

ON EARLY PSEUDO-LEARNED ORTHOGRAPHIC FORMS:
A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH SPELLING AND
PRONUNCIATION

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ABSTRACT

The history of English contains numerous examples of “improved” spellings. English scribes frequently modified spelling to make English words and some popular borrowings look like words of Latin or Greek origin. The typical examples are Eng. *island*, containing mute <s> taken from Lat. *insula* or Eng. *anchor* ‘mooring device’ (< Fr. *ancree*), with non-etymological <h>. Although such “reformed spellings” became particularly fashionable during the Renaissance, when the influence of the classical languages was at its peak, “classicised” spellings are also found earlier, e.g. in texts from the 14th century. In the present contribution which concentrates on identifying such earliest influences on spellings in Middle English attention is focussed on the regional distribution of reformed spellings, with a sociolinguistic focus on the type of the text. The data for the study come from standard sources like the *Middle English Dictionary* (2001) and *Oxford English Dictionary* (2009).

1. Foreign influences on spelling

It is common knowledge that the spelling patterns of foreign languages have exerted their impact on the spelling of English words. The problem is a rule debated the histories of English in the context of the English Renaissance. Thus, according to Culperer – Archer (2009: 251), “[t]he Early Modern period (...) saw huge interest in, and admiration for, classical Greek and Roman culture. Ancient Greek and Latin were extolled as perfect languages (...), whilst English was considered to be in a bad state”. The so-called early grammarians in England found the state of their language far from satisfactory and even considered the English writing system as spoilt. John Hart, one of the most famous spelling

reformers, who lived in the 16th century, held that “there are four main ways in which a writing system could be “corrupt”. These are, in his terminology:

- 1)
 - a. Diminution (“the use of too few symbols in the written form for the number of speech sounds to be represented”).
 - b. Superfluity (“the use of more symbols in the written form than there are speech sounds in the spoken form”).

These violations of the rule of good spelling can be exemplified by:

- 2)

(...) the in *doubt*, the <g> in *eight*, <h> in *authoritie*, <l> in *souldiours*, <o> in *people*, <p> in *condempned*, <s> in *baptisme*, and *divers lyke*...

The two remaining corruptions, apparently less important, are:

- 3)
 - c. Usurpation (“the use of the wrong symbol. This arises because some symbols have ‘double powers’, i.e. can be used to represent two different sounds”; e.g. “g represents one sound in *gentle* but another sound in *together*, though in both cases it is followed by *e*”).
 - d. Misplacing (“putting the written symbols in the wrong order”; e.g. *fable*, *circle* should be written *fabel* and *cirkel*, “because we pronounce the *e* before the *l*, not after”) (Barber 1997: 82-83).

Against the trends popularised in the 16th century, Hart rejected “the idea that spelling should reflect the etymology of a word”, i.e. the etymological spelling. This led to an extensive phenomenon of re-spelling, consisting in apparent “improvement” of English orthography.

The re-spellings mentioned above are usually associated with the Renaissance, which roughly overlapped with the new period in the history of the language, referred to as Early Modern English. Although the Renaissance is said to have begun in 14th century Italy, the date of its beginning on the English soil is connected with either the introduction of the printing press by William Caxton in 1476 or with the accession of the Tudors and “culminating in the Elizabethan Age” (Bolton 1992: 860).

In describing the impact of classical languages and French on English spelling, the present short study concentrates on the data representing the period before the Renaissance, i.e. roughly the years 1200-1500, when many English words modified their spelling under the influence of not only Classical Latin,

but also Vulgar Latin, Ecclesiastic Latin and Old French. The data come from two sources, the *Oxford English Dictionary on CD-ROM* (2009, the most recent version 4.0), and the *Middle English Dictionary online* (2001). The purpose of the study is to demonstrate that the Middle English period offers quite numerous evidence that the spelling patterns of Latin and of its various descendants had their share in modifying English spelling and producing pseudo Latin forms long before the Renaissance. A part of the problem has been already dealt with in my earlier paper (Wełna 2002) on the reversed spelling of the sequence <ar> produced by the rule lowering short [e] before nonprevocalic [r], as in ME *serve clerk* > *sarve clark* which later restored the old orthography *serve clerk* due to the impact of the spelling of Lat. *certus clericus*, both containing the sequence <er>. In the conclusion of the paper it was suggested that such influence of Latin had a strong sociolinguistic basis since the change in the sequence <er> “affected the pronunciation of vowels in the speech of certain social groups, i.e. those educated Englishmen who knew Latin and who were thus able to distinguish between loanwords containing [ar] produced by *e*-lowering and loanwords where [ar] was original”, as in ME *armee* ‘army’.

