Liber Uricrisiarum

Star, Sarah, Tavormina, M. Teresa, Harvey, E.Ruth, Daniel, Henry

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Appendix 5

The Language of the Royal 17 D.i Scribe

The scribe of R is a well-disciplined writer with a highly consistent orthographic practice. Many of the items in the *LALME* Questionnaire are given by this scribe in spellings found widely across the country, or at least widely across counties south of the Wash.¹ For example, the scribe consistently uses the following non-northerly spellings and forms:²

1 Examples of widely occurring spellings used by the R scribe, for *LALME* items 1–56 (up to Forms): þe, þise, þo, sche/she, it, þai, man, ar, wer(e), is, art, was, schal/shal, schalt/shalt, schuld(shuld(e)), wil, wilt, wold(e) sg., wolde/wolden pl., to, fro, after, þan “then,” þan “than,” þogh, if, whil(e), noȝt/noght, world(e), þenk- “think,” werk sb., wirk- pres. stem, þer(e), wher(e), myȝt, þor(o)gh, when (and less common whan). The familiarity of these and other spellings suggests a certain degree of standardization, or at least avoidance of narrowly regional forms, by the scribe.

2 The localizations of different words discussed here are based both on e*LALME*’s general Dot Maps, many but not all of which are also found in the print version of the Atlas, and on the interactive, User-defined Maps available only in the web version, especially when the general Dot Maps conflate several spellings of a word. The tallying of forms has been made possible through the use of R.J.C. Watt’s Concordance program (v3.2). In the following quantitative estimates, “extremely rare(ly)” means less than 2 per cent of all instance; “very rare(ly)” = 2 to 5 per cent, “rare(ly)” = 5 to 10 per cent, “less common(ly)” = 10 to 25 per cent. We use the term “East Anglia” to mean Norfolk and Suffolk; county names are based on the pre-1974 boundaries, as in *LALME*.

It should be noted that “localization” of a Middle English text according to *LALME* maps (more precisely, of its scribe’s written language) refers to orthographic features that the text shares with “anchor” texts, whose place of production is known from internal evidence. Such shared features need not mean that the text under consideration was produced in the same place as similar anchor text(s): a scribe might learn how to spell in one location, and then move and work elsewhere while retaining some, most, or all of his early orthographic habits. As the General Introduction to *LALME* points out, “the Atlas tells us, in essence, where the scribe of a manuscript learned to write; the question of where he actually worked and produced the manuscript is a matter of extrapolation and assumption” (1:23, section 4.1.1; original emphasis).
o for OE/ON á (LALME Questionnaire Item 48);
-þ and -th (with very rare -t and extremely rare -þe/-þe) for the pr.3sg. ending (Item 61): over 2400 instances; -es occurs only about five times in the entire text outside the Prologue (and only once in the Prologue);³

hem (very rarely ham) for THEM (Item 8): a form that reaches into south Yorkshire and south Lincolnshire but is found mainly further south; the only non-þ initial spelling outside the Prologue is themself in 2.13.397;

her and here for THEIR (Item 9), with distribution similar to that of hem/ham; no þ/-th- forms outside the Prologue;

here and her for HER (Item 5), with extremely rare (1x) hir: her(e) distribution similar to that of hem/ham;

swich(e) and swych(e) for SUCH (Item 10), alongside rare such(e) and extremely rare sich(e)/swich/swche: swich(e)/swych(e) typically occur in East Anglia, Essex, Cambridgeshire, along the southern and southeastern edges of Lincolnshire, and south of a line that then runs through Bedfordshire, southern Northamptonshire, south Warwickshire, Worcestershire, and the northern part of Herefordshire;

which(e) and extremely rare whyche for WHICH (Item 11), with the -ch(e) ending in all but two cases (whilk and whilke), Northern/Northeastern spellings found only in the list of conditions in 1.4.6 and 13, perhaps reflecting an element of the scribe’s exemplar that he felt was worth preserving);⁴ some which(e)/whyche spellings do occur further north than most of the features listed here, but in a more scattered fashion, and mainly south of a line from the Wash to Morecambe Bay (in and south of Lancashire, southern Yorkshire, and southern Lincolnshire);

eny for ANY (Item 15), with any and ony each only once: eny is typically found south of a line that runs west from the Wash and then turns northwest through Lancashire;

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³ The Prologue and the suppletions of R’s gaps by M7 have slightly different spelling systems from R; they are discussed briefly below (pp. 307–8). We have also inventoried five-folio runs from the beginning, middle, and end of the manuscript; those samples do not reveal any significant differences in major and minor spellings and forms across R’s work on the main text, though the scribe uses os (for AS) and -th (pr.3sg. ending) with some increasing frequency across the course of the text.

