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THE ONOMASTIC DATA OF THE FOURTEENTH-CENTURY POLL TAX RETURNS: A CASE FOR FURTHER DIALECTOLOGICAL STUDY OF LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLISH

D. HARRY PARKIN

University of the West of England

ABSTRACT

An important source of localisable Middle English dialectological data has recently become widely accessible, thanks to the published transcription of the 1377, 1379 and 1381 poll tax returns by Carolyn C. Fenwick (1998, 2001, 2005). As the only collection of onomastic data from the late fourteenth century with national coverage, the name forms in the records can be analysed to further our understanding of Middle English dialect distribution and change. As with many historical records, the poll tax returns are not without damage and so do not cover the country in its entirety, but provided their investigation is carried out with suitable methodological caution, they are of considerable dialectological value. Using the poll tax data, the distributions of two dialect features particular to the West Midlands (specifically rounding of /a/ to /o/ before nasals and /u/ in unstressed positions) are presented and compared with the patterns given for the same features in Kristensson's (1987) dialect survey of data from 1290-1350. By identifying apparent discrepancies in dialect distribution from these datasets, which represent periods of no more than 100 years apart, it seems that the spread of certain Middle English dialect features may have changed considerably over a short space of time. Other possible reasons for these distribution differences are also suggested, highlighting the difficulties in comparing dialect data from different sets of records. Through this paper a case for further dialectological study, using the poll tax returns, is made, to add to the literature on Middle English dialect distribution and to improve our knowledge of ME dialect phonologies at the end of the fourteenth century.

Keywords: Middle English, dialect, dialectology, onomastics, poll tax

1. Introduction

The extant fourteenth-century poll tax returns from 1377, 1379 and 1381 (referred to from now on as the PTRs), an important source of onomastic data, have recently been made widely available in their entirety (Fenwick 1998, 2001, 2005). They

are unique in that they provide a relatively representative cross-section of society, including the names of people from all social classes. This distinguishes them from the rolls of the early fourteenth-century lay subsidies which did not assess those who were "too poor to be taxed" (FitzHugh 1988: 160), based on the level of their income or the value of the taxable goods which they owned.

As a result of the attempt to tax "all lay men and women … of … fifteen years and over", excepting "genuine paupers" (Fenwick 1998: xvi), the PTRs "include the names and payments of some 60 per cent of the whole population, several times more than may be found in the earlier Lay Subsidies" (Rogers 1995: 149).

Given this coverage provided by the PTRs, it is possible to carry out a number of dialectological analyses of late medieval England with much greater synchronic precision than has been possible in previous research. Sundby's (1963) work on the Middle English (ME) dialect in Worcestershire from c1100 to c1500 is perhaps the most restricted study of its kind with regard to time span, in which he divides his survey into fifty-year sets. However, other dialectological surveys have used much wider date ranges while treating the data as synchronic; for example, Moore, Meech & Whitehall (1935) used data from the twelfth to fifteenth century "as if they had to do with a synchronic unity and consequently committed a number of errors" (Fisiak 1982: 121). In an attempt to address the fundamental problems faced in the preparation of a historical dialect atlas, Fisiak (1982: 121) asked, among other questions, "what span of time can be recognized as a sufficiently homogenous unit for a description of dialects so that a historical change is not accepted as a dialect feature?". Unfortunately, the preferred answer to this question has been incompatible with the amount of data available for previous research, as stated by Fisiak (1982),

> There is no principled solution to this problem. So far only practical considerations have determined whether it should be a hundred years or more. It seems that ideally a life span of one generation should be a time unit for historical dialectology but in practice it is often impossible to follow this proposal rigidly for the lack of a sufficient number of appropriate written records. (Fisiak 1982: 121)

The PTRs do, however, provide the ideal identified by Fisiak, and considering that the lay subsidy rolls were suitable, though with some additional documents, for a ME dialect survey (Kristensson 1967, 1987, 1995, 2001a, 2002), the fact that the PTRs contain a greater percentage of the population than the subsidy rolls means that they can be justifiably analysed in a dialect study.[1] As the

[1] Note that there is not complete agreement on the extent to which ME dialect data represent orthographical or phonological distinctions. Fisiak (1983: 199) states that "Middle English dialectological research has relied entirely on the phonological characterization of dialect differences" except for the *LALME* survey, which considered the available data as representative of

onomastic data of the PTRs have not been studied for this purpose before, their investigation will update our knowledge of ME dialect distribution, and may also show previously unknown patterns at a date for which a wealth of surname evidence has not been widely available in the past.

2. Onomastic or literary dialectological data?

Some dialect surveys of late ME have studied data from the period covered by the PTRs (see, for example, McIntosh, Samuels & Benskin, 1986, whose work, *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* (*LALME*) mostly considered texts from the period 1350-1450), but these have used literary sources,[2] rather than onomastic. There are fundamental differences in these two types of data which, some scholars believe, make name data a more accurate reflection of localised dialect features.

Kristensson has been one of the strongest advocates for onomastic, over literary, ME dialect evidence. In the first volume of his ME dialect survey (1967: x-xi), he was clear in explaining that the localisation and dating of medieval literary works was often difficult, and that they are therefore inadequate as a source of dialect material when analysed for the investigation of dialect distribution:

> For an investigation of ME dialects, literary texts provide poor material, in any case at the present stage of our knowledge of them. The basic principle must be to use only such texts as can be localized and dated, and are preserved in the original or in copies identical with the original. In their stock-taking of all ME texts, Moore, Meech and Whitehall found only six texts that satisfy these demands, but for their survey they also drew upon 37 other texts which they considered trustworthy for a dialectal investigation. It goes without saying that this material is too scanty for the determination of dialect boundaries. Even if more localized and dated texts should be found in the original, they will not furnish enough material for a dialect survey.

Kristensson (1967: xii) goes on to explain how place-name data is favourable to literary evidence, but that their frequency is not always sufficient for reliable conclusions on dialect distribution to be drawn. He then states that surnames provide a favourable source of ME dialect evidence as they are often localisable and occur in large numbers in many documents.

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regional orthographies. As it is generally agreed that onomastic evidence "is particularly productive for phonological investigations" (Fisiak 1983: 198), and previous surveys of onomastic data have been phonological in focus (see Kristensson 1967, 1987, 1995, 2001a, 2002), I consider the data of the PTRs to be suitable for phonological analysis.

[2] Other written textual evidence has also been used in some such surveys, though given that literary sources are the most commonly used in analyses of ME dialect from textual evidence, the term *literary* will be used throughout to refer to non-onomastic ME dialect data.

Kristensson continued to promote this view. He writes: "In my long preoccupation with Middle English dialects I have become more and more convinced that documents of the type *Lay Subsidy Rolls* and *Court Rolls* provide the most reliable material for a survey of Middle English dialects" (1997: 655). Fisiak (1982) provides further support for the use of such records in historical dialectology, stating that

> Subsidy roles [sic] and assize roles [sic] and in fact any lists of names in legal documents are extremely important and should not be neglected (cf. Sundby 1963). The nature of these documents guarantees a high degree of reliability of writing. Orthographic variations, it seems, must reflect variations in the phonetic reality which is essential for the reconstruction of pronunciation and consequently for the establishment of isoglosses. (Fisiak 1982: 120)

Hough (2012: 46) identifies a further advantage in using onomastic material, suggesting that, "as names can be used without an understanding of semantic content, they are less subject than lexical items to orthographic standardization, so collections of historical spellings may offer a more reliable guide to phonology than other types of data".

While a strong case can be made for the use of onomastic data, particularly the surname evidence, in a study of ME dialects, the argument that this approach leads to more reliable results than the analysis of literary material suggests that both types of data are directly comparable; this is not necessarily the case. Fisiak (1983) is right to point out that the study of literary and onomastic data for dialect analysis should be complementary, as one type of data may provide localisable dialect evidence that the other type cannot, but this is not to say that they are equivalent. It is as Hough (2012: 46-47) explains, "the extent to which conclusions drawn from onomastic data can be extrapolated to other areas of language is uncertain. Differences between names and words may lead to different phonological developments". This has not been proven, but studies of apparent differences in lexical and onomastic data certainly make it a possibility.