2. Modified spellings: criteria of classification

In Middle English, i.e. between the Norman Conquest and the introduction of the printing press by Caxton, the impact of the foreign patterns on the spelling convention of English is especially seen in certain graphemic contexts. The presentation which follows will only consider those modified segments which show at least some degree of the influence of the Latin spelling. The selection was made on the basis of listing in the long-forgotten monograph by Pumpjanskij (1963), a Russian linguist:

4)

Context	Examples
 (before <t>)	<i>debt, doubt</i>
<c> (before <t> (after <s>)	<i>perfect, subject, verdict, victuals sceptre, science</i>
<d> (before <C>)	<i>administer, admonish; advantage, adventure, advert, advertise, advice, advocate</i>
<h> (after <c>) (after <t>)	<i>anchor anthem, apothecary, theatre, theme, theology, throne, thyme</i>
(word-initial)	<i>habit, heir, herb, heretic, hermit, hermitage, homage, honest, honour, horrible, host (mil.), host, hostage, hostel, hour, humour</i>

<l> (before <C>)	<i>falcon; cauldron, herald, soldier; almond, balm, realm, salmon; (de)fault, vault</i>
<p> (before <t>)	<i>concept, receipt</i>
<s> (before <l>)	<i>isle</i>

It should be made clear at this point that the term “pseudo-learned” used in the title need not convey a negative sense since in some instances, like in the case of the <ar> > <er> reversal discussed earlier, such modifications can be regarded as efforts to improve original Latin spellings corrupted by phonological changes in French or in English.

For practical reasons in the account which follows examples will be split into four groups, the first one embracing graphemes corresponding to plosives, i.e. <b, p, c, d>, the second containing words with non-initial <h>, especially in the cluster <th> plus the noun *isle*, the third one contains words with initial <h->, and the fourth group embraces words with preconsonantal <l>.

3. Graphemes <b, p, c, d>

This group of words with reformed spellings contains spectacular items like *debt* or *doubt* which are quoted in almost all textbooks of the history of English as spellings under a direct influence of Latin since the forms *dette dout(e)* borrowed from French later modify their orthography, inserting etymological from Lat. *dēbitum*. The *d*-less spelling is first found in the *Ancrene Riwe* (c.1230) and the spelling with in a manuscript from the middle of the 15th century, but a potentially older form can be found in an earlier document containing wills (texts from c.1415). Likewise, *doubt(e/n)*, from French exhibits insertion of :

5)

- a. c.1230 (?a1200) 34a: We...ahen godd greate **deattes** of sunne...We seggeð: for3ef us ure **deattes**, als wa as we for3eoueð ure deatturs.
(**Ancr. Cambr. Corp-C* 402 34a)
(1415) Pan my vessells of siluer...be sold and paied for my **debtes** wher myn other gods failen.
(*Wills Proved at Lambeth Palace HRS* 2 28)
c.1450 (c.1405) [He] made vs...[T]o be his trewe attourneys and treete for his **debtes**.
(*Mum and the Sothsegger*) (Add 41666) 1710)
- b. c.1230 (?a1200) Ne beon ha neauer se ancrefule ne se fulitohene, þe deouel of helle **duteð** ham swiðe.
(**Ancr. Cambr. Corp-C* 402 66a)

(1429) The seide Suppliauntz **doubten** hem of damage and prejudice.

(*Rolls of Parliament* 4.346b)

c.1475 (?c.1451) Late it be out of **doubte** that...they by Goddis might shalbe overcome.

(*The Book of Noblesse*, Roy 18.B.22; 41)

If the influence of the Latin form on the spelling of *debt* with seems certain because Old French apparently had no forms with *b*-insertion, there is evidence that the form *doubter*, with (apart from *duter*, *doter*, *douter*) was present in 14th-16th century French, based on Lat. *dubitāre*, so that *doubt*, both a noun and a verb, can be direct borrowings from French in the middle of the 15th century.

