sciendo *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia 56s1 (2021): 387–409*
*doi: 10.2478/stap-2021-0010*

# WORD-INITIAL PREVOCALIC [H-] IN MIDDLE ENGLISH

JERZY WEŁNA[1]

ABSTRACT

The present contribution discusses the phonological reality of initial fricative *h-* in words of Germanic and French origin in dialectally identified 106 texts from the *Innsbruck Corpus of Middle English Prose* (Markus 2008), with the focus on native words where initial *h-* is frequently mute, as confirmed by (a) *h*-less spellings like *ouse* for *house* or especially (b) the use of the article *an* before *h*-nouns. In the early texts a phrase like *an house* may testify to the survival of the historical determiner (OE *ān*) put before both initial vowels and consonants, but in later texts this position may indicate mute initial *h-* in the following noun (or in an adjective before a noun). The paper offers numerical data concerning such distributions in particular *Corpus* texts as well as analogous data referring to the adjectives MIN and THIN (later on *my* and *thy*), where the final nasal consonant was lost when used in the function of an attribute. Consequently, this development led to the rise of a set of possessive adjectives with a syntactic, not phonological, distribution The data from the *Innsbruck Corpus* seem to indicate that an early loss of initial prevocalic *h-* in Middle English words of Germanic origin took place in particular texts rather than in texts from the whole region. The evidence from the Corpus shows that the implementation of the contemporary distribution, i.e., *a* before consonants and *an* before vowels, had a partly regional character, its first traces coming from as early as the 13th century.

Keywords: Article; dialects; French; initial *h-*; spelling; Middle English.

## 1. Introductory remarks

The question of the phonological status of word-initial prevocalic *h-* emerges in practically every study of English historical phonology. Their authors almost unanimously agree that in words of French and Latin origin, like *honour*, *houre*, *host*, the sound corresponding to initial prevocalic *h-* was not articulated, with the exception of words such as *hardy*, *haste*, *heron*, etc., which had crept into French from Old Germanic and later became fully integrated in Middle English

[1] University of Warsaw, jawelna@uw.edu.pl

(cf. Brunner 1963: 42–43, Jordan 1974 [1925]: 228). This means that language users who articulated initial prevocalic *h-* in native words like *house, harm* or *hot*, treated also loanwords like *hardy, hasty* as native.

Writing about the grapheme *h-*, Scragg (1970) states that in the initial position before a vowel <h> "has been unstable throughout the history of written English", which is also proved by "instances of the non-etymological absence or presence of initial *h* in native words" (see his list of non-etymological spellings with initial *h-*). In loanwords from French, *h* in this position was mute (cf. *istorie* for *historie*) and was also silent in native words with a weak stress, e.g., *(h)is, (h)em* etc. (cf. Fisiak 1968: 61). But in his later work, a monograph on the history of English spelling, Scragg (1974) concentrated only on (non-)etymological *h-* in loanwords from French and Latin, neglecting the issue of the phonetic reality of the grapheme *h-* in words of Germanic, chiefly English, origin.

It is evident that the only certain indication of mute initial prevocalic *h-* are spellings with the corresponding grapheme deleted, such as the occasional forms *elf* for *half* or *ard* for *hard* in *Ormulum*. The situation becomes more complex when etymologically correct *h-* is written in the word-initial position because in such cases speakers of Middle English either pronounced the fricative or dropped it. In native words, Scandinavian, and perhaps French words of Germanic origin, like *hardy, haste* etc. mentioned earlier, speakers tended to retain the fricative sound, while in words of purely French or Latin origin initial *h-* was deleted, as it was in Vulgar Latin and French. Consequently, French loanwords were probably articulated in English without this initial sound, although forms with etymological *h-* spelling inserted were not rare and grew in number with the passing time, especially during the Renaissance period.

Concerning the pronunciation of initial *h-* in words with a Germanic background phonologists vary in their opinions. The most characteristic seems Wright & Wright's (1928: 129–130) statement, who suggest a solution as simple as possible:

(1) OE. initial **h** […] was an aspirate like the **h** in NE. **hand**, but with a strong emission of breath between the **h** and the following vowel or consonant…. OE. initial **h** remained in ME. before accented vowels, as **hous** (OE. **hūs**), **hĕlen** (OE. **hælan**) *to heal* […]. But before unaccented vowels it often disappeared, especially in pronominal forms, as **em**, **im, it** beside accented **hem** *them*, **him, hit** [… ]. AN. initial **h** was not pronounced, and accordingly it was often omitted in the writing of such loan-words as **habit abit, haste aste, heire eire** *heir* [ …].

An analogous status of initial *h-* is also suggested in Brunner (1963: 42–43), who, however, claims that in "French words of Gmc origin" initial *h-* was articulated

in Middle English. A similar stand is taken by Ekwall (1975: 79–80) with reference to the turn of the Early New English period.

Writing about non-etymological h- in spellings, like

(2) *hoke* (oak), *hought* (out), *hende* (end), *hevelle* (evil), *hangyr* (anger), *howlde* (old) in *Norfolk Guilds* (1387), *St. Editha* (1420), Bokenam and *Cely Papers*

and other late 14th–15th century sources, Wyld (1936: 219–220), rejected the view that such forms reflected standard pronunciation. In his opinion, "the habit of 'putting an h' was widespread as a vulgarism before the later eighteenth century". But more recently, Milroy (1983, 1992a: 197–201) launched an even bolder hypothesis of the very early phenomenon of *h*-dropping which was reflected in the instability of *h*-forms especially in the East Midland (which is supported by the data from LALME). According to Milroy (1992a: 200), "in the absence of strong orthographic standardization, the scribes would omit it [i.e., *h*-; JW] on some occasions and insert it 'hypercorrectly' on others". Milroy's hypothesis was in agreement with Charles Jones's account of *h*-dropping and insertion (Jones 1989: 265–274; cf. his list of examples illustrating initial *h*- variability in Layamon's *Brut*).

As regards the stability of initial *h* in the earliest documents, Hogg states that initial *h*- was lost as early as Old English. His examples include *ondweorc* (handiwork), *yldo* for *hyldo* 'kindness' or reverse *healle* for *ealle* 'all', etc.

(3) Initially [h] usually remained but throughout there are occasional examples of the failure of initial [h] to be represented in spelling. […] loss or unhistorical use of <h> initially is particularly frequent in the poems of the Exeter Book, CP(H), and Li […] (Hogg 1992: 273)

A much more detailed account of non-etymological *h* in words of Old English origin can be found in Minkova (2003: 160–165). Her list of examples selected from Old English poetic and prose texts based on Scragg (1970) shows a proportion of roughly 70% of initial *h*-insertions to around 30% of initial *h*-deletions, where inserted *h*s could have represented the glottal stop. Elsewhere, Minkova (2014: 104) postulates the status of "an obstruent phoneme" for OE *h*- and defends the consonantal status of initial prevocalic *h*- in Middle English, simultaneously emphasising its unstable character.