Nicolaisen (1995) questions the notion that all terms behind northwest Germanic toponyms must have been drawn directly from the lexicon when they were needed, instead suggesting that these items were part of a northwest Germanic onomasticon, a set of lexical items that were used for place-naming. Discrepancies in the dialect lexis evidence of surnames and occupational descriptions have also been found in the PTRs (see Parkin 2014), further reinforcing the idea that any lexicon may not be directly comparable with its corresponding onomasticon. It might also be, then, that the phonology apparent in ME literary texts is not the same as the phonology apparent in the names of synchronic ME tax records. As a result of this uncertainty, the direct comparison of onomastic ME dialect surveys and those which used literary evidence may not be appro-

priate, and the suggestion that onomastic data provide more reliable evidence of dialect distribution than literary data might be incorrect. Perhaps a safer statement would be that onomastic and literary data provide different evidence of dialect distribution, and the exact relationship between the two types requires further investigation.

This is not the aim of this paper, though the possible incomparability of onomastic and literary material in dialect studies means that Kristensson's survey, as the sole national survey of ME dialects from onomastic data, is the only one of its kind. Comparison is, therefore, required with other onomastic data which can be suitably localised, in order to determine whether or not the dialects of the name forms in the lay subsidy rolls are, on the whole, the same as in other records from a similar period. This will allow the suitability of onomastic evidence in dialect study to be further evaluated, while adding to our knowledge of ME dialect geography through the investigation of a new source.[3] Now that they are widely available, and contain a suitable amount of data for analysis, the PTRs can be used for this purpose (see section 4).

It is worth mentioning here that the kind of geographical distribution presented in *LALME* is different to that employed by Kristensson and most other onomastic studies. *LALME* uses the 'fit-technique' (see McIntosh 1956, 1963), where documents of unknown provenance are localised according to their linguistic similarity with 'anchor texts' which have a known provenance; one important advantage of this approach is that documents of unknown provenance can still be used to study dialect geography and to represent a dialect continuum of ME.

Kristensson's approach is to plot each feature where it occurred. This is only possible when a document's provenance is known, but this is not a problem for local tax records. Stenroos & Thengs (2012) concisely summarise how this approach differs to the 'fit-technique', as follows: "rather than asking which texts represent the 'same dialect' on linguistic grounds [*as in the 'fit-technique'*], we could simply ask what kinds of written language were produced at a given geographical location". By plotting features at the location where they were produced, "maps are more likely to reflect the messiness of the real world". In this study of the PTRs, the "fit-technique" has not been adopted, instead approaching the great complexity of medieval dialect variation in the "orderly way" suggested

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[3] New sources are also beginning to be analysed in similar ways thanks to the work of *The Middle English Scribal Texts Programme* (*MEST*) at the University of Stavanger, a long-term research project which deals with 15th and early 16th century documentary material, and is of great importance to the future study of late Middle English dialect distribution. The work of *MEST* includes the compilation of the *Middle English Local Documents* corpus (*MELD*), which includes texts that, much like the PTRs and lay subsidy rolls, are dateable and localisable with a high level of accuracy. The dialectological value of the documents analysed as part of *MEST* can be seen in, for example, Stenroos & Thengs (2012) and Thengs (2013).

by Stenroos & Thengs (2012), relating the data "strictly to those extralinguistic parameters that are available, such as the actual provenance of documentary texts". To this end, in figures 1 and 2, the features analysed and identified from the name forms in the PTRs are plotted at the locations in which the bearers of those names were recorded. This also allows for direct comparison with Kristensson's survey, in which the same approach was used.

3. Methodological considerations

3.1. Localisation of the poll tax returns

Before analysis of the PTRs is carried out, it is first necessary to establish that the PTRs are a suitably local source for dialect study, considering Kristensson's (2001b: 64) statement that "a basic tenet in historical dialectology is to rely only on such forms as were taken down locally by people living at the place and are preserved in originals or copies very close to the originals". Of course, the PTRs are localisable in that they come from individual vills, and so, where the vill names are extant in the records, it is possible to give a precise point on a map of England for an apparent dialect feature found in the name of a person recorded in a PTR from an individual vill. However, these points are only representative of local dialect distribution if each extant return was drawn up in such a way that its name forms represented the dialect of the inhabitants of the vill in question, which was not necessarily the case. There has been disagreement on this matter in previous works, with McClure (1973) and Kristensson (1976) giving both sides of the argument.

McClure (1973: 193) suggests that Kristensson's (1967) use of county lay subsidy rolls in his dialect survey might render some of the conclusions unreliable, stating that "the doubt arises from the fact that a variety of scribal influence may have nonetheless come between the local speech forms and the written forms of the county rolls". Kristensson (1976) responded to McClure by acknowledging that he raised an important point, and so attempted to clarify the relationship between county rolls and their corresponding original local documents. In a comparison of a rare extant local roll with its county equivalent, for Stratford on Avon in 1332, Kristensson (1976: 56) identifies some spelling differences, before concluding that "none of the spelling changes ... imply a change that gives the name concerned a different "pronunciation" of a dialect feature", and so he asserts that the county lay subsidy rolls are suitable for local dialect analysis.

There is further disagreement between McClure and Kristensson on a closely related matter. In an earlier paper, Kristensson (1965: 139) had suggested that county scribes would have been careful not to considerably alter the spelling of names when copying them from local rolls because "misspellings of the names of

the tax-payers might lead to trouble when it came to collecting the taxes", meaning the county rolls contain locally relevant forms. However, McClure (1973: 190) states that "the county rolls were not directly used for collecting the levies; this was done by the local assessors using copies of their own original returns", contradicting Kristensson. In response, Kristensson (1976: 58, footnote 25) refers to two parliamentary writs for the Lay Subsidies of 1290 and 1297, which "explicitly state that the chief taxers should have two county rolls made and that one should be sent to the Exchequer and the other should be kept by the chief taxers for the purpose of collecting the taxes". He suggests that "it was important that the names in the chief taxers' rolls had been taken down correctly", in case any recorded person needed to be identified when settling a dispute. While they clearly disagree on the value of the subsidy rolls in dialect study, they appear to agree that only those records which might have been referred to when physically collecting the taxes are suitable for phonological analysis.

Most of the extant PTRs are not local documents, but are "detailed rolls" drawn up by borough commissions responsible for levying taxes in certain parts of the country, though these detailed rolls were created using written or verbal information from local assessors (see Fenwick 1998: xxvii, Figure 2). In 1377, poll tax collection was carried out by men who were locals of their collection areas, and even though no written authorisation for local men to collect taxes in 1379 and 1381 has been found, Fenwick (1998) states, without doubt, that the collections of these taxes would have relied upon local collectors. It is likely, therefore, that the local information provided to the borough commissions, whether written or spoken, would have been so in the corresponding local dialect. From this information, indentured rolls were made, one part of which was used by the collectors, and the other was sent to the Exchequer to be examined (see Fenwick 1998: xix). As it appears that local men would have been responsible for the collection of taxes, it is reasonable to assume that the local name forms would have been preserved in the borough rolls for the reference of the local collectors. The names in the PTRs are therefore considered appropriate for phonological analysis, with the extant documents having been from a similar level of the administrative hierarchy to the extant lay subsidy rolls which were studied by Kristensson.