As regards the forms *concept* (*conceit*), *receipt* (*receite*), showing the insertion of the respective voiceless plosive [p], they can only be due to the imitation of Lat. *conceptum* and *recepta* (both PPs), since forms with <p> in English appear much earlier (14th century) than in French (16th century). The variation of the forms of both nouns can be seen in, for instance, Gower's *Confessio Amantis*; cf.:

6)

a. (a1393) The word was lich to the **conceite**,

Withoute semblant of deceite.

(Gower *CA* (Frfr 3) prol.113)

Whan the word to the **conceipte**

Descordeth in so double a wise,

Such Rethorique is to despise.

(Gower *CA* (Frfr 3) 7.1554)

b. (a1393) Aries...is the **receipte** and the hous

Of myhty Mars the bataillous.

(Gower *CA* (Frfr 3) 7.991)

(c.1390) Þenk also...þat longe hast lyued and mucche reseiued...hou þou hast spendet þat **reseit**.

(*Mirror St. Edm. (I)* (Vrn) 145)

Very similar in terms of word structure are four words (*perfect*, *subject*, *verdict*, *victuals*), containing the consonant cluster <ct> which may be a potential indication of the influence of Latin. Of the four items, *perfect* and *verdict* developed forms with <ct> undoubtedly under the influence of Lat. *perfectum* and MLat. *verdictum*. A hypothesis of a direct borrowing from Old French should be excluded since that language lacked forms with <ct>; cf.

7)

1591 (?a1425) (...) and before I come away my **perfect** sight I hadd.
 (Chester Pl. (Hnt HM 2) 235/130)
 (1433) ... duly and verily so founden by **verdict** of xii sufficient and indif-
 ferent persons of the ... Town
 (*Rolls of Parliament* 4.479a)

Concerning the noun *subject*, it may be a direct borrowing (cf. Fr. *subject*, present in the 15th century, although the early form in Trevisa may have reflected Latin influences). But the existence of OF *victaille* may be crucial in determining the French origin of *victuals*, although the vowel letter <u> seems to indicate Late Lat. *victualia* as the direct source:

8)

c.1330 16/325: Kes me, lemman, and loue me, And i þi **soget** [7S(2): soiet]
 wil ibe.
 (7 *Sages* (1) (Auch) 16/325)
 (a1398) 3if þe wit of gropinge is al I-lost, þe **subiect** of al þe beest is I-
 distroyed.
 (*Trev. *Barth.* (Add 27944) 26b/b)
 c.1436 (...) ne non other maner of thyng suspesious, for silver, ne for breed,
 ne for wyn, ne for ale, ne for other **victuayle**.
 (Ipswich Domesday (2) (Add 25011 133)

In spite of their Latin look the two words in which the original initial <c-> or <s-> was replaced by etymological <sc->, *sceptre* and *science*, are rightly derived directly from French where the cluster <sc> is frequently found.

9)

(a1393) A worthi kniht..Of grete Rome...The **Sceptre** hadde forto rihte.
 (Gower *CA* (Frf 3)2.589)
 c.1350 & for þat þai ben of svtile **science**.
 (*Apoc.* (1) in *LuSE* (Hrl 874)p.134)

In the course of time the above forms completely replaced rare spellings with a single initial consonant, like *ciences* (14c) or *ceptre* (Chaucer), which somehow failed to win popularity in English.

All potential doubts connected with the grapheme <d> in the last group are confined to words containing the prefix *ad-*. Although Old French words descend from Latin, clusters with the prefix-final *-d-* and the following consonant <v> were in most cases simplified, losing that consonant. Consequently almost all English words belonging to this group refashioned their pronunciation from

the French-like pattern to the Latin-like pattern, by inserting <d> from the Latin source word. This process belonged to the early half of the 15th century, though *d*-full forms could be also found in the earlier texts (cf. Chaucer's use of both forms in the same text, i.e. *Boece*). The first occurrences of the latinised *d*-forms are the following:

10)

?a1425 (c.1380) To han wel **adminystred** the comune thynges...to profyt of the comune.

(Chaucer *Boece* (Benson – Robinson) 2.pr.7.20)

God...**amynistreth**, in many maneris and in diverse tymes, by destyne thilke same thinges that he hath disponyd.