The two classic historical phonologies, those by Luick and Jordan, also devote some space to the problem of *h*-instability. Luick (1940: 1092) described the regional conditioning of the change in the period from the 15th century onwards as follows:

(4) In einer Periode, die mit dem 15. Jahrhundert, in einigen Gegenden vielleicht etwas früher, einsetzt, schwand das anlautende *h* in Fällen wie *hand, house, hell* in erheblichem Umfange auf dem größten Teil des Sprachgebietes: nur Schottland, Irland, Nordhumberland und Teile von Cumberland und Durham bewahren es. Auf dem ganzen übrigen Gebiet ist nach dem Ausweis der lebenden Mundarten von dem Wandel ergriffen worden.
[In the 15th century, but earlier in certain areas, initial [h] was lost in words like *hand, house, hell* to a considerable extent on a major part of the territory where English was spoken. That sound was retained only in Scotland, Ireland, Northumberland, parts of Cumberland and Durham. Elsewhere the change was effected, as is evidenced by the living dialects [translation mine; JW].

Luick's attempt at determining both temporal and regional conditioning of the change (here: loss of initial prevocalic *h-* in native words) placed the process in the 15th century on the major territory of England, to the exclusion of the northern areas. But in his grammar Luick said almost nothing about the status of initial *h-* in Early Middle English. With reference to Late Middle English he emphasized the instability of initial *h*-spellings, disregarding social influences which may have been at work.

In Jordan's version unstable *h-* was due to either French influences or phonetic reasons, as some scribes apparently considered *h-* as aspiration rather than a regular consonant:

(5) In initial position before a vowel *h* was aspirate as in OE and still became sounded as such in native pronunciation in accented syllables, although also often weak (*habben, hōnd* etc.) […]. Severe alternations of the *h* writing in accented syllables rest in general upon French influence […]. Early omission of the *h* (already in OE) could also rest on the fact that the writer did not consider the aspiration as a full valued sound. [Chaucer consistently uses *an, myn, thyn* before *h* words which indicates he did not pronounce the *h* …]. Jordan (1974 [1925]: 178–179)

In the quotation above the fragment in square brackets referring to Chaucer's usage is an important amendment to the original text made by its editor E. J. Crook. The fragment refers to the use of the article *an* and the adjectives *myn, thyn* directly before words with initial *h-* to indicate that the initial fricative is not articulated. This logical statement concerning the use of simple spelling methods to suggest how a word should be pronounced has given the present author an idea to conduct a closer investigation of the distribution in Middle English prose texts of the forms of these three words before nouns and adjectives beginning with *h-*.

## 2. A(N), MI(N) and THI(N)

Before presenting the results of the study we will try to establish the grammatical status of the indefinite article *an* and its distribution. In the grammars of Old English *an* is treated not as an article but as a numeral representing 'one'. In that meaning it could stand before nouns in the singular irrespective of the initial sound of the following word, i.e., its position was determined morphologically. Its later fates lack a precise description. Apart from Süsskand's (1935) early study embracing only Old and Early Middle English, where *an* is treated as the surviving form of OE *ān*, the question when precisely *an* obtained its contemporary grammatical status and its present-day phonology-based distribution remains debatable. Scant information in (a) Ekwall (1975) and (b) Fischer & van der Wurff (2006) leaves the issue of the chronology of the change open; cf.:

(6) (a).The indefinite article (originally identical with the numeral *one*) had the forms *a, an* in the late ME period, but distribution according to the initial sound of the following word had not yet been fully established. In EModE, as today, *a* was used before a consonant, *an* before a vowel, but also frequently before [h] (as in *an hand, an hundred*) (Ekwall 1975: 95).

(b) In ME, indicative presentative *an* […] becomes truly separate from the numeral *an*, in that a formal distinction develops between the two. The OE numeral *ān* develops regularly into ME *oon*, while the vowel in the article is reduced to short [a], and the word loses the final nasal when the next word begins with a consonant. (Fischer & van der Wurff 2006: 117).

These and several other sources (for more details see especially Lutz 1991: 59–67, section "achte Stufe", and Sommerer's recent study of 2018) allow one to formulate the following statements concerning the formation of the indefinite article with the contemporary distribution before vowels and consonants:

(a) In Middle English, the unaccented form of the Old English numeral *ān* showed a tendency towards becoming the indefinite article.
(b) In the accounts of most historical linguists the rise of the indefinite article on the whole territory of England is dated to the 15$^{th}$ century or even later
(c) With the lapse of time, Middle English shows more traces of the phonetic adjustments of the "numeral/article" to the initial sound in the directly following noun or adjective. Consequently the Middle English data should be split into at least two periods: the one until c. 1400 and and the other after that date.

The data collected in the present study may help establish the principles of the distribution of the forms of *an/a* and those of the possessive adjectives *mi/min*, *thi/thin* etc. in the working corpus consisting of the forms of these three words followed by nouns or adjectives with initial *h-* This working corpus is based upon 106 texts from the *Innsbruck Corpus of Middle English Prose* (Markus 2008; see the Appendix), excluding texts with uncertain localization and those supplying no examples of the contexts under investigation. Of course, a study based on the original manuscripts would have brought more precise results, nevertheless the data from this major corpus of Middle English prose texts may be treated as a tool helping to discover rudimentary standard patterns in the distribution of the numerals/articles and possessive adjectives.

To simplify data presentation, the items are symbolized here by the following six lemmas:

(7) AN (*an*) A (*a*)
MIN (*min, myn*) MI (*mi, my*)
THIN (*thin, thyn, þin, þyn*) THI (*thi, thy, þi, þy*) ([no forms with *ð*-])

Because of lack of certainty as regards the pronunciation of final *-e* in *mine*, *thine*, etc. in prose texts, where final *-e* can be articulated or not, such forms had to be excluded. As regards the potential readings of, e.g., the noun *house* (OE *hūs*) in Middle English after *a/n*, the following pronunciations were theoretically possible:

(8) (a) *an hous(e)* [a'nu:s] or [an 'hu:s]
(b) *an ous(e)* [a'nu:s]
(c) *a house* [a 'hu:s] or [a 'u:s]??

Of the four (or five?) pronunciations it is only the hiatus form in parentheses, i.e., (8c) [a 'u:s], which could hardly be accepted as a natural sequence, while the other form in (c), i.e., [a 'hu:s], is a pronunciation fully compatible with that employed in Modern English, i.e.. [ə'haus]. The form (8b) is self-explicit as one cannot expect here a reading other than [a'nu:s]. The most problematic is the ambiguous context (8a) typical of Early Middle English, where [an 'hu:s], with *an* functioning as an article or a numeral, was a continuation of the original Old English form *ān*. In later Middle English when the phonological distribution of the indefinite article became established, the sequence *an house* [a'nu:s] or [an'hu:s] was replaced by *a house* with one possible reading, i.e., [a'hu:s], with a subsequent diphthongisation of [u:].

In the following sections the materials classified according to dialects are split into those from before and after 1400. Our focus is on the numeral/article, while the possessive adjective data are to be treated as supplementary.