3.2. Missing and damaged poll tax returns

There are, however, some methodological difficulties to overcome when using the PTRs in dialect study. The counties[4] of Cheshire, Durham, Hertfordshire and Huntingdonshire, as well as the City of London, have no surviving returns

[4] The term *county/counties* is used to refer to the administrative units as they existed prior to their reorganisation in 1974.

and so a dialect survey using the PTR name data cannot cover all parts of the country. As palatinates, Cheshire and Durham had "the right of exclusive civil and criminal jurisdiction within that territory" (*OED online*: palatine, adj.1 — I. 1.), and so they were often not obliged to levy certain taxes; it is for this reason that there are no early fourteenth-century lay subsidy rolls for these counties. It seems that Cheshire and Durham were requested to levy a poll tax in 1379, but "a writ of supersedeas cancelled the order to Chester" before "the palatinate's immunity from parliamentary taxation was confirmed by the crown in 1381" (Fenwick 1981: xxi). Such a writ does not appear to have been issued for Durham, though it seems reasonable to assume that the county's palatine status may have been at least part of the reason for the absence of PTRs. No similar explanation can be given for Hertfordshire, Huntingdonshire and the City of London, and so the assumption must be that the once existing records have simply been lost. Some of these might be included in Fenwick's (2005: 580-599) section of "unidentified" documents, which have been damaged so that their place of origin is unknown, but this cannot be certain.

Nevertheless, there are PTRs extant for the other thirty-five counties of England and for the city of York, and so a great deal of data is still available for dialectological analysis. In addition, the missing counties are not particularly large, and the generally accepted, though simplified, borders of the ME dialect areas (Northern, West Midland, East Midland and Southern (sometimes divided into south-eastern and south-western areas)) do not intersect them (see, for example, Burrow & Turville-Petre 2005: 5-7 for an explanation of these areas), so the absence of their PTRs is not likely to mean that broad patterns of ME dialect distribution are misrepresented. Names from the early fourteenth-century lay subsidy rolls, where extant, have not been used to supplement the available data so that the short time-frame covered by the PTRs is maintained, allowing for a more synchronically contained survey of ME dialect distribution than managed in previous research.

The different level of coverage provided for some counties by their extant PTRs is a further methodological issue. Wiltshire, for example, has many surviving returns, covering most of the county, while the only extant returns for Worcestershire are from Worcester. The PTRs provide poor coverage for a number of other counties, where others are very well represented, and some counties only have extant records for a limited area. As a result, the frequencies of certain dialect features in one county cannot necessarily be directly compared with those in another. While the mapping of features will provide a general picture of their distribution, it is not possible to have the same level of confidence in the distribution of names in counties where only patchy evidence is available, compared with counties for which there is wider coverage.

Unfortunately, this problem cannot be easily overcome, and is a common issue in this type of historical research as many medieval documents have been lost since their composition. All that can be done is to treat the data with care, and to take appropriate methodological precautions in their analysis, so that a meaningful comparison of different sized datasets can be made. With the poll tax data, this can be done by employing both a visual representation of dialect distribution on a map, and a proportional comparison of dialect feature frequencies for each county in a table. Maps can be used to show exactly which features are recorded in which places, while relative frequency proportions for dialect features can be given as estimates for the true prominence of certain features within the surveyed counties.

To clarify this point, let us imagine two counties, X and Y, for which there are different amounts of medieval onomastic data. If we were to study, for example, rounding of /a/ to /o/ before nasals, and records from county X contained forty names in <an> and ten in <on>, while records from county Y contained 450 names in <an> and 50 names in <on>, then the visual presentation of these features may be misleading. On a map, it would appear as if rounding of /a/ before nasals was more common in county Y (50 instances) than in county X (10 instances), but this is a false impression as a result of a greater amount of data being available for county Y. Proportionately, this rounding is more common in county X, with 20% of all its names in <an> or <on> showing evidence of rounding, while the same figure for county Y is only 10%.

While the example given is simplistic, if the differences in the amount of available data are not quite so pronounced then the discrepancy between visual and proportionate county distribution may not be quite so obvious. By complementing the visual representation of dialect feature distribution with the comparison of its proportional frequency in each county, it is possible to reach greater certainty on exactly where a dialect feature was most common. The proportional frequency comparison is not ideal, as it will not provide a clear picture of the exact locations where usage of different dialect features is more mixed, but when considered alongside the visual distribution evidence it will provide further support for, or give cause to refine, the dialect feature distribution patterns apparent from the data. This method will, therefore, be used for dialect distribution analysis in this paper and further study of the PTRs.

It would be preferred methodologically if grouping and comparison of data by county could be avoided. The data could then be taken as an accurate reflection of "who said what where" (a consideration advocated by (Kretzschmar 2009: 74) for the study of the "linguistics of speech", as opposed to the "linguistics of linguistic structure"), rather than being artificially separated by county boundaries, which are administrative borders unlikely to have seriously affected dialect distribution in the fourteenth century. However, to ensure that the fre-

quencies of features in the poll tax data can be meaningfully compared according to location, the data must be grouped in some way to avoid misrepresenting the apparent distribution and frequency differences of certain dialect features in undamaged and damaged records. The county has been chosen as the most suitable grouping variable, as it allows for direct comparison with Kristensson's dialect survey of onomastic data, where examples of features have also been grouped by county, while also allowing data groups to be large enough to contain a probably representative frequency of dialect features. This might not be the case for a highly damaged return for an individual vill, which could be missing all occurrences of a feature that was actually common to the settlement in the fourteenth century. It is much less likely that such a feature would be missing from all poll tax returns for every vill in an entire county.

3.3. By-names, surnames, and given-names

Consideration of the suitability of the different types of anthroponomastic data is also required. The by-names and surnames (referred to collectively from now on as 'second names') of Fenwick's (1998, 2001, 2005) PTR volumes represent a different kind of data to the given-names, with the given-names being unsuitable for dialectological analysis.[5] Fenwick states, in the introduction to the first volume of her transcribed edition of the PTRs, that she has expanded abbreviated forms of given-names, unless the abbreviation is ambiguous; for example, the abbreviated form *Agn*', may be for *Agnes* or *Agneta*, and so the form has been transcribed as *Agn*', while forms such as *Henr*' have been expanded to *Henricus*. As a result of such expansions, the given-name data cannot be used for dialectological analysis, as many forms are Fenwick's own interpretation of abbreviated forms, rather than the true medieval forms as they appeared in the original documents. The regularity with which given-names are latinised and written in a standard form by scribes, either in the nominative or genitive case, in these types of tax documents also makes them unsuitable, as they are unlikely to preserve any particular dialect feature in their form.

Fenwick has not expanded abbreviated forms of second names, preserving the forms of the original documents in her transcription. If, for example, the

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[5] The terms 'by-name' and 'surname' are both used to refer to a person's second name, as distinct from their first name or 'given name'. 'By-name' is used to refer to those second names which were non-hereditary, and described something of their bearer, and 'surname' is for those which were hereditary. Hereditary surname adoption was a complex process, with much regional variation, though it is generally accepted that the majority of people had hereditary surnames by about 1350 in the south of England and 1450 in the north (see Reaney 1967). This being the case, the second names of the PTRs cannot be said to have been hereditary or non-hereditary in all cases, and so the terms 'by-name' and 'surname' must both be used.

second name *Hobbus*, which is recorded fifteen times in the West Midland PTR dataset analysed in this study, is an expansion of an abbreviated form, then the abbreviated form can only have been *Hob*'or *Hobb*'. However, it is clear that Fenwick has not expanded such abbreviations in this way, otherwise the form *Hobb*' would not occur, as it does in the name of Marg' *Hobb*', in the 1381 return for Saintbury, Gloucestershire (see Fenwick 1998: 276). The second names, whether they are by-names or surnames, are therefore suitable for analysis, as they are given in the exact same form as written by the scribes who drew up the poll tax documents. This being the case, only the second name data have been used for analysis.

3.4. Dialect boundaries

Finally, before any dialectological analysis of the PTRs is carried out, the use of the dialect boundary in the visual presentation of dialect data, and exactly what it is meant to represent, must be discussed. The decision not to draw dialect boundary lines on the dialect feature maps in this paper will also be explained.