(4.pr.6.98)

c.1450 (c.1440) The good Sperite...**admonycht** owre mynde, he meuith oure will, and techyt owre vnder-stondynges.

(Scrope *Othea* (StJ-C H.5)101)

(a1470) By his deth ye shall have none **advantage**.

(Malory *Wks.* (Win-C) 325/17)

c.1230 (?a1200) Swuch **auenture** bitimeð to..sum wummon, þet ha ne mei nawt fulleliche wreien hire seoluen

(*Ancr.* (Corp-C 402)92a)

(a1470) Sir Launcelot departed, and by **adventure** he com into the same foreste.

(Malory *Wks.* (Win-C) 264/6)

(?a1439) And beestis which be rage off ther nature, He can **aduerte** & make hem li ful stille.

(Lydg. *FP* (Bod 263) 2.4043)

c.1450 He trowed þat onone with a wurd he sulde **averte** his purpos.

(*Alph. Tales* (Add 25719) 148/9)

(?c.1440) Y hafe found a cedula..of whyche I sende you a double, to be better **avertysed** of the mater.

(*Paston*2.50)

(?1464) That 3e myght ben **advertysid** and lernyd by theym the goode rewle...yn the desopiscion and delyng of your almys

(*Paston* 4.119)

(c.1385) And if yow thynketh this is wel ysayd, Sey youre **auys** and holdeth yow apayd.

(Chaucer *CT. Kn.* (Manly – Rickert) A 1868)

(1425) By yowre **advys**...wryttes may ben taken agens hym.

(*Paston*2.21)

(a1387) Þe **advoket** his sone [Lat. *oratoris filius*].

(Trev. *Higd.* (StJ-C H.1)4.107)
 (a1393) Ther was with him non **advocat**
 To make ple for his astat.
 (Gower *CA* (Fr3) 7.2067)

Although all items printed in bold type are borrowings from French, these words owe their full prefix forms *ad-* to their Latin source words. The dates of the first occurrences of the full prefix range from c.1425 (1380) (*adminystre* in Chaucer) to a1470 (*adventure advauntage* in Malory; MS date unavailable). As regards *adminystre*, it could have been influenced directly by a French form with <d> which was established in the late 14th century, the original Old French form being *aministrer*, without <d>. But practically in all other cases the *-d-* in the respective French words reflects Latin influences during the Renaissance, while the English forms reflect such influences from before that period.

4. Non-initial <h>

In our small corpus the non-initial <h> is typically found in the combination <th> in words of Latino-Greek origin, and in one word <h> appears in the cluster <ch> (*anchor*). It may come as a surprise that in this group of words the cluster <th> need not reflect a direct influence of Greek or Latin because that cluster can be found in the relevant French words, which means that the item could have been borrowed directly from French with no graphemic assimilation to the spelling of the classical languages. Words which owe their digraph spellings <th> to Old French are the following:

11)

- a. (c.1390) Cristes moder swete...bad me for to syng
 This anteme [vrr. **anthephene, antheme,**] verraily in my deiyng.
 (Chaucer *CT. Pri.* (Manly – Rickert) B.1850)
- b. (c.1384) Thei maden a sawt with oon ynwit, or wille, in to the **teatre**, or
 comune biholdyng place
 (*WBible(1)* (Dc 369(2)) Deeds 19.29))
 (c.1385) That swich a noble **teatre** as it was...in this world ther nas
 (Chaucer *CT. Kn.* (Manly – Rickert) A.1885)
- c. c.1400 (a1376) Panne tenide hym **theologie**
 (*PPLA (1)* (Trin-C R.3.14) 2.79)
- d. c.1300 Thimus: anglice, **time**.
 (*Add. 15236 Herb List* (Add 15236) 119)
 (a1398) Epithimum is þe flour of **thime**, þat is a herbe.
 (Trev. *Barth.* (Add 27944: Seymour) 948/21)

The <th> spelling in *theology* is a norm, although the *h*-less orthography of this noun characterises spelling in Langland (*P. Pl. A. xi. 136 Bote*), while *theatre* exhibits forms without <-h-> parallel to the digraph forms. Also *thyme* can be considered a direct borrowing from Old French since the form *thym* containing the *th*-cluster is found in that language as early as the 13th century. The most controversial item is *anthem* which lacked the Latin correspondence with <th>, the only possible source form could only be rare OF *anthaine* but not LLat. *antiphona* which did not contain <th>.

