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<u>A pragmatic study of oath swearing in late Anglo Norman and Middle English</u>

Abstract

Profanity has attracted much scholarly attention for the reason that swearing, oaths, and insults "manifest language use in its most highly charged state" (Taavitsainen 1997: 815). This article examines the possible functions of swearing *per membra Christi* [by Christ's limbs]*,* starting with a particularly revealing example from a group of late medieval pedagogical dialogues, the *Manières de langage.* Taking the perlocutionary reaction to this utterance as a starting point, the wider phenomenon of swearing on the body parts of Christ in both Middle English and Anglo Norman will be explored. This behaviour was initially conceptualised (and widely condemned) as an act of blasphemy, the notion of dismembering Jesus being especially widespread. However, this article also concerns itself with the emotive interjectory function of swearing oaths on God and Christ, and will posit that this behaviour is caught in a long process of pragmaticalisation during the high and late Middle Ages. This research supports the view of a bidirectional channel of influence between Middle English and Anglo Norman, and suggests a similar trajectory of both pragmatic development and language attitudes.

Keywords: Pragmaticalisation; Swearing; Oaths; Middle English; Anglo Norman

1 Introduction

Concerning the status of French in medieval England, there has been much debate about its status as an L1 (overview in Ingham [2012: 27-29; 2015]). However, by the beginning of the 15th century, Anglo Norman had likely become an instructed L2 in England, with multiple grammars, word lists, and dialogues (Kristol 1990; Nissille 2014: Ch. 2). These dialogues, known as the *Manières de langage* (henceforth, *Manières*), are central to the study of conversational French in the late Middle Ages. They also have much to reveal about contemporary attitudes to certain conversational behaviours, rendering them particularly significant for historical sociolinguists (on the *Manières'* socio-historical contexts in Britain and France, see Kristol [1995] and Critten [2015; 2018]). The dialogic structure of these texts (which include conversations demonstrating how to secure a room at the inn, how to ask for directions, as well as how to flirt, insult, and barter) provides a rich source for pragmatic study, which is based in the study of semantics in social context. These dialogues will thus provide the starting point for the present discussion on the pragmatic status and development of swearing oaths by God in Anglo Norman and Middle English.

Section 2 will examine how this behaviour manifests in the *Manières*, paying especial attention to the strongly negative response elicited. In light of this, Section 3 will consider medieval commentary of this speech act (the vast majority of which survives in Middle English). On the basis of the Anglophone attestations and commentary, in Section 4 I will examine the Anglo Norman uses of this oath, using this to demonstrate the potentially censored nature of the attestation in the *Manières*. I will argue that this may represent an instance of euphemism within the dialogues. Having explored the applications of and reactions to this type of oath-swearing, in Section 5 I will discuss the pragmaticalisation of oaths sworn by God, which have their origins within blasphemy, but which, during the high and late Middle Ages, assume the secondary function of interjection. I will argue that for both Anglo Norman and Middle English sources, the oaths under examination reflect this ongoing process pragmaticalisation, which in turn reveals close contact between the two languages.

2 Swearing on God's death in the *Manières*

An instance of this behaviour in the *Manières* occurs when a merchant utters an apparently objectionable oath, to which a buyer takes offence[1]:

— *Par la mort Dieu*, biau sire, se je eusse volu, je eusse eu huy ou matinee pour mesmes les anes .x. d. Ore me croiez se vous vuillez.

— *Il ne vous faudra ja ainsi jurer*, car je vous en croi bien a primer mot sanz plus sonner

[— *By the death of God*, good sir, if I had wanted, I could have had (today or tomorrow) 10 pence for the same ducks. Believe me if you wish.

— *You shouldn't ever swear like that*, since I believed you on the first instance without any more fuss.] (*Manières*: 38. Emphasis my own.)

The vendor swears emphatically *Par la mort Dieu*, for which the buyer chastises him. This response is important because the buyer both names the act (*jurer*) and expresses a negative value-judgement. The metalinguistic term *jurer* is significant, meaning both 'to declare an oath' and 'to curse'. Indeed, there is semantic ambiguity in this instance, reflected in Dominique Lagorgette's statement that *jurer* is 'polysémique puisqu'il signifie «promettre » mais aussi « blasphémer »" [polysemous because it means 'to promise' but also 'to blaspheme'] and thus constitutes a pragmatic-semantic oscillation between two diametrically opposed axes (2013: 124). We see this continuum at play in this above example: the merchant is simultaneously promising and yet also "blaspheming".