It is well known that "regional dialects do not have strict geographical boundaries. Their variant forms are part of an extended series of overlapping distributions: a 'continuum'" (Laing 2000: 98), with core dialect zones where particular features are relatively dominant, and transitional zones where a number of these core zones appear to meet. Dialect boundaries suggested in dialectological studies of this kind have never been intended to represent precise lines which perfectly separate two different dialects. In some studies they are used to give a general approximation of a location at which it is not possible to say that one dialect is more dominant than other, separating regions in which the dominant variations of the dialect feature being investigated are apparently different.[6] Others have used dialect boundaries to represent the extreme limit of a dialect feature, beyond which they have found no evidence of its use, such as Fisiak (2001: 17) who assumes that "isoglosses are outer boundaries of the distribution of linguistic forms". While these types of boundaries are drawn from qualitative observations, some scholars adopt a quantitative approach, attaching statistical significance to their isoglosses, separating regions based on the frequencies of different dialect features (see, for example, Kretzschmar 1996). Such different approaches mean that direct comparison of the boundaries suggested in different dialect surveys is not always appropriate.

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[6] See, for example, Kristensson (1987: 237), Map 4, which shows that names in *Mon*, *-mon* occurred in Gloucestershire, but the county is not included in the *-o-* area on the basis that *-a-* forms are dominant.

Further to this, each map created in a dialect survey is a representation only of the data analysed, and so slight differences in the position of dialect boundaries, even when relying on the same method for drawing isoglosses, are to be expected in different works, as no two datasets will be identical with regard to dialect feature distribution. All of this calls into question whether the use of dialect boundaries is appropriate. Certainly, isoglosses can be helpful to show the limits of individual features, so long as it is made clear that an isogloss is an approximate boundary for that feature alone, and therefore makes a "generalization about the evidence" (Kretzschmar 2009: 69). Problems arise, however, when attempts are made to define an entire dialect region.

In his ME West Midland dialect survey, Kristensson (1987: 211-213) dedicates part of the conclusion to a definition of the "West Midland dialect area". He notes that Jordan (1974: 5) appears to define this area as the region in which Old English (OE) *i*-mutated *a* before *l*-groups appeared as /a/, and that Ekwall (1963) seems to do the same, before contrasting this with Moore, Meech and Whitehall's (1935) suggestion that /o/ before nasals is the defining feature of the West Midland dialect area. Kristensson (1987: 212) takes /o/ before nasals to define the ME West Midland dialect area, on the basis that the names in the lay subsidy rolls with this feature are "more frequent than words with /a/ from *i*-mutated *a* before *l*-groups", that the feature therefore "had a more prominent position in the spoken language," and it "was the most conspicuous feature of the West Midlands". The fact that Kristensson's West Midland dialect region covers a greater area than Jordan's shows that even two of the most characteristic ME phonological developments in the West Midlands did not necessarily share the same distribution. No conclusions as to the limits of the West Midland dialect area can be made by comparing their isoglosses, as they merely represent the distributions of two different phonological developments of different vowels under different conditions. This shows that individual features are not an accurate reflection of a broader regional dialect, and can only be held to represent the distribution of that feature alone. Perhaps, then, the attempt to define a broad dialect area is unhelpful, as all dialect features will show different distributional patterns, meaning that an isogloss for a dialect region is dependent on which features are selected for analysis, as stated by Davis (2000: 257): "dialect areas are, in large measure, a function of the items one selects, and that changing those items even slightly can result in very different sets of boundaries".

It is for these reasons that I have chosen not to plot dialect boundaries in the analysis of the names in the PTRs. While I will only discuss the distribution of individual dialect features, rather than attempt to define a broad dialect area, any comparison of dialect feature boundaries with those given in previous research could be misleading. If different, it would not be clear whether this was due to

an actual change in the distribution of dialect features, slightly different methods for drawing dialect boundaries, or the fact that the datasets are not identical and so slight differences in distribution are to be expected. Furthermore, it is not the aim of this paper, or my continuing dialectological study of the PTRs, to define a dialect region, but to compare the distribution of certain dialect features with patterns found by Kristensson (1967, 1987, 1995, 2001a, 2002), in order to further our knowledge of ME dialects from the onomastic data. Considering this approach, there is little need for isoglosses, as stated by Kretzschmar (2003):

> If we are no longer interested in separating some region into dialect areas, we have no need for heteroglosses to mark boundaries. Instead, we can try to describe the distribution of individual features, in space and in time, on their own terms. (Kretzschmar 2003: 93)

The advantage of this approach is that the complexities of dialect distribution, and the different patterns of individual features, are not oversimplified into a single dialect boundary, allowing each individual dialect feature to be analysed as a separate linguistic development with its own distinct pattern of distribution.

4. Analysis

4.1. Introduction to analysis of Middle English dialect features in the West Midlands

Having established the suitability of the PTRs for dialectological study, and suggested a methodological approach to the analysis of the data, the remainder of this paper will further stress the importance of such study by comparing the distributions of two dialect features in the names of the PTRs with those found by Kristensson in the names of 1290-1350. This will not be an extensive ME dialect survey, but is meant as an introduction to, and justification for, further dialectological research using the PTRs, which I intend to carry out.

In order to show that the PTRs are a useful data source which can make an important contribution to our understanding of ME dialect distribution, some dialect features that are characteristic of the West Midland region will be analysed. This region has been selected for a number of reasons, chief among which is my own familiarity with it, and the corresponding PTRs, having completed my doctoral thesis on the history of the surnames of the Cotswolds. Parts of the thesis examine the dialect evidence of the names, where it was found that the distribution patterns for /o/ before nasals and <u> for vowels in unstressed positions (rather than the more common <e>) were different in the Gloucestershire PTRs to the patterns Kristensson (1987) found in the 1290-1350 data. This further strengthens the case for a dialectological analysis of the PTRs, and

makes the West Midlands a sensible starting point, given that initial investigation of the region suggests that the data may show dialect distribution patterns different from those found in previous research. The ME dialect features of the West Midlands have also received considerable attention in previous works, and while Kristensson's (1987) is the only onomastic, and therefore directly comparable, survey for this region, there are others which provide additional relevant information (see, for example, Serjeantson 1927a, 1927b, 1927c).

While the following analysis will draw comparisons with Kristensson's (1987) findings, the area which has been surveyed for each dialect feature is wider than that studied by Kristensson, to allow for the possibility that the PTRs will show a wider geographical spread of a dialect feature than apparent in Kristensson's data. To this end, the PTR data studied are taken from the counties which make up the largest region which has previously been called the "West Midland dialect area" (in Serjeantson 1927a, 1927b, 1927c), as well as all bordering English counties.

These counties are as follows: Derbyshire (Db), Gloucestershire (Gl), Herefordshire (He), Lancashire (La), Oxfordshire (Ox), Shropshire (Sa), Staffordshire (St), Warwickshire (Wa) and Worcestershire (Wo) (the West Midland counties); Berkshire (Bk), Leicestershire (Le), Northamptonshire (Np), Nottinghamshire (Nt), Somerset (So), the West Riding of Yorkshire (WRY) and Wiltshire (Wi) (bordering counties). Cheshire (Ch) is not included for reasons given above, while there is very little data for Wo (see 3.2.), Db and Nt. All vill names from Lonsdale hundred in La are also damaged, so dialect features cannot be localised within this northern part of the county, but there is generally enough data from these counties for at least tentative conclusions to be drawn on their dominant dialect features. As it is often still possible to identify the typical dialect features in these counties, the incomplete data is unlikely to seriously affect or reduce confidence in any conclusions which are drawn from the apparent dialect distribution patterns in the West Midlands as a whole.

On the distribution maps which follow, if the same sound is apparent in two or more names from the same vill, only one point is plotted on the map. If different sounds, and so different dialect phonologies, are apparent in names from the same vill then a point is plotted to show this, as indicated in the map key.