With reference to the forms of *a(n)* in the *Innsbruck Corpus* texts, the symbols (an, AN, a, A) put under the label TYPE in the items (10–16) below should be understood, as follows:

(9) Before words with initial prevocalic *h-*:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| an | *an* is used 1–4 times | (rare) |
| AN | *an* is used 5 times or more | (frequent) |
| a | *a* is used 1–4 times | (rare) |
| A | *a* is used 5 times or more | (frequent) |

The above symbols can be combined when in a text both *an* and *a* stand before initial prevocalic *h-* , thus AN/a, AN/A, an/A, an/a.

Parentheses enclose numbers of words of French or Latin origin, e.g., (2F) reads "the form is found before two loanwords from French". This seems important as the loss of word-initial prevocalic *h-* was natural in words of French origin. Texts are arranged chronologically, starting from the oldest ones. As said earlier, the data concerning the possessives *mi/n*, *thi/n* are here treated as supplementary.

## 3. South (Western) and Kentish (A/N, MI/N, THI/N before prevocalic *h-*)

The distribution of the above words before prevocalic *h-* in the southerly dialects (South West and Kentish) is as follows (the two border date texts are treated as belonging to the 14th century). For full information concerning particular texts, see the Appendix.

| (10) SOUTH (WEST) (8 texts) | MS date | an | MIN/THIN | a | MI/THI | TYPE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hali Meidenhad (Bod.) | (1150+) | 1 | 1 | – | – | an |
| Hali Meidenhad (BL Titus) | (1150+) | 2 | 13 | 1 | – | an/a |
| Twelfth–Cent. Homilies (Bod.) | (1150+) | 1 | 1 | – | – | an |
| History of the Holy Rood–tree | (1150+) | 1 | – | – | – | an |
| Old English Homilies | (a1225) | 2 | 2 | – | – | an |
| Trevisa, Methodius | (1359+) | 3 | – | – | – | an |
| Trevisa, Dialogus | (a1402) | – | 2 (2F) | – | – | (an) |
| A Myrour to Lewde Men… | (c1400) | 53 (6F) | 10 | – | – | AN |

| (11) KENTISH (1 text) | MS date | an | MIN/THIN | a | MI/THI | TYPE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Twelfth-Cent. Homilies (Vesp.) | (1250+) | 3 | 9 | – | – | an |

In the *Innsbruck Corpus* the earliest prose works come from the South (West). The evidence of A(N), MI(N), THI(N) before *h*-words is very scant in both Early and later Middle English. The few examples of *an* confirm their status as numerals, although a single form of *a* (*a heate* 'heat') found in *Hali Meidenhad* (Titus; 63/665), an early text, may confirm the phonetic reality of the fricative in *heate*. The use of adjectives with final *-n* has nothing to do with phonological distribution because *n*-less forms are not found even in texts from the later period. Curiously, of the 13 instances of MIN/THIN in *Hali Meidenhad* (Titus), as many as 10 stand before the noun *he(o)rte* 'heart'. The 53 instances of *an* retained before *h-* in *A Myrour to Lewde Men and Wymmen*, a late text with around 1000 occurrences of *a* before consonants different from *h*, may be a strong indication that initial *h-* after *an* was not articulated. Kentish *12th Century Homilies* offers a very small number of forms, while the other Kentish text (*Sermons*, Oxford Laud MS. 471) contains no relevant data.

## 4. West Midland (A/N, MI/N, THI/N before prevocalic *h*-)

The distribution of the above words before prevocalic *h-* in the West Midland is as follows (the single border date text is treated as belonging to the 14th century). (For a full list of texts see the Appendix):

| (12) WEST MIDLAND (15 texts) | MS date | AN | MIN/THIN | A | MI/THI | TYPE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (a) Hali Meidhad (coll.) | (1150+) | 4 | 12 | – | – | an |
| Liflade … St. Julian (Bod.) | (1150+) | 1 | 3 | 1 | – | an/a |
| Liflade … St. Julian (Roy.) | (1150+) | 3 | 2 | – | – | an |
| Seinte Marherete (Bod.) | (1150+) | 3 | 12 | – | – | an |
| Sawles Warde | (1150+) | 2 | 1 | – | – | an |
| Ancrene Riwle (CCC) | (1200+) | 23 (1F) | 27 | – | – | AN |
| Ancrene Riwle (Gonville) | (c1225) | 12 | 11 | – | – | AN |
| Ancrene Riwle (Nero) | (c1225) | 10 | 6 | – | 1 | AN |
| Seinte Marherete (Roy.) | (c1225) | 3 | 10 | – | – | an |
| Life of St. Katherine (Roy.) | (1225) | 6 | 6 | – | – | AN |
| Wohunge of Ure Lauerd | (a1300) | 1 | 7 | – | 8 | an |
| Three ME Sermons (1st) | (c1400) | 12 (2F) | 5 | – | – | AN |
| (b) Saint Bartholomew | (c1450) | 1 | 1 | – | – | – |
| Saint Nicholas | (c1450) | 1 | 2 | – | – | an |
| Saint George | (c1460) | – | 1 | 1 | 1 | a |

The earlier West Midland texts, i.e., those from before 1400 (12a), show more or less the same pattern as texts from the South (see (10) above), i.e., 85 instances of the numeral *an* before words with initial prevocalic *h*- are contrasted with a single instance of the article *a* before *h*- (cf. a surprising, very early appearance of an *n*-less determiner form *a heuene* in *Liflade … St. Julian;* Bod., 12 c.). A consistent appearance of AN, MIN, THIN before 1400 strongly supports the hypothesis of mute initial prevocalic *h*- in that region (102 *n*-forms against 10 forms without *n* of the adjectives). As regards *Ancrene Riwle* (Nero; c. 1225), *an* appears there only before vowels (11) and *h*- (10), while *a* is found before consonants other than *h*- (107 occurrences). This means that in *Ancrene Riwle* (Nero) initial prevocalic *h*- was certainly not articulated after *an*. All other early texts (12a) contain the article *an* before words with initial vowels and consonants.

The three texts from the 15th century (12b) also show the predominance of the longer forms, the only example of the *n*-less article *a* before *h*-nouns being the phrase *a hole* in *St. George*, Egerton (74/r21). The 15th century data with the prevalence of *an* over *a* seem to show the Western area as the territory where initial prevocalic [h] may have had a tendency not to be articulated.

