y*, *ȳ* (but *feer* 631), 5) where *ē* is raised before dentals, 6) where the inf. normally loses its *-n*, 7) where the pres.pl. loses its *-n*, 8) where the pret.pl. loses its *-n*, 9) where the pres.t. 3rd sg. ends in *-s*, 10) where the pa.part. loses its prefix (see below) and preserves its final *-n* as a rule, 11) where final *-e* is lost as a rule but can be sounded, 12) where the pres.part. can end in *-ande*, 13) where OE. *ǣ* before *n* remains (but *stronge* 264: *bone*).

A region which satisfies these conditions is the North-East Midland area, certainly north of Robert of Brunne's region (Bourne in S. Lincs.) and possibly as far North as the Humber.

Wyld makes it clear from his *Synopsis of Features in Eastern Group* (op.cit., p. 128), that pres. part. in *-ande*, and pa.part. with *-n* preserved occur as far south as Norfolk in the fourteenth century, and can therefore only be regarded as Northerly and not Northern.

Norfolk Gilds 1389, has *-eþ* for 3rd sg.pres.t., but frequent *-es*, *-is* (when the whole text of "Athelston" is taken into account, *-es* is used throughout, except *þynkiþ* 249, *haþ* 511): the pres.pl. in Robert of Brunne is *-yn*, *-e* (*-ys*, *-s*), but south of him *-en* down to Norfolk Gilds 1389; *-e*, alongside *-yn*, does not occur until Bokenham 1443. On p. 120 Wyld says 'Pres, Indic.Pl. In Lincs.,² Norf., and Suff. *-en*, or *-yn*, is either the only, or by far the commonest form.' Again on p. 128: 'Inf. Norfolk Gilds has still *-en*, *-in*,' and Wyld remarks on p. 121: 'The Infinitive. The final *-n* is, on the whole, used more regularly in E. Midland than in more southerly texts. Thus while R. of Br. generally omits *-n*, probably because in this respect his dialect agrees with the Northern type of English, the Norfolk Best. and Gen. and Ex. and the Gilds generally retain it. Marg. Paston, sixty years or more later, has both *-e* and *-en*.' The dialect of "Athelston" is more Northerly than that of R. of Br. who regularly writes *o* for OE. *ā* (Sisam, 204), and 'Pres.Sg.: *-eþ*; also *-es*, but latter seems only or chiefly to occur as rhyming word.' (Wyld, p. 123).

At *Englische Studien* 14, 337, Zupitza quotes Wilda as deciding that the dialect of "Athelston" is 'rein nördlicher.'

He remarks on this: 'Da wir im Athelston keine spezifisch nördlichen wörter antreffen, andererseits aber es mir wenigstens wahrscheinlich vorkommt, das der dichter öfter *i*-vor dem partic-perf.pass. gebraucht hat, so scheint es mir rätlicher, unsere romanze für ein nord-mittelländisches denkmal zu halten.' With this conclusion I agree (infins. *slon* 518, *gon*

² It has to be remembered that the Lincs. text he is speaking of is R. of B. (1303).

775, in rhyme, are against pure Northern, and the ending of the present plural, for example), but since West Midland characteristics are absent the eastern half of the North Midlands is indicated.

I see no reason to disagree with Zupitza in dating "Athelston": 'Ich meine, wir werden uns nicht um viele jahrzehnte irren, wenn wir die romanze um 1350 entstanden denken.' Final *e* (see above, 19), was lost at different dates in different regions. 'In the North it hardly survives the middle of the century. In the North Midlands its survival is irregular. In the South and S. Midlands it is fairly well preserved until the end of the century.' (Sisam, 285). This accords with our localization and dating of "Athelston." The mention of *Charynge Cros* 335, in rhyme, gives a backward limiting date of 1296.

It is clear that the scribe's dialect was more Southerly than that of the Romance, and that he has introduced Southern forms into the text. Such rhymes as *knawe* 570: *rawe* (again 780), are now seen to be original. He has left alone 3rd pers. sg. pres. in *-es*, which occurs very frequently throughout the text, except at 249, 511, where he substitutes a *þ* form.

There is the Northerly imper. pl. in *-es*: *lystnes* 7, *wendes* 372.