4.2. /o/ before nasals

The first dialect feature selected for analysis and comparison with Kristensson's (1987) distribution findings is the typical West Midland rounding of /a/ to /o/ before nasals. As mentioned (3.4.), Kristensson (1987: 212) considers /o/ before nasals to be the defining feature of the dialect of the West Midlands, stating that "it was the most conspicuous feature of the West Midlands (and still is), and it

seems warranted to take the /o/ isophone as the boundary for the West Midland dialect area". The justification to draw a regional dialect boundary from the isophone of a single feature, on the basis that it was "conspicuous", seems flawed, though the data are numerous, and so comparison of the PTRs with Kristensson's findings can be made. There is also clear agreement that /o/ before nasal was a characteristic feature of the West Midlands, with Serjeantson (1927a: 65) giving it as one of ten "especially characteristic" features of the region, and Jordan (1974: 50) noting that the feature was "retained only in the West Midland".

Kristensson (1987: 10-12 & 212-213) dedicates the majority of his discussion of this feature to the distribution of names in *man* and *mon*, as they provide the greatest amount of relevant data. All names in the PTRs which derive from, or contain an element derived from, ME *man* man' have therefore been extracted and plotted on a map (see Figure 1) for direct comparison with the corresponding distribution map given by Kristensson (1987: 237). Any names with a form suggestive of ME *man* but of uncertain etymological origin have been omitted, such as the name *de Man* which is for someone from the etymologically obscure Isle of Man. Where names with the form *mon* make up less than 2% of the total number of sampled names for a given county, they have not been plotted on the basis that they were not at all representative of the dialect in that county. In such cases, the word *man* is then written on the map to show that forms with <a> were overwhelmingly dominant. Proportion figures are however given in a table (see Table 1) to show the frequency of the non-representative <o> forms.

Overall, the late fourteenth-century PTR distribution of names with ME *man* is not quite as clear-cut as the 1290-1350 distribution presented by Kristensson. The counties of Ch, He, La, Sa, St and Wo are all labelled "*mon*" by Kristensson. The reader could be forgiven for assuming that he therefore only found names in *mon* in these counties, but this is not the case, even though the majority had <o>. Kristensson (1987: 10) states, for example, that Wo had "6 instances of *man*-forms against 126 instances of *-mon,*" but does note that "only *mon* is found in Sa, St (except one *Norman*) and He".

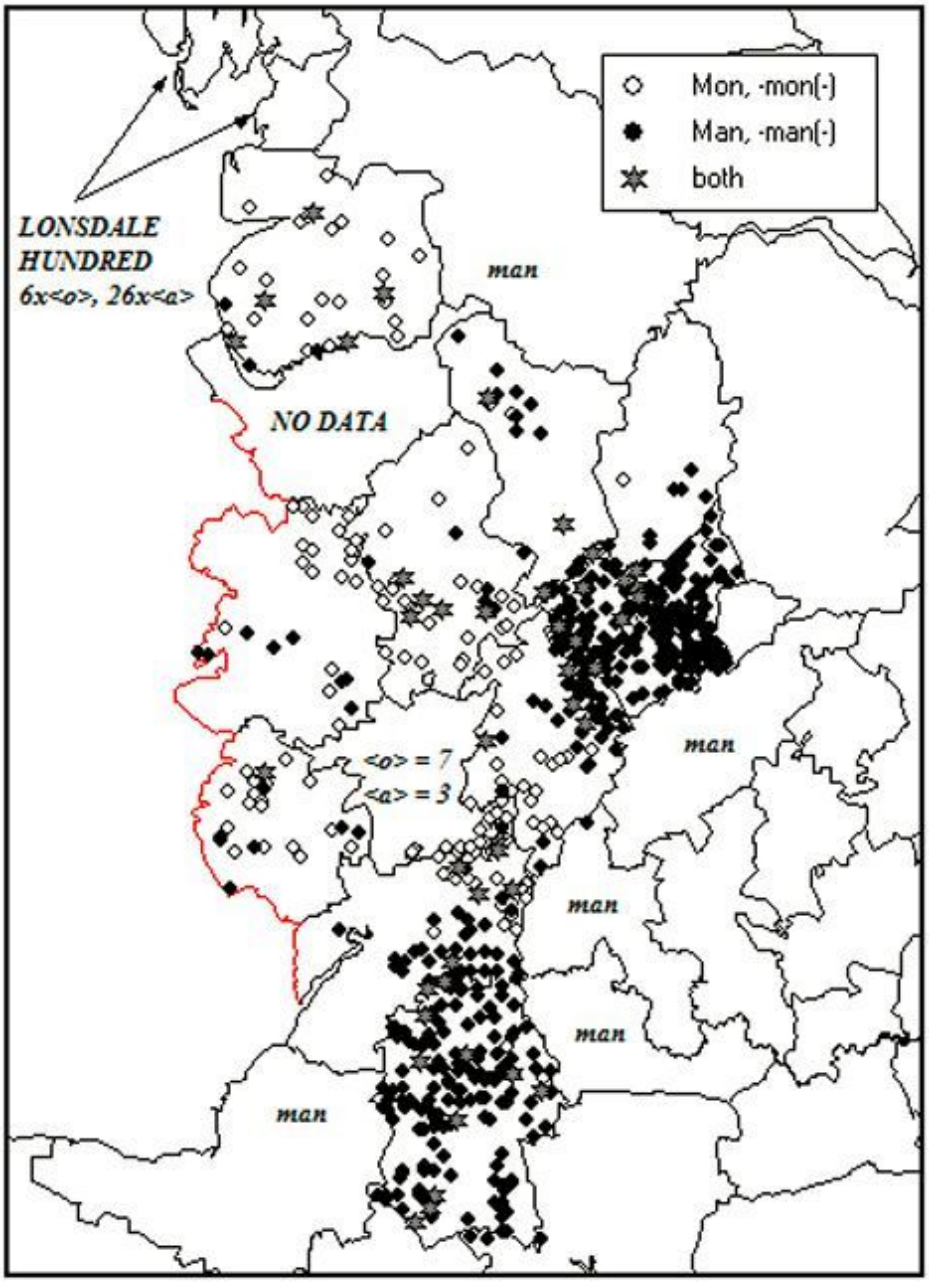

Figure 1. Map of names in the PTRs from West Midland and bordering counties with ME *man*

Table 1. Frequency table for names in *man* and *mon* **WEST MIDLAND COUNTIES**

	man	***mon***	***% mon***
Herefordshire	8	42	84.00%
Staffordshire	17	47	73.44%
Shropshire	11	29	72.50%
Worcestershire	3	7	70.00%
Lancashire	34	47	58.02%
Gloucestershire	79	67	45.89%
Derbyshire	38	31	44.93%
Warwickshire	105	49	31.82%
Oxfordshire	112	2	1.75%
TOTAL WEST MIDLAND	407	321	44.09%
BORDER COUNTIES			
Nottinghamshire	8	1	11.11%
Leicestershire	464	23	4.72%
Wiltshire	361	9	2.43%
Berkshire	105	2	1.87%
Northamptonshire	152	2	1.30%
Somerset	80	1	1.23%
WR Yorkshire	741	4	0.54%
TOTAL BORDERS	1911	42	2.15%

There are further, and more noticeable, differences in Db, Gl and Wa, which Kristensson (1987: 212) identifies as "transition areas". The PTR data certainly suggests that these were indeed transition areas, having been the three West Midland counties with the lowest percentage of <o> forms (again, except Ox), but the distribution of this feature is different to that found by Kristensson. It is difficult to have complete confidence in the Db distribution, due to the small amount of available data, but while Kristensson (1987: 10) had "6 instances of *man* and 10 of *mon*" for Db, the PTR dataset contains thirty-eight instances of *man* and thirty-one of *mon*. The 1290-1350 data therefore shows that <mon> names were more common than those in <man> in Db at the time, and the PTRs show that names in <man> were more common than those in <mon> in Db in the late fourteenth century. Similarly, Kristensson (1987: 10) found that Wa "exhibits a large majority of *mon*," but the PTRs contain 105 <man> names and only forty-nine in <mon>.