## 5. South/West-East Midland (A/N, MI/N, THI/N before prevocalic *h*-)

The distribution of the above words before prevocalic *h*- in a Southern region bordering on the West/East Midland is as shown below (the single border date text is treated as belonging to the 14th century; for a full list of texts see the Appendix):

| (13) S/WM/EM (5 texts) | MS date | AN | MIN/THIN | A | MI/THI | TYPE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (a) Lollard Sermons | (a1400) | 26 (4F) | 16 | 3 | 6 | AN/a |
| (b) The Art of Hunting | (c1445) | 4 | 8 | 1 | 2 | an/a |
| Three Kings of Cologne (Roy.) | (c1450) | 2 | – | 12(2F) | – | an/A |
| Three Kings of Cologne (Cbr.) | (1450+) | 3(1F) | – | 13 | – | an/A |
| Late ME Treatise on Horses | (1500) | 62 | 2 | – | 1 | AN |

This small group of texts represent a Southern region bordering on the West and East Midland. In the text from before 1400 (*Lollard Sermons*), 26 tokens of *an* are contrasted with only 3 instances of *a.* Surprisingly, this relatively early text shows a practically contemporary distribution, i.e., *a* before all consonants (except *h*-) and *an* before all vowels. Its 37 occurrences of *an* before a vowel (and 26 before *h*-) are confronted with around 700 instances of *a* before consonants

(and only 3 instances of *a* before *h*-). The text supplies contrasting forms, i.e., 4 cases of *an hous* (e.g., LS 24/454) and 2 cases of *a hous(e)* (e.g., LS 60/272).

Texts from the latter half of the 15th century (c. 1445–1500) show a characteristic change, namely, before initial *h*- the article *a* prevails over *an*, except in *Late Middle English Treatise on Horses* (Sloane, Berkshire/S. Oxfordshire) with its 62 occurrences of *an*. Pairs contrasting at least in their graphic shapes are also found; cf.:

:

> *The Art of Hunting*: *an hert* (e.g. 47/r24): *a hert* (46/r13);
> *Three Kings of Cologne*, Royal 32/r26 *an half*: 130/r20 *a half*,
> *Three Kings* Cbr. *an houws* (65/r29): *a hows* (e.g. 21/r36).

However, it is difficult to determine whether words containing initial *h* in such pairs really differed in their pronunciation. Then, the items in the first pair would have developed either a phonological ([an ert: a hert]) or allomorphic contrast (an hert: a hert), with initial *h* remaining unaffected in the latter.

## 6. East Midland (A/N, MI/N, THI/N before prevocalic *h*-)

The distribution of the above words before prevocalic *h*- in the East Midland is as follows the single border date text is treated as belonging to the 14th century; for a full list of texts see the Appendix):

(14) EAST MIDLAND (31 texts)

| | MS date | AN | MIN/THIN | A | MI/THI | TYPE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (a) Peterborough Chronicle | (1070-1154) | 4 | – | – | – | an |
| Vices and Virtues | (a1225) | 6 | 3 | – | – | AN |
| Ancrene Riwle (Pepys) | (c1225) | 39 | – | – | 1 | AN |
| Ancrene Riwle (Titus) | (c1225) | 12 (1F) | 13 | 2 | 4 | AN/a |
| Mandeville's Travels | (1350+) | 17 | 2 | 2 (1F) | – | AN/a |
| Lavynham, A Lytil Tretis | (a1400) | 9 (1F) | 1 | – | – | AN |
| Pepysian Gospel Harmony | (c1400) | 16 | 1 | – | – | AN |
| (b) Lantern of Light | (a1415) | 15(3F) | 15 | 1 | 7 | AN/a |
| Cloud of Unknowing | (1400+) | 7 | 22 (1F) | 4 | 1 | AN/a |
| Love's Mirror of the Blessed Life | (1400+) | 4 | 2 | 14 | 18 | an/A |
| Pater Noster of Richard | (1400+) | 7 | 12 | 4 | 5 | AN/a |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ermyte | | | | | | |
| Life of Adam and Eve | (1400+) | 7 | 6 | – | 1 (1F) | AN |
| Julian of Norwich's Revelations | (c1420) | – | 1 | 6 | 12 | A |
| Paston Letters 2 | (1420-1500) | 10 (2F) | 12 | 2 (1F) | 10 | AN/a |
| Paston Letters 3 | (1420-1500) | 12 (2F) | – | 6 | 12 (1F) | AN/A |
| Paston Letters 4 | (1420-1500) | 19 (2F) | 21 | 4 | 22 | AN/a |
| Paston Letters 5 | (1420-1500) | 24 (4F) | 20 (1F) | 4 | 16 (1F) | AN/a |
| Paston Letters 6 | (1420-1500) | 11 (3F) | – | 8 | 12 | AN/A |
| Deonise Hid Diuinite | (a1425) | 1 | 19 | – | 1 | an |
| Misyn, The Fire of Love | (1435) | – | – | 11 | 40 | A |
| Capgrave, Lives of St. Augustine | (1440) | 14 (5F) | 5 (2F) | 24 (1F) | 3 | AN/A |
| Metham: Physiognomy | (1448) | 6 (1F) | – | 2 | – | AN/a |
| Speculum Christiani | (c1450) | 12 | 7 | 3 | 7 | AN/a |
| Macer Floribus | (1450+) | 14 (4F) | 7 | – | – | AN |
| Lincoln Diocese Documents | (1450+) | – | 3 (2F) | 18 (1F) | 18 (3F) | A |
| Pecock, Follower to the Donet | (c1453) | 29 (6F) | 9 | – | 1 | AN |
| English Register of Oseney Abbey | (1460) | 18 | – | 3<br>145(116F) | AN/a | |
| Capgrave, Abbreviation of Chron. | (c1462) | 1 | – | 91 (16F) | – | an/A |
| Cely Letters | (1472-78) | 13 | 7 (1F) | 15 | 23 | AN/A |
| Pecock, The Donet | (c1475) | 24 (9F) | 8 | – | 1 | AN |
| Agnus Castus, A ME Herbal | (1500+) | 241 (F224) | 5 | 1 (1F) | – | AN/a |

The *Innsbruck Corpus* offers a vast range of texts from the East Midland, especially those from the 15th century. Although *an*, as was expected, prevails before *h-* in the early compositions (14a), each of the two texts, *Ancrene Riwle* (Titus, c. 1225) and *Mandeville's Travels* (1350+), contains two forms of *a* before *h-*. But it seems that before 1400 the numeral/article continued to be used like in Old English, except in two texts. The first, *Ancrene Riwle* (Pepys; c. 1225) developed a currently existing distribution, with *an* used before vowels and initial prevocalic *h-*, and *a* only before consonants, which means that words with initial *h-* are treated like those with an initial vowel. The other text, Lavynham's *A Lytil Tretis*, also shows a regular pattern (with one exception: *an leful liking* 24/r36).

In the later period retention of *h-* due to the preceding article *a* seems to be a feature of Julian of Norwich's *Revelations*, *Lincoln Diocese Documents* and Capgrave, while *h-* appears to have been deleted in *Pepysian Vowel Harmony*, *Life of Adam and Eve*, *Macer Floribus*, Pecock (both *Donets*) and perhaps *Agnus Castus*.

The unstable position of initial *h-* is best illustrated by spellings in Capgrave's two texts where this letter is non-etymological:

Of Richard Story he took a **hooth**, for he swore on a book þat he schulde neuyr meynten no swech opiniones. And aftir þis **hooth** þe kyng saide, 'And I swere here onto þe, if euyr þou breke þin **ooth**, þou schal deye a foul deth'. *Abbreviation of Chronicles* (204/r9–13)

Beati apostoli epistola, where he tellith þat þis Vitalis was an **huscher** of gramer in Melan… *Lives of St. Augustine* 30/r6–8.