Words in which the digraph is in all probability due to the early influence of Latin and/or Greek are more numerous and include the following first occurrences of spellings with <ch> and <th>:

12)

- a. (a1393) It blew and made such tempeste,
Non **ancher** mai the schip areste
(Gower *CA* (Frf 3) 8.606)
- b. (c.1387-95) Ful reddy hadde he hise **apothecaries** [Cmb Ii: at the potecaries]
To sende hym drogges and his letuaries
(Chaucer *CT. Prol.* (Manly – Rickert) A.425)
- c. c.1400 (?c.1380) Bot þe nwe, þat ly3t of Godez sonde, þe apostel in
Apocalyppe in **theme** con take.
(*Pearl* (Nero A.10) 944)
- d. a1425 (?a1396) I cry the mercy, Kyng of **Thrones**.
(?Maidstone *PPs* (Wht) 111)

Because Old French lacked the replicas with the digraph of the above set their form must have been influenced by Latin words like *anachoreta*, *apothecarius*, *thema*, and *thronus*. Such impact of Latin belongs mostly to the 14th and early 15th century.

A special case is the form of the noun *isle*. Old French substituted the form with <s>, i.e. *isle*, for that of *ile*, apparently under the influence of Lat. *insula* ‘island’. The rivalry of the two forms is reflected in the following examples:

13)

- c. 1300 (?c.1225) Ihc was cristene a while; Þo icom to þis **ille** [vr. yle] Sarazins
blake.
(*Horn* (Cmb Gg.4.27) 1318)
(1446) The Kyng wol þat his letres...be directed to sir Thomas Stanley to
carie...by
water Elianer Cobham in **pisle** of Man
(*Proc. Privy C.* 6.51)

There is little doubt that Eng. *isle* was refashioned after the French form with <-s->, which became frequent in that language in the 15th century. Although the *Oxford English Dictionary* derives the word from Old French as an *s*-less form *ile*, it is quite possible that the form with <-s-> in English is a 15th century re-borrowing of the word.

5. Initial <h->

The spelling and pronunciation of Middle English words with initial <h-> is to a large extent determined by processes taking place in Vulgar Latin, Medieval Latin and Old French, i.e. languages showing a tendency to delete that fricative. The insertion of *h*- before vowels in words where originally it had been lost may be interpreted in terms of hypercorrection (cf. Scragg 1974; Häcker 2004). This loss of the initial fricative caused a lot of confusion in the spelling convention, traces of which can still be found in Modern English where, for instance, the noun *history* or the adjective *historical* are sometimes preceded by the indefinite article *an* (cf. Visser's well-known title *An historical English syntax*).

The rather long list of words with word initial <h-> in the present study reflects Middle English items with and without that consonant letter in their spelling. Explanations postulating the influence of Latin on the restoration of such <h-> are not always credible since their vast majority had French correspondences with the initial fricative letter in spelling. In such cases the process of latinising was taking place not in English but in French, where the deleted initial <h-> was frequently restored some time later. Under (14) are listed and exemplified words showing variation of *h*-full and *h*-less forms, sometimes in the same text; cf.

14)

ME (*h*)*abit* (< OF (*h*)*abit*)

c.1230 (?a1200) A wil þet ha alle habbeð i meane wið innen wið hare **habit** [Nero: **abit**], þet is an...

(*Ancr.* (Corp-C 402) 11/1)

ME (*h*)*eir* (< OF (*h*)*eir*)

c.1300 (?c.1225) Horn...Asla3en beþ mine **heirs**...Mi Rengne þu schalt welde.

(*Horn* (Cmb Gg.4.27) 897)

(c.1300) Þe erl dede sone take þe knaue, Hauelok, þat was þe **eir**.

(*Havelok* (LdMisc 108) 410)

ME (*h*)*eretike* (< OF (*h*)*eretique*)

(1340) Þe **heretike** and þe apostate..reneyþ hire bileaue.

(*Ayenb.* (Arun 57) 19/23).