Figure 1 shows that the Wa <man> forms were most heavily concentrated in the east of the county, and so this might suggest that the possible change in the distribution patterns for Db and Wa, from the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century to the late fourteenth century, could be a continuation of a dialect transition recognised by Kristensson (1987: 212), who notes that "in the early 14th century, /man/ was penetrating westwards, and had begun to supplant /mon/ in eastern Derbyshire and eastern Warwickshire". This is supported by Wakelin's (1982: 8) comparison of ME and present-day *man* and *mon* isoglosses, which shows a westward, albeit very slight, movement of the boundary. It could, therefore, be the case that over a period of approximately 50 years, from the late 1320s and early 1330s (the majority of Kristensson's data come from 1327 or 1332 lay subsidy rolls) up to the late 1370s and early 1380s (represented by the PTRs), /a/ before nasals had penetrated the West Midlands, becoming more dominant than /o/ before nasals on the fringes of the region, and occurring in small numbers in other counties. This could account for the small number of <man> names in the PTRs from He, Sa and St, in contrast to the exclusive presence of <mon> names in Kristensson's earlier data from these counties.

This suggestion is not, however, compatible with the apparent change in distribution of <man> and <mon> names in Gl. Kristensson's (1987: 212) Gl data, predominantly from 1327 subsidy rolls, shows that "/man/ was in the majority", leading him to suspect that "/mon/ forms were probably remnants from the stage when /mon/ prevailed". Indeed, his map shows a clear dominance of <man> forms throughout the county. If there had been a continued penetration of /a/ before nasals deeper into the West Midlands from the early fourteenth century up to the late fourteenth century, then it would be expected for names in <man> to be even more dominant in the Gl PTRs, perhaps with an increased proportion of such names in southern Wa. However, this is not the pattern apparent from the PTR data. The extant PTRs for Gl only cover the eastern part of the county, but even with this limited coverage the distribution of <man> and <mon> names suggests that /o/ before nasals was dominant in the north of the county and /a/ before nasals was dominant in the south. It seems implausible that this pattern is due to a reversal of a West Midland penetration of /a/, though it is unclear how this distribution change may have been caused.

It may have been that /o/ before nasals had begun to spread, to some extent, beyond the West Midland region, and so, also considering the westward penetration of /a/ into Db and Wa, the distribution pattern of <man> and <mon> names might be evidence of a widening dialect transition area, or a wider and more pronounced mixing of these different dialect pronunciations.[7] This is sup-

[7] It is unclear why this would have happened, but could have been due the plague having "weakened settlements and created opportunities for migration" (Dyer 1982: 23) after 1349.

ported by the occurrence of a number of <mon> names in the Le PTRs, with only one such name in Kristensson's earlier Le data, and the <mon> forms in the Wi PTRs, particularly the instances in the far south of the county (no comparison with Kristensson's analysis can be made, as he did not include Wi in his survey). However, the fact that the proportions of <mon> names in the PTRs for Np, Ox and WRY were particularly low, even though these counties border those which had relatively high proportions of <mon> names, does not support this argument.

With no clear single reason for the apparent change in distribution of /a/ and /o/ before nasals from the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century up to the late fourteenth century, the possible interfering influence of scribal practice must be considered. Even if comparison was being made between the evidence of the PTRs and a synchronic record, rather than the earlier data studied by Kristensson, the scribes who compiled the documents would not have been the same. Different proportions of the scribes may have been trained in different scriptoria, and some may have been responsible for records which related to areas with different dialect characteristics from their own. As has been mentioned (3.1.), it is likely that the PTRs did maintain local name forms to a large extent, but it is certainly possible that scribal habits may also be present in the records, masking the true phonological distinctions of the time.

The likelihood of this having had an effect is increased by some sharp demarcations of dialect features seen in Figure 1. It is surprising that the small proportion of <man> forms in Sa are only found in the southern half of the county, and this surely is not indicative of an impending transition to /a/ as the dominant pronunciation, as Sa is still part of the /o/ before nasals area today (see Orton, Sanderson & Widdowson 1978: Map Ph5). Perhaps the scribe, or scribes, responsible for compiling the borough PTRs for the south of the county was not a local man, and had a greater tendency to write <a> to reflect his own pronunciation of /a/ before nasals. A similarly sharp demarcation can be seen between the northern and southern evidence from the extant Gl PTRs, with <mon> dominant in the north and <man> dominant to the south. There are a small number of instances of non-dominant forms in either part of the county, though the distribution differences in both parts are very pronounced. The dominant <mon> area of Gl is covered by the late fourteenth-century hundreds of Holford and Greston, Kiftsgate, Salmonsbury and Tibblestone, and it is interesting that Fenwick (1998: 249) notes that "the internal evidence shows that the returns for the three hundreds of Salmonsbury, Holford and Greston and Kiftsgate were originally drawn up together". This would suggest that the

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Increased migration could have caused a greater geographical spread of both dialect characteristics.

scribes responsible for the north of the county were not the same as those responsible for the south. If they had different dialects, this could explain the sharp demarcation of dialect characteristics in Gl. This is further supported by the remarkably similar pattern of demarcation seen in the Gl distribution of <u> before -*s*(-), -*l*(-) and -*r*(-) in unstressed syllables (see Figure 2 in section 4.3.). As part of further study, an analysis of the original PTRs and their scribal hands would be worthwhile, in order to identify more accurately the extent to which the apparent distribution of dialect features in the documents is dependent on the dialects of the scribes. Ideally, social variables, such as gender, age, and education, which are known to effect dialect usage (see Kretzschmar 2009: 104-145), would also be studied, but this information is not available in the PTRs. As the dialect information in the PTRs comes from scribes, the data is representative only of educated men, with no reliable indicator of age variation, though all are likely to be adults. As a result, the dialect distribution patterns apparent from the PTRs are representative of the dialect of well-educated scribes only. Geography is the only dialect variable which can be meaningfully investigated with onomastic data of this kind.

Overall, the <man> and <mon> name evidence from the PTRs shows some differences in distribution from patterns found by Kristensson. This could be due to a rapid change in dialect distribution over a period of approximately fifty years, a widening of transition areas, or could be affected by scribal practice, though the extent to which each of these factors influenced the patterns seen in Figure 1 and Table 1 is unclear. It is, however, clear that, because the distribution patterns from the PTR data and Kristensson's earlier data are not identical, further study of the PTRs could contribute to our understanding of late ME dialect development, potentially showing change in a number of features over a relatively short period of time. This suggestion is supported by the evidence of <u> before -*s*(-), -*l*(-) and -*r*(-) in unstressed syllables, rather than the more usual <e>.

4.3. <u> before -*s*(-), -*l*(-) and -*r*(-) in unstressed syllables

This feature has not been widely commented on in previous work, though it is certainly characteristic of the West Midlands in ME. Skeat (1911: 80) notes that "the suffix *-us* appears to be altogether peculiar to West Midland", and Serjeantson (1927a: 65) recognises "the occurrence of the unstressed endings *-us*, *-ud*, etc." in the region. Kristensson (1987: 214) states that "/u/ in unstressed position" is "generally held" to be a dialect feature of the West Midlands in ME, and Hjertstedt (1987: 28) identifies "WMidl. *-us*, *-ul* in unstressed position" in some names of the Wa subsidy rolls. The *LALME* (1986) maps for <u> in unstressed positions also show higher concentrations in the West Midlands, though with infrequent occurrences distributed sporadically throughout the

country (see, for example, the maps for "3Sg pres ind: suffix vowel *u*", "Sb pl: "-us" type, incl abbr *-us*", "Wk ppl: suffix vowel *u* (eg *-ud*, *-ut*, *-utt*)" and "-ER suffix: *-ur(e)*, excl abbr *ur*").