In both cases inserted *h-* has no phonological substance; cf. OE *āþ* 'oath', AN *usser* 'usher'. Note also *myn howllde lady* 'my old lady' (*Cely Letters* 97/r52), *myn hoold lady* (*Paston Letters* vol 5, p. 297) and *an hesy servise* 'an easy service', p. 123.

## 7. London (A/N, MI/N, THI/N before prevocalic *h-*)

The distribution of the above words before prevocalic *h-* in London is as follows (the border date texts are treated as belonging to the 15th century; for a full list of texts see the Appendix):

| (15) LONDON (30 texts) | MS date | AN | MIN/THIN | A | MI/THI | TYPE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (a) Complaint of Our Lady | (1350+) | 3 | 1 | – | – | an |
| (b) Book of … St. Bartholemew | (1400+) | 18 (6F) | 3 | 1 | 2 | AN/a |
| Chaucer's Treatise on Astrolabe | (1400+) | 6 (1F) | 6 (1F) | – | – | AN |
| Chaucer, Melibeus (Hgw) | (c1402) | 5 (1F) | 10 (1F) | – | – | AN |
| Chaucer, Person's (Hgw) | (c1405) | 14 (6F) | 8 (1F) | – | – | AN |
| Chaucer, Person's (Elles) | (c1405) | 12 (5F) | 11 (2F) | – | – | AN |
| Chaucer, Melibeus (Elles) | (1410) | 5 (1F) | 10 (1F) | – | – | AN |
| Chaucer, Boece | (1425+) | 8 (2F) | 16 (3F) | 1 | 2 | AN/a |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| English Wks of Wyclif 2 | (a1424) | 22 (6F) | 3 | – | 1 | AN |
| English Wks of Wyclif 1 | (a1425) | 16 (3F) | 3 | – | – | AN |
| Speculum Sacerdotale | (c1425) | 43 (12F) | 7 (1F) | 1 | 12 | AN/a |
| Dictionaries and Saying | (1450) | 3 | – | 4 | 9 | an/a |
| Revelations of St Birgitta | (1450+) | 20 (5F) | 23 (2F) | 6 (1F) | 18 (1F) | AN/A |
| Caxton, Life of S.Thomas | (c1470) | – | – | 1 | – | a |
| Caxton, Dialogues in Fr. & Eng. | (1483) | 10 (1F) | – | 3 (1F) | 4 (1F) | AN/a |
| Caxton, Knight of La Tour Laundry | (1483) | 47 (7F) | 7 | 13 | 5 | AN/A |
| Caxton, Quattuor Sermones | (c1483) | 5 | 28 | – | 12 | AN |
| Caxton, The Curial | (c1484) | 3 (1F) | 1 | – | 1 | an |
| Caxton, Paris and Viene | (1485) | 13 (2F) | 12 (2F) | 6 | – | AN/A |
| Caxton's Malory's La Morte | (1485) | 87 (29F) | 16 (6F) | 7 | 74 (2F) | AN/A |
| Caxton, Four Sons of Aymon 1 | (c1489) | 34 (6F) | 5 (3F) | 52 (3F) | 45 (4F) | AN/A |
| Caxton, Blanchardyn & Eglantine | (c1489) | 14 (5F) | 4 (2F) | 25 (4F) | 9 | AN/A |
| Caxton, Reynard the Fox | (1489) | 31 (1F) | – | 6 | 23 (1F) | AN/A |
| Caxton, Doctrinal of Sapience | (1489) | 36 (7F) | 12 (3F) | 2 (2F) | 18 | AN/a |
| Caxton, Eneydos | (1490) | 15 (2F) | 3 (2F) | 13 | 13 (2F) | AN/A |
| The Tretyse of Loue | (1493) | 8 (3F) | 2 | 11 (1F) | 17 | AN/A |
| Caxton, Four Sons of Aymon 2 | (c1498) | 24 (9F) | 4 (4F) | 23 (1F) | 32 (5F) | AN/A |
| Caxton, Prologues and Epilogues 1st(15c.) | 6 (2F) | 3 | – | 5 | AN | |
| Caxton, Prologues 2nd | (15c.) | 1 | – | – | 1 | an |
| Myracles of Oure Lady | (1496) | 9 (4F) | – | 1 | 2 | AN/a |

Texts from London come almost exclusively from the 15th century, with manuscripts containing Chaucer's prose (5 texts) representing the early part of the period, and Caxton's 15 texts from the latter half of the 15th century. Chaucer's texts display a distribution of forms resembling that in Modern English. The form *an* and the conservative forms of MIN, THIN are found before *h*-words. The same pattern characterizes Wyclif's works and, with reference to the indefinite article only, *Speculum Sacerdotale*, where, curiously, the reduced forms of the possessive adjective prevail over the conservative ones.

The 15 texts associated with Caxton show a lot of inconsistence as regards the distribution of *an* and *a*. Although representing the period of at least 75 years after Chaucer, Caxton's works, especially the later ones, show a lot of variation of both the article and the possessive adjective. Only *Four Sons of Aymon* in its two versions demonstrates the prevalence of the adjectival *n*-less forms, and to a lesser degree those of the *n*-less article before *h*-words. This unexpected variation testifies to a very unstable character of initial prevocalic *h*- in East Midland texts from the latter half of the 15th century.

Worth noting is the non-etymological mute *h* in *an habundance* (Caxton's *Curial* 14/r16).

## 8. North (A/N, MI/N, THI/N before prevocalic *h*-)

The distribution of the above words before prevocalic *h*- in the North is as follows (the border date text is treated as belonging to the 15th century; for a full list of texts see the Appendix):

| (16) NORTH (17 texts) | MS date | AN | MIN/THIN | A | MI/THI | TYPE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Three ME Sermons | (c1400) | 13 | 10 | – | – | AN |
| Don Jon Gaytryge's Sermon | (c1440) | – | – | 1 | – | a |
| The Abbey of the Holy Ghost | (1400+) | – | 4 | 1 | 1 | a |
| Alphabet of Tales 2 | (1400+) | – | – | 76 (8F) | 22 | A |
| Hilton, Angel's Song | (1400+) | – | – | 1 | – | a |
| Methodius, Bygyn. of the World | (1400+) | – | 1 | 6 | – | A |
| Fistula in ano | (c1425) | 4 | – | 4 | 2 | an/a |
| English Conquest of Ireland | (c1425) | 18 (1F) | – | – | – | AN |
| Alphabet of Tales 1 | (1450+) | – | – | 98 (6F) | 39 (1F) | A |
| Liber de Diversis Medicinis | (c1440) | 13 (3F) | 7 (1F) | 56 | 9 | AN/A |
| Mirror of St. Edmund | (c1440) | 1 (1F) | 1 | 5 | 20 | an/A |
| R. Rolle & Followers 2a | (a1450) | 18 | 66 | 4 | 28 | AN/a |
| R. Rolle & Followers 2b | (a1450) | 13 (6F) | 32 | 2 | 14 | AN/a |
| R. Rolle, Yorks. Writers rolhor | (a1450) | 10 | 92 | 23 | 148 (1F) | AN/A |
| R. Rolle, Yorks. Writers rolplus | (a1450) | 10 | 90 | 22 | 147 (1F) | AN/A |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Craft of Dying (Lowl. Scots) | (c1475) | 6 | – | – | – | AN |
| Wisdom of Solomon (Lowl. Sc.) | (1475+) | – | – | – | 5 | (a) |