The following Northerly forms, proved in rhyme, are in keeping with the original North-East Midland dialect of "Athelston":—

dede (death) 180, 442: *rede*, *ded* 313: *red* (red), is a variant of *deþ*, usually Northern, *tydande* 124: *lande*, *tylle* 122: *wille*, OE. (rare Nth.) *til*, ON. *til*, the common equivalent of *to* in Northern texts, *heretyke*: *dyke* 480, *sloo* 84: *woo*, *sloo* 246: *twoo*, *slon* 518: *non*, ON. *slá*, *tan* 495: *ylkan*, *tan* 509: *wan*, *tan* 768: *gan*.

Another feature of the text, *e* forms for normal *i*, falls into place in the original dialect. Where these forms occur in rhyme, they are inconclusive, as they rhyme with each other:—

iwreten 21, *wete* 265, 667, *wetyng* 505, *leue* 316: *moregeue*, *leue* 658: *geue* (again 402), *leuyd* 695, *presoun* 251, *reden* 322,

dede 372, 24 (but OE. had *dede*, beside *dyde*, pa.t. of *dōn*), *hedyrcome* 728.

Sisam says p. 280: 'And in Northern texts there are a number of *e* spellings in open syllables, both for OE. *y* and *i*.'

Past Participles with *i* prefix.

iwreten 21, *iholpe* 138, *iwent* 181, *iredde* 366, *igrauntyd* 268/233, 403, *imaad* 187, /429, 724, 630, 778, *iborn* 651, 289/387, *iblessyd* 662, 650, 560, *ihangyd* 706/457, 697, *igon* 95, 622/769, 764.

From the above analysis, it is clear that there are only ten past participles with the prefix, and five of these also occur without prefix (after /); where both forms occur, the number without is frequently greater than the number with, e.g. *imaad*, 1 with, 4 without. Thus in the whole poem, there are only five past participles with prefix, that occur solely in that form, and it is obvious, that there is a possibility of the Southern scribe's being responsible for some of these; where metre seems to demand the *i* form, this is in itself an explanation of an uncommon form, as e.g. *imaad*. There is nothing here to weigh against N.E. Midland as the dialect of "Athelston", on the contrary, there is confirmation.

Trounce says at p. 52: 'We may say, therefore, that the strictly linguistic evidence is not inconsistent with a localization in Norfolk, which is on other grounds not only a satisfactory choice, but almost an inevitable one.' The analysis in the preceding pages shows, on the contrary, that the linguistic evidence is *against* a localization in Norfolk (see for example, the consideration of the *pres. indic. plural* and the *infinitive* in the preceding pages).

On page 46 Trounce says: 'This clear indication of the East Midlands or the North is rather disturbed by the occurrence of $\bar{y} > \bar{e}$ in FEER 631 I.W. PRAYER (OF. *preiere*) . . . ' This point has been dealt with in the preceding pages.

A glance through Trounce's Glossary shows quite a number of references to Northern or Northerly forms: see for example, *nerhande*, *ded(e)* death 313 note, *tyl(le)*, *pedyr*, *whylys*,

forwondryd, forcursyd. On page 47 (8) he has 'LYNG (ON. *lengja* OE. *lengan*) r.w. RYNG shows *e* raised before the nasal combination. The word and the rhyme are rare and Northern.' See also page 139 under Northern.

French & Hale say: 'The dialect of the poem is North Midland of 1350-1400. It has several Northern peculiarities, such as the setting of two or three predicates in apposition, and the omission of relatives.'

With regard to the introduction of St. Edmund into "Athelston", which Trounce considers, at p. 2, 'connects it with Bury St. Edmunds', Lord Francis Hervey in his *Corolla Sancti Eadmundi* shows that there were many associations with the tradition of St. Edmund at places on the London to Canterbury road, at Rochester and Dartford for example (see page xliii and pages lv-lvii). One who knew this road well, as did the author of "Athelston", could not fail to be acquainted with the tradition of St. Edmund; there is no need to go out of the way to Norfolk for it.