⁴ The spelling while(e)/whylk(e) in the Conditions list occurs not only in R but also in its descendant M7, the proto-alpha witness G3, and the alpha subgroup CfCgBH; the proto-alpha witness M6 and alpha subgroup GTSaSc have forms of which. Beta texts change the phrase “which(e)/whilk(e) it is” to “what hue it is,” clarifying the sense.
meny for MANY (Item 13), with rare many and one instance of meny(e): meny(e) is normally a more southerly form than eny, occurring mainly south of a slightly wavy line running across Suffolk and west through Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and the northerly parts of Gloucestershire and Herefordshire; however, LALME’s Dot Map for the item shows one Linguistic Profile (LP 73) with meny as a minor form in north Cambridgeshire (Isle of Ely);
cherche and chirche (one each) for CHURCH (Item 108), with no k-forms (though only two instances, they agree with the general non-Northern orthography).

Several LALME items help to limit the general southward and westward extent of the language:

os and as for AS (Item 34), both frequent (664x and 475x respectively), as well as very rare also and a single instance of also: os is typically found in Northern and Northeastern counties, including the more northerly part of Norfolk; parts of Cambridgeshire/Isle of Ely, Huntingdonshire, and Northamptonshire; and counties north and east of Leicestershire, Derbyshire, and Yorkshire (inclusive). The spelling as is widespread across LALME’s NOR survey points and presumably continues on into the south.
-and(e), the somewhat less common -end(e), and the less common -ond(e) for the pr.ppl. ending (Item 58), together with less common -ing/-yng and very rare and extremely rare -ant and -ynd: -and(e) is usually found north or east of a curving line running to the northwest of most of Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire, north of most of Huntingdonshire, and then turning southward to run west of most of Cambridgeshire/Isle of Ely, East Anglia, Essex, the Middlesex/London area, Kent, and parts of Surrey and Sussex, thereby excluding a large portion of the southern and central Midland shires; -end(e) has a smaller, more easterly footprint, with a narrow “finger” of instances reaching out to the northwest: broadly shared with -and(e) are parts of Sussex and Surrey, Kent, the Middlesex/London area, Essex, East Anglia, and Cambridgeshire/Isle of Ely; further north, the form is limited to the northern areas of Northamptonshire, Rutland,

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5 Linguistic Profiles (henceforth LPs) are given in LALME vol. 3 and explained in the Introduction to that volume; both the LPs and the Introduction to vol. 3 are also available in eLALME.
south Lincolnshire, northeast Leicestershire, and southeast Nottinghamshire (-and(e) also occurs in these counties).

-ond(e) occurs in an even more restricted area, in four LPs from Lincolnshire and Leicestershire and another two from Lancashire. CALL (Item 103) is represented almost entirely (more than 320 instances) by the root call-, with only four instances of clep- forms, all in the first part of the text (1.3.31, 2.3.55, 2.3.59, 2.3.352): most LALME records of call- forms occur in Surrey, London, Essex, East Anglia, and north of a line running north of all or most of Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, and Herefordshire, though very scattered instances can be found in Oxfordshire and the southwest;

mykel(-) for MUCH (Item 16), along with rare mykil, very rare mych(e), and extremely rare mikel, mykyl, myke, and mich, mychel, mychil: forms like mykel/mykil/mykyl and mikel are normally found north of a line from the Thames estuary to the mouth of the Severn.

Based on these forms, especially os and -end(e)/-and(e) combined with the broadly non-Northern spellings and forms noted above, R’s language is best explained as coming from an area that would include the northern half of Norfolk, the borders between southern Lincolnshire and northern Cambridgeshire (Isle of Ely), Northamptonshire, Rutland, and Leicestershire, and possibly a small part of southeast Nottinghamshire. Two individual items deserve special notice: meny for MANY and the -ond(e) ending for pr.ppl. As mentioned above, the spelling meny (R’s majority form of the word) is usually found further south than the region suggested here for R’s language, but its occurrence as a minor form in LP 73 (Isle of Ely) suggests that it could have been familiar to the R scribe. Perhaps he found the visual analogy between eny and meny a persuasive argument for writing the two words with the same vowel.