The texts from the North in the *Innsbruck Corpus* all come from the 15th century. In the Northern version of *Three Middle English Sermons* (c. 1400), *an* is found before initial vowels, but it fails to appear before consonant letters other than *h*- (around 650 occurrences before other consonants, which means that initial *h*- was treated by its author as mute). An analogous pattern is characteristic of *The English Conquest of Ireland* where only *an* stands before *h*-words. On the other hand the *n*-less forms of the adjective and the article only stand before *h*- in *Alphabet of Tales* 1 and 2, which makes it clear that these texts retained initial *h*-. Rolle's texts exhibit much variation as regards the distribution of the article and the adjective, with a slight prevalence of the reduced forms.

## 9. Conclusions

To summarize, some general statements can be formulated on the basis of the above examination of the *Innsbruck Corpus of Middle English Prose* data:

(a) In dialects, an early loss of initial prevocalic *h*- in Middle English words of Germanic origin is evidenced in particular texts rather than in texts from the whole region, typical examples being *Ancrene Riwle* Nero (West Midland; c. 1225), *Ancrene Riwle* (Pepys, c. 1225), and Lavynham's *A Lytil Tretys*; a1400) (East Midland), *Lollard Sermons* (a1400; SWE Midland), Chaucer (London; c. 1400 and later), and *Three ME Sermons* (c. 1400; North). The retention of *h*- is seen in both versions of the *Alphabet of Tales*.

(b) South Western and West Midland texts in the *Corpus* do not contain the article *a* before *h*- until c. 1450, which testifies to the strong position of *an* in its function.

(c) Luick's distribution of initial *h*- retention is to some extent confirmed by the results of the present study, although *Corpus* texts from the North offer evidence of the loss of *h*- in texts such as *Liber de Diversis Medicinis*, *Rolle's Yorkshire Writers*, or *Alphabet*, mentioned earlier.

(d) The *Corpus* data indicate that the initial impulse of the rise of the indefinite article was the split of *an* into *a* and *an*. Another impulse was the loss of *-n* in *mine, thine* etc., resulting in the rise of a set of possessive adjectives with a syntactic, not phonological, distribution.

(e) There is ample evidence in the *Corpus* that the implementation of the contemporary distribution, i.e., *a* before consonants and *an* before vowels, had a partly regional character, its first signs belonging to the 13th century.

I believe that the topic is worth further investigation, perhaps basing on corpora more comprehensive and precise than the *Innsbruck Corpus*, of the shortcomings of which I am fully aware. Let me hope that the results of the present "pilot" study may be of some use for the future researchers in that field.

## APPENDIX
## A list of texts from the *Innsbruck Corpus* consulted

For a full explanation of symbols see *Manual of the Innsbruck Prose Corpus*, 57–64.

### South-Western

*History of the Holy Rood-tree* <N Oxford, Bodley 343> <M 1150+ (1150–1250)> O 1050+ (OE) SO (West Saxon)

*Hali Meidenhad* <N Oxford Bodley 34, 52v ff (1150–1250)> SO / SWO

*Hali Meidenhad*, Titus, <N BL Cotton Titus D 18f. 112v ff 1150-1250<D SO / SWO>

*Old English Homilies*, <N Trinity Coll. Cbr., MS. B. 14.52 <M a1225<O a1200<D SO>

*Twelfth-Cent. Homilies*, <N Oxford, Bodley 343> <M 1150+ (1150–1250)> SO> dialect

*A Myrour to Lewde Men and Wymmen*, <N BL Harley 45> early 15)> (c1400 William of Nassyngton?, SO/SWO (Gloucestershire

*Dialogus inter militem et clericum*, N BM Harley 1900>Trevisa, John > beginningof 15)> a1402 (MED)> SO (West Southern)

*Methodius, The Bygynnyng of the World*, <N BM Harley 1900> Trevisa, John (?)> (1359–1420?)> 0 (1350–1420?)><D SO (West Southern)

### Kentish

*Twelfth-Cent. Homilies*, Oxford, Vespasian D. XIV 1150–1250, KO

*Kentish Sermons*, in Old English Miscellany<N Oxford Laud MS. 471> <M (1250–1350, KL

### West Midland

*Hali Meidhad*, collation of diff. MSS.> <M 1150–1250)> WMO>

*Sawles Warde*, in Old English Homilies, <N Bodleian MS. 34> < (1150–1250)> WMO

*Liflade and Passion of St. Julian*, <N Bodleiana Oxford, 34<M 1150+)>(1150–1250> WMO>

*Liflade and Passion of St. Julian*, MS Royal, <N Bodleiana Oxford, Royal 34<M 1150, O 1150–1250> WMO

*Seinte Marherete*, Bodley, ed. Mack. 13> <N Oxford Bodley 34<M 1150+ (1150–1250)> O 1200+ (c1230 (Wells))> WMO (Herefordshire?)>

*Ancrene Riwle*, MS Corpus Christi College Cbr. 402<M 1200+><O 1200 WMO

*Ancrene Riwle*, MS Gonville/Caius College Cbr. 234, (c1225 MED) O 1200 (?a1200) WMO?
*Ancrene Riwle*, MS B.L. Cotton Nero A. XIV<M 1200+ (c1225 MED)> <O 1200, WMO?
*Seinte Marherete*, Royal, <N BL Royal 17 A. XXVII > <M c1225> <D WMO (Herefordshire)
*Life of St. Katherine*, Royal MS, <N Royal MS. 17 A XXVII > <M 1200+ (1225)><D WMO (Hereford / Gloucester)
*Wohunge of Ure Lauerd*, BL Cotton Titus B. 18> <M a1300> <D WMO ?>
*Three Middle English Sermons* <N Chapter Library Worcester F. 10> (c1400)> (1st serm.) WMO;
*Saint Nicholas*, <N MS BL Egerton 876> <M 1450> WMO? LondonO?>
*Saint Bartholomew*, ed. Hamer. <N MS BL Egerton 876> <M 1450+ (c1450)> <O 1438> WMO? / London O?
*Saint George*, <N B.L. Egerton 876.> c1460> <O 1438> D WMO? (London?)