þe lemes of anticrist..werreþ þe guode men...ase deden..þe **eretiks** þe guode cristene men.

(182/8)

ME (*hermite*) (< OF (*hermite*))

c.1275 (?a1200) 3urstendæi me com to an **æremite** [Otho: **heremite**] wel idon.

(Lay. *Brut* (Clg A.9) 18763)

ME (*homage*) (< OF (*ommage*))

(a1470) Ye shall have **homage** and feawte of me.

(Malory *Wks.* (Win-C) 314/21)

Hit were fayrer of hym to take **omage** and feaute and lat hym holde his londys of you.

(325/16)

ME (*honeste*) (< OF (*honeste*))

(1340) þe floures weren þe holy þo3tes, þet alle weren uayre and **oneste**.

(*Ayenb.* (Arun 57) 96/10)

þanne þet stat of spoushod is zuo holy and suo **honeste**.

(222/7)

ME (*honour*) (< OF (*honour*))

c.1300 W iþ gret **honor** hi hit [þe holi bodi] neme adoun and to buringe bere. (*SLeg. And.* (Hrl 2277) 101)

c.1325 (c.1300) Deie we rapen wiþ **onur**.

(*Glo. Chron. A* (Clg A.11) 8176)

ME (*horrible*) (< OF (*horrible*))

(1340) þet him ne dret na3t to done ane greate zenne, dyadlich and **orrible**.

(*Ayenb.* (Arun 57) 43/5)

(c.1385) In derknesse and **horrible** and strong prisoun,

This seuen yeer hath seten Palamoun.

(Chaucer *CT. Kn.* (Manly – Rickert) A.1451)

ME (*ost*) (< OF (*ost*))

c.1325 (c.1300) Hii asailede þe verste **ost**...þe secunde ost of þe kinges alf...ne likede no3t þis cas.

(*Glo. Chron. A* (Clg A.11) 9421-8)

c.1325 (1265) þe kyng of alemaigne gederede ys **host**

BLewes (Hrl 2253) 20

ME (*oste*) (< OF (*oste*))

(c.1387-95) Greet cheere made oure **hoost** vs euerichon,

And to the soper sette he vs anon.

(Chaucer *CT. Prol.* (Manly – Rickert) A.747)

a1425(?c.1350) Efter soper, sayd myne **oste**

þat he cowth nocht tel þe day

Þat ani knight are with him lay.

(*Ywain* (Glb E.9) 222)

ME (*h*)*ostage* (< OF (*h*)*ostage*)

c.1300 As ri3t is bi **ostage** [Corp-C: **hostage**]

(*SLeg. Pilate* (Hrl 2277) 30)

ME (*h*)*ostel* (< OF (*h*)*ostel*)

a1400 (c.1303) He come and toke þere hys **osteyl**.

(*Mannyng HS* (Hrl 1701) 1938)

Whan synne ys shryue...þere wyl God holde hys **hostele**

(12470)

ME (*h*)*umour* (< OF (*h*)*umour*)

a1425 Siþ feveris is a siiknesse maad of distempour of **humoures**, and blood is moost kyndely **umour**, answeringe to þe love of...

(*God. Wycl.Serm.* (Bod 788)2.169)

Only two words with initial <h-> among words subject to the present investigation may be considered to have modified their spelling under a direct influence of the Latin form. The two words are *herb* and *hour*, the latter with purely graphic <h>. The respective forms with initial <h-> in French belong to a later period. The examples below indicate variation cf. forms in both types:

15)

c.1300 Ioye þare was inov Of treon and **herbes** [Hrl: **erbes**] þikke j-nov3.

(*SLeg. Brendan* (LdMisc 108) 41-3)

(a1387) Þey putteþ non giblettes [Lat. *appendicia*] to þe **houres** [Tbr: **oures**] of Goddes service

(*Trev. Higd.* (StJ-C H.1) 7.403)

The above variation is found in the different manuscripts containing the same text.