The -ond(e) ending occurs 36 times in the text, out of 285 total pr.ppl. forms – a not insignificant minority form (13 per cent), though substantially outweighed by -and(e) (151x) and -end(e) (54x). The very restricted distribution of -ond(e) in the LALME Dot Maps overlaps slightly with the dialect area described above, which could mean that the area should simply be narrowed down to south Lincolnshire and northeast Leicestershire, but it is also possible that the -ond(e) spellings are inherited from R’s source and were familiar enough to the scribe that he did not always translate them into

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6 Our dialect analysis differs somewhat from that of Norri, for whom “The dialect has Norfolk features, and perhaps comes from the southern part of the county” (1992, 71).
his more common -and(e)/-end(e) spellings. The fact that Stamford and Ketton, places associated with Daniel and his dedicatee Walter Turner of Ketton, are in south Lincolnshire and Rutland (and only three miles apart) may lend possibility to the hypothesis that Daniel’s text was originally written and initially copied in the Dominican convent at Stamford, but no documentary support has yet come to light as to where Daniel himself learned his letters or where he resided when writing the Liber Uricrisiarum.

One last observation concerning the scribe of R should be made, namely that he appears to avoid spellings that might be seen as strongly Northern, Northeastern, or East Anglian. If his writing system is based in Norfolk, for instance, he eschews the characteristic East Anglian spellings xal-/xul- for SHALL/SHOULD; nor do spellings for SUCH and WHICH with -lk- (aside from the Conditions list in bk. 1.4) or qu-/qw-/qwh- for WH- appear anywhere in his text, even though such forms are easily found in counties such as Lincolnshire, Norfolk, the Isle of Ely, and Leicestershire. In this behaviour, he seems to move in the direction of the kind of “colourless” regional writing that Samuels discusses in the context of later fifteenth-century examples (1981, 43–4).

Two sets of folios in our edition diverge from the dialect features of the main text described above: text transcribed from M7 and the text of the Prologue.

As indicated in the Introduction (p. 31), we have substituted text from M7 for ten missing or mutilated leaves in R. The M7 scribe is generally very faithful to the text of R, including most of the forms inventoried above,7 but differs in one particularly striking feature: he uses the character <y> for both y and þ in R, which may well have been his immediate exemplar (based on the carryover of many marginal “lef” cross-references, even though they no longer apply to folios in M7). According to Michael Benskin, the scribal practice of conflating y and þ in a single letter-form “characterizes the writing of scribes from the northerly and some easterly parts of England, and from Scotland” (1982, 14). Based on Benskin’s map showing the general distributions of the spellings <þ> and <y>, the “easterly parts of England” include large portions of Norfolk, a narrow band stretching across mid-Suffolk into Cambridgeshire, and two very small regions of southern Essex. Benskin’s map may be further refined for our purposes with the User-defined Maps in eLALME for the pr.3sg. ending,

7 We have concorded and compiled a separate Inventory of Forms for the M7 material, but omit its details here, as they generally agree with R aside from the conflation of y and þ. As noted in the Introduction, our edition normalizes M7’s y as þ as appropriate, for ease of reading.
limiting the forms to -ey/-iy/-yy.8 These endings appear in only eleven LPs, ten of them in Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Isle of Ely, south Lincolnshire, north Huntingdonshire, south Nottinghamshire, and Staffordshire, with one outlier (-yy as a minor form) in Herefordshire.9 Such findings may imply that the M7 scribe learned to write in an area similar to or slightly west of the R scribe’s language, an area where (or under a teacher for whom) y and þ were not distinguished, but was otherwise comfortable with the rest of R’s spellings, reproducing them with little or no variation.

The Prologue also diverges in small but significant ways from the language in the main text of R, particularly in its use of þam (8x) and þaym (1x) for THEM, and þair (2x) for THEIR, instead of R’s usual hem/ham and her(e).10 Although þam and þaym can be found across the country, they are somewhat more common in the Northern areas, consistent with their origin in Old Norse þeim. The spelling þair, with both initial þ- and medial -ai-, is also found primarily in the north. The Prologue is in the hand of the R scribe, so these variations from his practice elsewhere in the text suggest that his exemplar for the Prologue was written in a slightly more northern dialect than that of the main text. A minor linguistic variance of this sort from the main text might be explained if the English version of Daniel’s Latin Prologue was created by a translator other than Daniel, slightly later than the Liber Uricrisiarum proper, and then grafted on to a copy of the main text either by the R scribe or by a predecessor.

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8 M7’s pr.3sg. endings are -ey (136x), -th (24x), -t (5x), -es (5x), -iy (2x), -ith (2x), -yth (2x), -yy (1x).
9 The infrequency of -y endings for pr.3sg. verbs, despite the common y/þ conflation in Northern Middle English, is explained by the even more common use of -es as the pr.3sg. ending in the north: most scribes who use the same character for y and þ would have used -es in the pr.3sg., and it is not surprising that the -y endings for pr.3sg. occur in counties between the broadly Northern and Midland dialect areas.
10 The form hem for THEM occurs only once in the Prologue.