South/West Midland/East Midland

*Lollard Sermons* <N BL Add. 41321; Bodl. Rawlinson C 751; John Rylands Libr. Ms Eng 412> <M a1400> <D MO (South Central ML (Add. and Rawl.)
*Three Kings of Cologne*, <N Cbr. UL Ee iv, 32, 2 MSS <M c1450+ (end 14 <O ?c1400<D EMO/WMO (South Midlands)>
*Three Kings of Cologne*, Royal, <N BL Royal, 18 A x<M c1450 (end 14 O ?c1400> <D EMO/WMO (South Midlands
*Late Middle English Treatise on Horses*, <N BL Sloane 2584, ff. 102–117v <M 1500<O a1450> <D SO / WMO / EMO (Berkshire/South Oxfordshire
The Art of Hunting, MS Porter (Phillipps MS 12086), Newhaven, Conn<M 1400+ (c1445)> (1327)>< SO/WMO (Worcester)

East Midland

*The Peterborough Chronicle* 1070-1154,<N Oxford, Bodley Laud Misc. 636> 1100–1200<D EMO
*Vices and Virtues*, BM Stowe 240> (a1225)> < (c1200)> <D EMO (MED)
*Ancrene Riwle* <Magdalene College Cbr. MS Pepys 2498, c1225 MED< (?a1200, EMO
*Ancrene Riwle*, <N MS Cotton Titus D. XVIII ff., M c1225 MED<O 1200 (?a1200, EMO?
*Mandeville's Travels*: Bodley Version, <N Oxford Bodl. E Musaeo 116>M 1350+ EMO>
*Pepysian Gospel Harmony* <N Magd. Coll., Cbr., MS Pepys 2498> c1400)> EMO / SO>

*Speculum Christiani*, N BL Harley 6580 (c1450)> <O 1300+, EMO>
*Capgraves's Abbreviation of Chronicles* UL Cbr. Corpus Chr.Gg. 4.12(M)M c1462–1463 EMO
*Capgrave's Lives of St. Augustine*; BL Additional 36704<M (1440; EMO (Lynn, Norfolk)
*Cely Letters* 1472–1488¸<N Office, London, S.C.I 53/59> (1472–1488) EMO>
*Cloud of Unknowing and the Book of Public Record Privy Counselling*<N BL MS Harleian 674< (early 15)> (14/early 15, EMO (editor)> dialect
*Deonise Hid Diuinite*; <N BL Harl. 674, 993, 1022, 2373 et al.> M a1425> ?a1400> EMO
*Middle English Translation of Macer Floribus de Viribus Herbarum*, <N Stockholm Royal Library MS X 91> M 1450+> EMO (Oxford)>
*Julian of Norwich's Revelations* (Shorter Version<N BL Add. 37790, "Amherst Ms."> (c1420<c1413)> EMO (Norfolk
*Lantern of Light*, <N BL Harley 2324> <M 1400+ (a1415 (O (a1415)> <D EMO (editor)
*Lincoln Diocese Documents*, 1450–1544<N Diocesan Registry at Lincoln Cathedral<M 1450+ (1450–1464)> <D EMO (Lincoln?)>
*Works of John Metham: Physiognomy*, <Oxford: All Souls 81 (1448/49 (editor<EMO Norfolk)
*Nicholas Love, Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, <N Cbr. UL Add. 6578 and 6686> (early 15)> EML (Southern Northamptonshire, LALME)>
*Misyn, The Fire of Love*, <N Corpus Christi Coll. Oxf. MS. 236> <M 1435)> EMO (editor)>
*The English Register of Oseney Abbey*, N Public Record Office, King's Remembrancer, Miscellaneous Books, no. 26> M (1460)> D EMO? (Oxfordshire)>
*The Paston Letters*, vol. 2–6, (1420–1500)> EMO>
*Þe Pater Noster of Richard Ermyte*. <N Westminster School Library MS. 3> <M 1400+ <D EMO (Peterborough)>
*Pecock, Reginald, The Donet*, Oxford Bodley 916> <M c1475> <O c1445<D EMO
*Pecock, Reginald, Follower to the Donet*<N BL Royal 17 D.ix> c1453–4 (editor, EMO (South East Midland / London)>
*Lavynham, A Litil Tretys*, <N BL Ms. Harley 211> (c1450)> <O a1400<D EMO (Ipswich?)
*Life of Adam and Eve*, Wheatley MS, N BL Addit. MS 39574> (beginning 15 <D EMO>
*Agnus Castus. A Middle English Herbal*, N Stockholm Royal Libr. 90, M 1500+, EMO

London

*The Middle English Prose Complaint of Our Lady and Gospel of Nicodemus*; <N Cambridge Magdalene Coll., Ms. Pepys 2498 (from Waltham Abbey, Essex<M 1350+ (c1375?)> <O 1350+ (2 half 14< London)

*Chaucer, The Tale of Melibeus*, Hengwrt MS> <M 1402/03> <O 1350+ (c1387 London O

*Chaucer, The Tale of Melibeus*, <N Ellesmere MS<M 1410> (c1387)> LondonO>

*Chaucer, The Persones Tale*<N Hengwrt MS <M c1405> (c1387)> <D LondonO

*Chaucer, The Persones Tale*, <N Ellesmere MS > <M c1405> (c1387)> LondonO>

*A Treatise on the Astrolabe*, <N Univ. Libr. Dd. 3.53, <M 1400+ (1391)> K cont.> London O>

*Book of the foundation of St. Bartholomew's* BL Cotton Vespasian B ix<M 1400+ (c1400)> London O?

*The Revelations of Saint Birgitta*; Libr. of Princeton University, Ms. in the Garrett Collection> <M 1450+ (a1475)> London O

*Chaucer, Boethius, De Consolatione Philosophie*, Cambridge Univ. Libr. Camb. Ii. 3. 21, with occasional use of other MSS> M ?a 1425+ (c1380< London O

*Caxton, Four Sons of Aymon*, pt. I N unique Earl Spencer copy< (c1489)> (c1489)> LondonO?>

*Caxton, Four Sons of Aymon*; pt. II; <N unique Earl Spencer copy> (c1498)> c1498)> LondonO?>

*Caxton, Blanchardyn and Eglantine*,N Lord Spencer's unique imperfect copy<M 1450+ (c1489 (c1489)> LondonO?> dialect

*The Curial made by Maystere Alain Charretier*, tr. Caxton<N William Caxton 1484> (c1484)> O a1457> London?>

*Dialogues in French and English*<N Libr. of Ripon Cathedral, Caxton's printed text c1483>,London O?>

*The Doctrinal of Sapience*, pr. by Caxton; <N Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California (base text 1489)> London O?>

*Caxton's Eneydos*; <N -> main MS / print(1490)> D London O?>

*The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry*; tr. Caxton<N BL, Harley 1764> (1483)> <D London?