This feature has been selected for analysis on the basis that its distribution and frequency in the PTRs is very different to that in Kristensson's data, and so to emphasise that the PTRs provide new information on ME dialect distribution. Rather than investigating all instances of <u> in unstressed positions, presumably representing /u/ in unstressed positions as Kristensson implies, only those names with <es>, <el>, <er>, <us>, <ul> and <ur> in unstressed positions have been studied, so that the findings can be directly compared with Kristensson's, who studied unstressed /u/ in relation to these consonants only. Kristensson provides no map for this feature, perhaps due to the small amount of relevant evidence, though the name forms are given (see 1987: 164-165), and because they are relatively few it is not difficult to give an account of their distribution.

Kristensson states, "in the West Midland dialect area ... there is a small admixture of *-us(-), -ul(-), -ur(-),*" before presenting the evidence. He has identified only seven names with <us> in unstressed positions, eight with <ul> and thirteen with <ur>, and also gives the surname *Gamol*, apparently taking the <o> as evidence of /u/. Db, St and Wo have one instance of <us> each, while Wa and Ch have two. Db, Ox and Wo are shown to have one instance of <ul> each, while Sa and Wa have two; St has one instance of <ul> as well as the surname *Gamol*. <ur> occurs once in Gl and Ox, twice in Wo, three times in Wa and six times in St. It seems, therefore, that <u>, rather than <e>, in unstressed positions is rare in Kristensson's 1290-1350 data, though frequent enough for him to conclude that the feature is found in the entire West Midland area except for Nt and Le, as well as He, but this may be because the data sample for that county is small.

This is by no means the case in the PTRs. The feature is widespread in the records from the West Midland region, and also in those from its bordering counties (see Figure 2). Care has been taken not to include any names on this map which might not represent the feature in question. These include those which could be latinised nominative singular forms of English patronymic surnames, such as *Felpus*, which could also be an example of <u> before *-s(-)* in unstressed position, rather than <e>, if the name is an English genitive form derived from the ME given name *Philip*, but is omitted from the dataset due to its ambiguity. This is, however, a very conservative approach, as there is no clear evidence in the data of an undeniably Latin nominative surname formation with *-us*. Other names which have not been used are those with more obvious Latin endings, such as *Clercus* (from Latin *clericus*) and *Vicoryus*, and those with another vowel preceding an *-e-* or *-u-*, such as *Taylour*, as they are unlikely to represent /u/.

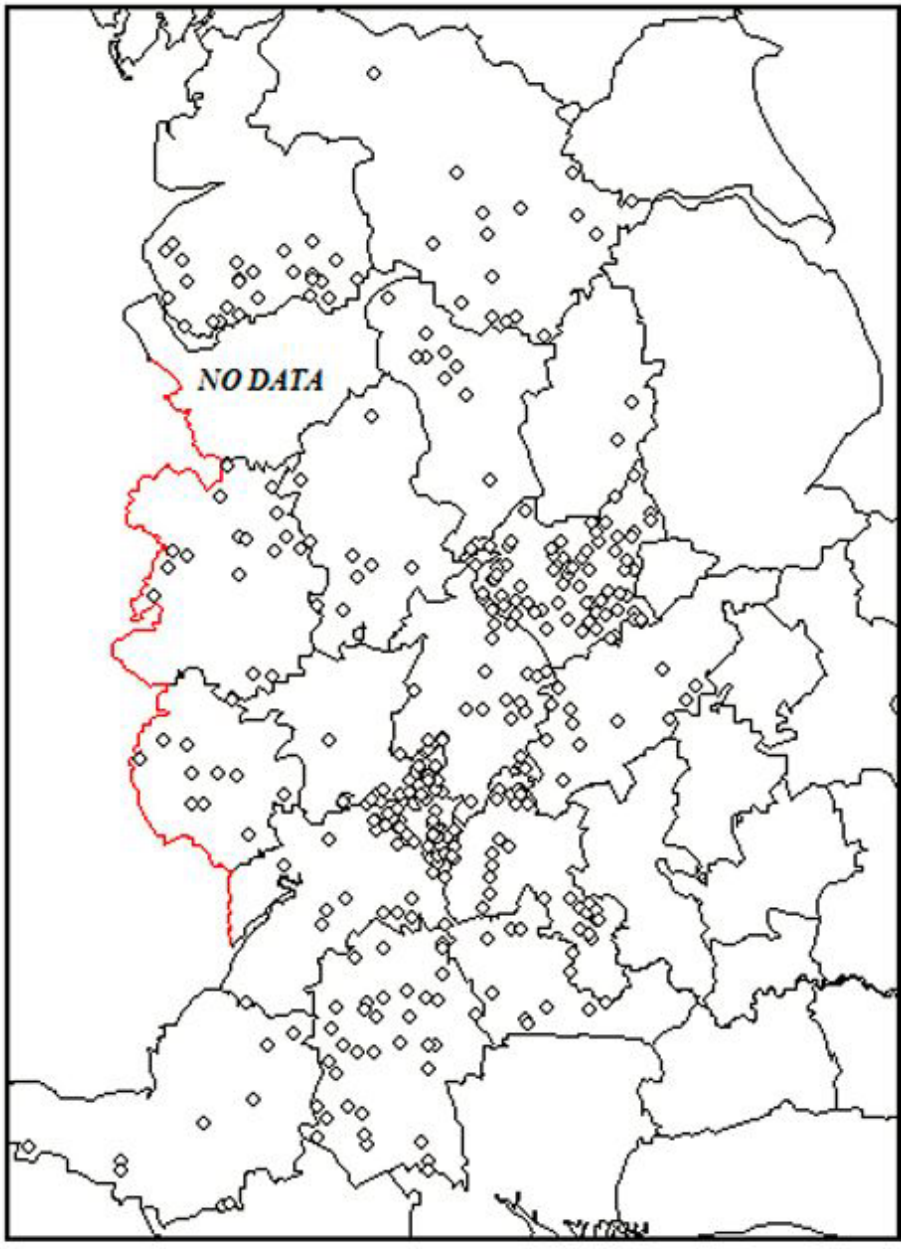

Figure 2. Map of names in the PTRs from West Midland and bordering counties with <u> before *-s(-)*, *-l(-)* and *-r(-)* in unstressed positions

The spread of the feature on Figure 2 is surprising, showing a much wider distribution than that found by Kristensson. While it has been considered a particularly West Midland ME development, the frequency of instances in Bk, Np, So, Wi and WRY suggest that it had increased in usage greatly since the time of Kristensson's data, and its use had also widened considerably. Indeed, it could be that this feature was a relatively late and persistent development of ME, with an example found as late as 1480-1481. In accounts documents relating to the Trinity of Bristol, "one of the finest English ships" (Reddaway & Ruddock 1969: 1), the following line appears: "Here after ffollowyng the salus of cloths" (Reddaway & Ruddock 1969: 21); *salus* represents the word *sales*.

Further evidence of the spread of this feature in the late fourteenth century can be seen in the frequency proportion figures in Table 2, for all names which end *-el*, *-er*, *-es*, *-ul*, *-ur* or *-us*. It must be noted that the names represented in this table are not, therefore, from the same dataset used to plot Figure 2. While Figure 2 shows all names in the West Midland and bordering county PTRs with *-ul(-)*, *-ur(-)* or *-us(-)* in unstressed positions, Table 2 includes a sub-set of these names, specifically those which *end* with *-ul*, *-ur* or *-us*, as well as those ending *-el*, *-er* or *-es* in the corresponding PTRs. This approach has been adopted to reduce the amount of data for analysis in Table 2 to a manageable level. If all names with *-el(-)*, *-er(-)* or *-es(-)* were to be included, these could not be easily extracted from the database without individual consideration of each relevant name to decide whether the feature in question would have been stressed or unstressed. This would be very time-consuming and is unlikely to alter the general picture gained from analysis of the sub-set of names ending *-el*, *-er*, *-es*, *-ul*, *-ur* or *-us*. The advantage of the adopted approach is that the database can be easily sorted for all names with the relevant endings, and proportion calculations made quickly.