6. Preconsonantal <-l->

Due to the vocalisation of preconsonantal [l] to [u] in French the sequence [al] develops into the diphthong [au] and such forms with the diphthong are often found in Middle English. Thus, the <al> spellings as a rule testify to the impact of the Latin form, Classical or Medieval, although some spellings contain <l>, perhaps reflecting Old French or Anglo-Norman forms. Consequently, quotations illustrating both types are split into two groups according to whether they are adjusted to French or Latin orthography. To the group of borrowings from French belong *falcon*, *herald*, *soldier*, *almond*, *realm*, *salmon* and *vault*, while

the group of words with potential latinised spellings includes *cauldron*, *balm*, *default* and *fault*. The group revealing the influence of French spelling on English can be exemplified as follows:

16)

c.1275 (?a1216) Þe **faucun** was wroþ wit his bridde.

(*Owl & N.* (Clg A.9) 111)

c. 1450 Þis lorde had also a gay **falcon** & a swyfte.

(*Alph. Tales* (Add 25719) 68/6)

(c1385) An **heraud** [vrr. herowde, herod, **herald**] on a scaffold made on Oo
Til al the noyse of the peple was ydo.

(Chaucer *CT. Kn.* (Manly – Rickert) A.2533)

a1400 (a1325) He gadir **sauders** her and þar,

To strenth his castels euer ai quar.

(*Cursor* (Vsp A.3) 24789)

?a1425 (?a1350) Of **soldeyours** to him soght So many knightes he had in
oste.. Pat wele it semede... Vencuse him suld naman infight.

(*Castleford Chron.*) (Göt Hist 740) 20892

(a1398) Swete almoundes beþ goode to mete and bitter **almondes** to medi-
cyne... Neih al þe tre þat bereþ bitter **amoundes** is medicynal.

(*Trev. Barth.* (Add 27944) 213a/b)

c.1330 (?a1300) Þou hast made flem þe ri3t aires out of þe **rem**

(*Arth. & M.* (Auch) 1642)

c.1380 Y am her bote a ...kni3t of þe **realme** of fraunce.

(*Firumb. (1)* (Ashm 33) 382)

(a1387) They eteþ hote **samoun** [*Higd.*(2): **salmon**; Lat. *salmonem*] alway,
They phisik seie nay.

Trev. Higd. (StJ-C H.1) 1.407)

(1440) **Vowte** of a howse: Testudo, lacunar

(*PParv.* (Hrl 221) 512)

?c.1475 Bowe of a Brigge: **volte**

(?**Cath. Angl.* (Add 15562) 17a)

As said earlier all these words may have been borrowed from French. which developed forms with restored <l> perhaps as a result of latinising. But in the other group French words could not serve as a model of restoring [l] for each of the respective forms with the liquid for their lack of <l>; cf.:

17)

c.1300 A **Caudron** he liet fulle With eoyle; he liet it seope faste and þane
guode man þareinne pulle.

- (*SLeg. Cross* (LdMisc 108) 383)
 (a1393) Sche sette a **caldron** on the fyr.
 (Gower *CA* (Frf 3) 5.4117)
 (a1393) This Maister hath hire every joingt
 With certein oile and **balsme** noingt.
 (Gower *CA* (Frf. 3) 8.1198)
 (a1398) Pure and verray **bawme** or **balsamum** may not be suffred in þe
 hond if the sonne come þerto.
 (Trev. *Barth.* (Add 27944) 216a/b)
 1375 Gret **defaut** off mete had thai. Ibid. xiv.368 **Defalt** of mete
 (Barbour *Bruce* ii. 569)
 c.1330 (?a1300) Ded me were leuer...þan he starf for **faut** of ous!
 (*Arth. & M.*(Auch) 7824)
 (a1393) As I am drunke of that I drinke, So am I ek for **falte** of drinke.
 (Gower *CA* Frf 3, 6.286)

For lack of French correspondences with <l>, words in (17) must have based their /l-full spellings on Lat. *caldarium*, *balsamum*, and VL **fallita*.

7. Concluding remarks

To summarise the above evidence one can state that in spite of the prevailing views suggesting latinising of spellings of most words during the Renaissance, which, as said earlier, began in England at the turn of the 16th century, there is ample evidence of forms latinised in the earlier manuscripts, even as early as those composed around 1300. Further, forms exhibiting Latin features, like certain consonant clusters, need not represent Latin patterns as they may be simply loanwords from Old French, a language subject to latinising earlier than English. Certain features, like the surviving initial prevocalic <h-> in Middle English lexis almost always indicate the French origin of these words.

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