*Paris and Viene* (Caxton); <N sig. c v> (1485, London O?>

*Prologues and Epilogues of William Caxton*, 1st ed.<N different prints> <M various; 15c.> D London O

*Prologues and Epilogues of William Caxton*, 2nd ed.<N different prints> <M various; 15c.> D London O

*Caxton, Quattuor Sermones*; ed.Blake<N print> (c1483)> <D LondonO?>

*The Life of S. Thomas of Canterbury*, in The Golden Legend ... by William Caxton<N print< (c1470)> LondonO? (text normalized in spelling?)>
*The History of Reynard the Fox*, William Caxton 1481> (1481; 2nd ed. 1489)> LondonO>
*Dicts and Saying of the Philosophers*; <N Oxford Bodley 943> <M1450<D LondonO (close to standard)
*The Equatorie of the Planetis*; Chaucer?<N Peterhouse MS 75.I> (1418)> (c1392)> LondonO>
*Three Lives from the Gilte Legende*, <N x> <M x> O x> original date; <D LondonO
*Malory's Le Morte Darthur*, <N Caxton's edition, part 1<M 1450+ (1485)> (1469–1470<D London O>
*The Myracles of Oure Lady*, <N Wynkyn de Worde's edition > <M 1496<D LondonO (Chancery Standard)>
*Speculum Sacerdotale*, <N BL Add. 36791> (early 15)> ?c1425> LondonO>
*The Tretyse of Loue*, <N Pierpont Morgan Libr.> (1493 / 94)> <D LondonO?>
*English Works of Wyclif*, 1–2 <N Oxford, Bodley 788, and 7 others (see edition, p. VIf<M a1425> <O c1480<D LondonO?>

North

*Middle English Sermons* <N Chapter Library Worcester F. 10> (c1400)> (2nd and 3rd Three sermon)> NO
*Dan Jon Gaytryge's Sermon*, in Religious Pieces, pp. 1–15, <N Lincoln Cath. Libr. 91, Thornton MS.> M 1400+> <O (c1440)> NO>
*The Abbey of the Holy Ghost*, N Lincoln Cath. Libr., Robert Thornton MS. 271-276, M 1400+, <O 1350+, NO>
*Alphabet of Tales* 2, BM Addit. 25, 719> <M 1400+> <O a1294> < NL>
Hilton, Angels' Song, BL Add. 27592> <M 1400+)> NO (West Yorkshire)
*Methodius, The Bygynnyng of the World*, N BM Additional 37949> Trevisa, John (?)> <M 1400+ (1/15)> <O 1400+ (1/15)> D NO
*Fistula in ano*, London, BL Sloane 6> <I John Arderne, M c1425> NO (Rutland)
*Alphabet of Tales* 1 <N BL Addit. 25, 719> M 1450+, O a1294>, NL
*Liber de Diversis Medicinis*,N Lincoln Cath., Thornton Ms. A.5.2.> c1422c1454, NO Yorkshire
*The Mirror of St. Edmund*, in Religious Pieces in Prose and Verse, <N Lincoln Cath. Libr. Thornton Ms., lf. 197> main MS c1440)> O 1350+ (1350? [editor])> <D NO? (editor
*Richard Rolle of Hampole ... and his Followers*, vol. II, part 1 (2a), Yorkshire Writers, 1895), vol. II> <N variable (MS. Cambr. UL Dd V. 64; Rawl. C 285; Arundel 507) M a1450> O a1349?> <NL>

*Richard Rolle of Hampole ... and his Followers*, vol. II, part 1, (2b) Yorkshire Writers, <N various (MS. Cambr. Dd V. 64; Rawl. C 285; Arundel 507)> <M a1450> <O ?a1349> <D NL>

*Richard Rolle of Hampole, Yorkshire Writers*,rollhor1 <N MS. Cambr. Dd V. 64 et al. (Rawl. C 285; Arundel 507)> <M a1450> O ?a1349> <D NL>

*Richard Rolle of Hampole, Yorkshire Writers* (rolplus)<M a1450> O ?a1349> <D NL

*Craft of Dying*, in Moral and Relig. Pieces, pp. 1–8; Lumby, J. Rawson, Cbr. Univ. Ms. KK. 1.5<M c1475> NO (Lowland Scots)

Ireland

*The English Conquest of Ireland A.D. 1166–1185*, Ms. Trinity Coll. Dublin, E. 3. 31> (c1425)> Irish?>

## REFERENCES

Brunner, Karl. 1963. *An outline of Middle English grammar* [Translated by G. K. W. Johnston.]. Blackwell.

Ekwall, Eilert. 1975. *A history of Modern English sounds and morphology*. Blackwell.

Fischer, Olga & Wim van der Wurff. 2006. Syntax. In Richard Hogg & David Denison (eds.), *A history of the English language*, Cambridge University Press. 109–198. DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511791154.004

Fisiak, Jacek. 1968. *A short grammar of Middle English*. Oxford University Press.

Hogg, Richard. 1992. *A grammar of Old English. Vol. 1: Phonology*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Jones, Charles. 1989. *A history of English phonology*. Longman.

Jordan, Richard. 1974 [1925]. *Handbook of Middle English grammar* (Translated and revised by Eugene J. Crook.). Mouton.

Lass, Roger. 1992. Phonology and morphology. In Norman Blake (ed.), *The Cambridge history of the English language. Vol. 2. 1066–1476*, Cambridge University Press. 23–155. DOI: 10.1017/CHOL9780521264754.003

Luick, Karl. 1940. *Historische Grammatik der englischen Sprache. Vol. 2*. Tauchnitz.

Lutz, Angelica.1991. *Phonotaktisch gesteuerte Konsonantenveränderungen in der Geschichte des Englischen*. Niemeyer.

Markus, Manfred (ed.). 2008. *Innsbruck corpus of Middle English prose on CD-ROM*. University of Innsbruck.

Milroy, James. 1983. On the sociolinguistic history of /h/-dropping in English. In Michael Davenport, Erik Hansen & Hans Frede Nielsen (eds.), *Current topics in English historical linguistics*, Odense University Press. 37–54.

Milroy, James. 1992a. Middle English dialectology. In Norman Blake (ed.), *The Cambridge history of the English language. Vol. 2. 1066–1476*, Cambridge University Press. 156–206. DOI: 10.1017/CHOL9780521264754.004

Milroy, James. 1992b. *Linguistic variation and change*. Blackwell.

Minkova, Donka. 2003. *Alliteration and sound change in Early English*. Cambridge University Press. DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511486968

Minkova, Donka. 2014. *A historical phonology of English*. Edinburgh University Press.

Scragg, D. G. 1970. Initial *H* in Old English. *Anglia* 88. 165–196. DOI: 10.1515/angl.1970.1970.88.165

Scragg, D. G. 1974. *A history of English spelling*. Manchester University Press.

Sommerer, Lotte. 2018. *Article emergence in Old English: A constructionalist perspective*. De Gruyter Mouton. DOI: 10.1515/9783110541052

Süsskand, Peter. 1935. *Geschichte des unbestimmten Artikels im Alt- und Frühmittelenglischen.* Niemeyer.

Wright, Joseph & Elizabeth Mary Wright. 1928. *An elementary Middle English grammar*. Oxford University Press.

Wyld, Henry Cecil. 1936. *A short history of English* (3rd edn.). Murray.