From Table 2, it appears that <u> in unstressed positions may not have been a feature only particular to the West Midlands, or had spread widely by the time of the PTRs, as the proportion of names ending *-ul*, in terms of all names ending *-ul* or *-el*, was higher overall in the border counties than in the West Midland counties, though the percentages are very similar. The total proportions of names ending *-er* and *-ur* only differ by 0.29%, and so it is not clear that <u> before *-r* in unstressed positions was a particularly West Midland feature, though the percentage for the West Midlands is the higher of the two. A much clearer difference can be seen in the proportion of names ending *-us*, making up 21.5% of all names ending *-es* or *-us* in the West Midlands, and only 3.17% of such names in the bordering counties. The percentage for the West Midland *-us* endings is, however, heavily skewed by the counties of Gl and Ox, with Gl containing a particularly high percentage. Kristensson found no examples of *-us(-)* in Gl or Ox in the 1290-1350 data, and so the feature may have increased great-

ly in these two counties in a short space of time. The figures in Table 2 also support the distribution pattern seen in Figure 2, which shows that the feature did not conform to what might be thought of as a West Midland distribution. The second highest percentage of names with <u> before *-l* in an unstressed position came from the bordering county of Le, the second highest percentage of names with <u> before *-r* came from the bordering county of So, and the sixth highest percentage of names with <u> before *-s* came from Le too. According to the PTR data, in the late fourteenth century, this was not necessarily a particularly West Midland feature. However, its absence north of the river Ribble in La, often suggested as a West Midland dialect boundary, suggests that it was contained in the region to a certain extent.

Table 2. Frequency table for names ending with unstressed *-el*, *-er*, *-es*, *-ul*, *-ur* or *-us*

WEST MIDLAND COUNTIES										
	-el	*-ul*	% -ul	*-er*	*-ur*	% -ur	*-es*	*-us*	% -us	% of *-ul/r/s*
Gloucs	52	5	8.77%	472	6	1.26%	178	144	44.72%	18.09%
Oxon	41	1	2.38%	688	2	0.29%	161	52	24.41%	5.82%
Salop	44	4	8.33%	203	5	2.40%	158	11	6.51%	4.71%
Derbys	19	3	13.64%	296	2	0.67%	27	5	15.63%	2.84%
Herefords	47	0	0.00%	263	1	0.38%	109	9	7.63%	2.33%
Lancs	15	1	6.25%	498	5	0.99%	97	7	6.73%	2.09%
Staffs	5	0	0.00%	252	2	0.79%	44	4	8.33%	1.95%
Warwicks	57	0	0.00%	697	5	0.71%	99	8	7.48%	1.50%
Worcs	7	0	0.00%	100	0	0.00%	7	1	12.50%	0.87%
TOTAL WM	287	14	4.65%	3469	28	0.80%	880	241	21.50%	5.75%
BORDER COUNTIES										
Wilts	258	12	4.44%	836	11	1.30%	617	24	3.74%	2.67%
Somerset	55	3	5.17%	272	5	1.81%	143	2	1.38%	2.08%
Berks	48	3	5.88%	293	2	0.68%	157	2	1.26%	1.39%
Northants	61	3	4.69%	496	2	0.40%	107	8	6.96%	1.92%
Leics	168	18	9.68%	1662	9	0.54%	125	11	8.09%	1.91%
WRY	19	0	0.00%	2978	5	0.17%	367	3	0.81%	0.24%
Notts	2	0	0.00%	32	0	0.00%	9	0	0.00%	0.00%
TOTAL BORDERS	611	39	6.00%	6569	34	0.51%	1525	50	3.17%	1.39%

Overall, the data suggest that /u/ in unstressed positions had rapidly become a much more prominent feature in the ME dialect of the West Midlands, and nearby counties, than it had been at the period studied in Kristensson's survey. However, it is also possible that the data do not provide a completely true representation of

this phonological feature's distribution at the time, with scribal practice apparently having some influence over the pattern presented in Figure 2.

It was mentioned in section 4.2. that the Gl distribution pattern for names in <man> and <mon> showed a sharp demarcation between either form, and that there was a surprisingly similar pattern for names with <u> in unstressed positions. In both Figure 1 and Figure 2 there is a north-south distributional divide, with <man> being dominant in the south of the county and <mon> in the north, and in this same northern area of Gl <u> in unstressed positions is frequent, but the feature is relatively rare in the south. It would not be expected for different dialect features to have shared the same distributions, as is implied by Davis' (2000: 257) statement that dialect regions are "a function of the items one selects". It is also the case that "regional dialects do not have strict geographical boundaries" (Laing 2000: 98), and so the shared and sharp demarcations for names in <man> and <mon> and names with <u> in unstressed positions suggest that the distribution patterns for these features in Gl, and perhaps therefore in other counties, presented in Figures 1 and 2, are not completely accurate reflections of the phonology of the time.

It seems that the only possible explanation for the unexpected patterns is that scribal practice has misrepresented the true phonological distributions of the features in question. This does not, however, mean that no conclusions can be drawn from the data. Of course, without complete confidence in the apparent distribution of features, particularly in transitional areas, it would be misleading to suggest that the fine details of ME dialect use and change can be accurately investigated with a study of the PTRs. However, it is possible to suggest that the counties in which such sharp demarcations are apparent might have been areas in which there were a greater variety of dialect feature variants than in other counties. Considering this, the conclusion that <u>, rather than <e>, in unstressed positions, suggestive of /u/ in unstressed positions, had a much wider distribution in the late fourteenth century than it appears to have had between 1290-1350 is certainly justifiable, though the distribution seen in Figure 2 is not necessarily exact.

5. Conclusion

The initial analysis of the PTRs, as part of this paper, shows that they are suitable for further dialectological study of late ME, with the potential to provide a national survey of ME dialects. As well as the two which have been discussed in sections 4.2. and 4.3., I have studied the PTR distributions of all West Midland dialect features also mapped by Kristensson (1987), and comparison with Kristensson's maps shows different patterns for most features. Considering this, there is certainly value in such a national survey as it is likely to further our

knowledge of ME dialect distribution and change, especially because it will be the first dialectological survey of ME in the late fourteenth century using onomastic data.

This being the case, it is my intention to continue the dialectological study of the PTR data, and it is hoped that further analysis of this important source will be carried out in response to this paper's discussion. It is clear that the distributions of some dialect features in the PTRs have not changed in any conceivable way since the period covered by Kristensson's survey (one such example is the distribution of OE *i*-mutated *a* before *l*-groups), but many others have and so it will be possible to draw new conclusions on ME dialect distribution and change from a PTR-based investigation. However, it must be borne in mind that any differences between PTR distributions and Kristensson's findings may not indicate actual changes in dialect phonology, but could be unrepresentative patterns due to different scribal practices during the compilation of different records, or greater levels of migration in the late fourteenth century.

5.1. An additional methodological suggestion

If any factor, other than the true dialect phonology of the area studied, has indeed had an effect on the PTR data, then the name forms of these records alone cannot be taken to be a truly accurate representation of regional phonology, even though they are likely to give a fair general impression of dialect distribution. As it is difficult to discover the extent to which any dialectological data have been influenced by these factors, the future study of such records could benefit from a methodology which seeks to combine all available data for the creation of dialect distribution maps. The more data are used, the more accurate any dialect boundaries and transition areas are likely to be, minimising the effects of any phonologically misrepresentative factors in a kind of average dialect distribution measure. By adopting this approach in the future, our understanding of ME dialect distribution can reach a greater level of accuracy, and with the ever increasing digitisation of historical records this will soon be an achievable goal.

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