In the romance, *Athelston's* sister *Edyue* married *Egelan*, and their son *St. Edmund* succeeds *Athelston*. The historic King *Athelstan* had a sister *Edgiva* (*Eadgifu*) according to William of Malmesbury, and the mother of his successor *Edmund*, bore the same name. A confusion of these two women would result in *Athelstan's* successor *Edmund* becoming his nephew as in the romance. An easy confusion of two famous kings, *Edmund* and *Edmund, K. and M.* would result in *Athelstan's* being succeeded by his nephew *St. Edmund*, as in the romance.

Trounce's attempt on page 118, to connect *Alyrke* with *Bishop Bateman* and King's Lynn is pure speculation. Gerould (*Englische Studien* 36, 193), from similar considerations, favours St. Thomas Becket. There is no local knowledge or tradition which sends us to Norfolk in localizing "Athelston".

Trounce in his articles in *Medium Ævum* (I, 87ff., 168ff.; II, 34ff., 189ff.; III, 30ff.) endeavours to show that the English tail-rhyme romances have their source in East Anglia. He

says at I, 94: 'These Auchinleck tail-rhyme poems represent the fountain-head of the Style.' At II, 42, he says: 'I propose to show that *Amis* and *Guy* (both Auchinleck MS.) belong beyond any doubt to East Anglia, and then to consider the rest of the poems in various groups, beginning with the remainder of the Auchinleck poems.' These quotations show Trounce's fundamental position: his whole structure (as he points out) depends on the soundness of this first conclusion.

At II, 44, he gives analyses of the rhymes of "Amis" and "Guy." The tests which show that "Athelston" is not to be localized in East Anglia give the same result for "Amis" and "Guy."

At page 51, Trounce gives the analysis for "Horn Childe", and his conclusion is 'purest Norfolk, and the *earliest of the tail-rhyme romances* preserved to us.' He finds 'some material more Northerly in quality' troublesome. One difficulty *by* (*be* inf.) r.w. *sikerly* 947, he solves by the suggestion *be* r.w. *sikerlé*, and compares *plenté* r.w. *vncessantlé* in the "Towneley Play of Noah."

A further difficulty is that of the Yorkshire names in "Horn Childe" (*Alerton more* 67, *Clifland bi Tese side* 54, *Blakeowe more* 110, *zork* 118, *Pikering* 116, *Staynes more* 175, *Humber side* 246, etc.).

At page 52 Trounce inclines to the idea that the presence of an ancient monument on Stainmore confirms his theory that the material for "Horn Childe" was drawn from Chronicles. The reverse seems more likely, as here would be the nucleus for tradition. Further he says: 'One may compare for the presence and the nature of the names (in *Horn Childe*), the poem of *Athelston* which was composed in the north of Norfolk, and has intimate and accurate details of London. Behind both poems lie Latin Chronicles or Anglo-Norman originals or both.' As for "Athelston", the author certainly does not go to Chronicles for his 'accurate details of London,' and the London to Dover road. His knowledge is first-hand: *Charing Cross* was there to be seen (*but not*

before 1296), and an accurate detail such as *þenne myzte he see þe toun Off Cauntyrbery* 347, precisely at the point where Canterbury is first seen, can prove only what is obvious throughout "Athelston." Local knowledge is clearly shown in both "Horn" and "Athelston," but in neither case is it of Norfolk.

At II, 51, Trounce says: '*Horn Childe* is in general clearly connected with *Amis*.' "Guy," "Amis," and "Horn Childe," support one another in their *non-East Anglian* origin; one cannot agree that the 'fountain-head of the Style' does 'belong beyond any doubt to East Anglia.'

At II, 46, Trounce states: 'The fact of these *are* sequences has to be accepted as an element of the literary situation of the East Midlands in the 14th century, whatever the explanation may be. This discrepancy between the forms of words in rhyme and those current in the daily speech of the areas in which the poems were written is very remarkable, and I should consider it rather disturbing, if I were a philologist.' It is not simply a question of rhyme-sequences: as indicated in the preceding pages, verbal inflexions show the same discrepancy.

Mr. Trounce has devoted much time and effort to the study of the English tail-rhyme romances, for which he has a great enthusiasm. His work has certainly led to a revival of interest in them, and his investigations make interesting reading, if in places 'rather disturbing,' as he says, to a philologist.

GEORGE TAYLOR.