The presence of reactions in the dialogues of the *Manières* are significant. Such evidence is categorised by J.L. Austin as the third part of a three-step process: locutionary act (physically producing a series of words), illocutionary force (the act that the words perform, such as persuade, order, or thank) and perlocutionary effect (the reaction that this produces in the addressee, be it an action or emotion) (1962: 98-102). The perlocutionary effects found in the *Manières* are a vital diagnostic for the pragmatic force of an utterance. Moreover, the context of such reactions allows us to unpick the polysemy of terms like *jurer*. It is evident from his utterance that the buyer felt affronted enough to comment on the merchant's oath and to rebuke him for such behaviour. The presence of this reaction marks out *par la mort Dieu* as an offensive phrase. Regardless of the identities of the learners (likely candidates are business students or school children, see Kibbee [1990: 74-85] and Ingham [2015]) this plays into social, as well as linguistic, education.

3 Commentary on *per membra Christi* oaths

Swearing by God's parts and attributes was a widespread behaviour across both Anglo Norman and Middle English. This is something that Edwin Craun (1987) refers to as swearing *per membra Christi* [by Christ's limbs]. I will likewise use this as a convenient term that encompasses varieties on this common theme. Although body parts were most common in these types of oaths, other attributes, such as God's death, were also sworn upon.

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[1] All translations my own unless otherwise specified.

Swearing oaths by God in vain was commented upon extensively in Middle English sources. Varied examples of swearing on God in vain can be found in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Melissa Mohr notes that Chaucer's pilgrims "can barely start a sentence without prefacing it 'By God's soul', 'For Christ's passion' or 'By God's precious heart'" (2013: 120). At this point it is crucial to point out the similarity between these interjections and the oath found in the *Manières*: *par la mort Dieu*. These phrases all adhere to the following pattern:

(1)
By	*godd-es*	*bones*
PREP	God-GEN	bones

'by God's bones'
(*Monk's Prologue*, l.3087)

(2)
For	*godd-es*	*armes*
PREP	God-GEN	arms

'for God's arms'
(*Wife of Bath's Prologue*, Harleian ms, l.833)

Thus: the preposition *by* or *for*, followed by either *God's* or *Christ's*, followed by a noun. Syntactically, Francophone expressions differ due to a post-nominal genitive expression, as opposed to the prenominal monolexical genitive *goddes* found in Middle English:

(3)
par	*la*	*quisse*	*Dé*
PREP	DEF	quisse	Dé-GEN
by	the	hip	of God

'by God's hip'

(*Private Letters of Edward I,* 85)

Although syntactic differences between the two languages existed, these oaths contain the same formal elements, and semantically capture the same idea of cursing on a part (usually a body part) of God.

These oaths were commonly theorised in terms of blasphemy in pastoral literature of the high and late medieval periods. A common source for later medieval thought on blasphemy was Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* (c.1267-74). In the *Summa*, Aquinas argues that blasphemy is essentially the misrepresentation of God, but in three ways: by assigning a quality to God that is not true, by denying a property of God, or by claiming divinity for a non-divine being (*Summa*: 166). Swearing by God's body or attributes could be viewed as misrepresentation of God's divine essence by attributing to him a corporeal body; this was the argument made by Henry of Frimaria (Craun 1987: 50; See also Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum Morale* 1180-1193). Moreover, swearing *per membra Christi* was widely condemned in Middle English exempla literature, such as Robert Mannyng's *Handlyng Synne* (c.1303) and *Ayenbite of Inwyt* (c.1340). Swearing *per membra Christi* is described in damning terms in *Handlyng Synne*, which is itself a translation of the Anglo Norman *Manuel de Pechiez*. Under the subject of "Swere nat hys name yn ydulnys" [Swear not his name in idleness]:

Ʒyf þou were euer so fole hardy

To swerë grete oþys grysly,

As we folys do alle day,

Dysmembre Ihesu alle þat we may.

Gentyl men, for grete gentry,

wene þat grete oþys beyn curteysy

Noþeles, blode, fete, & yʒen,

Þey scorne Ihesu, and vpbreyde hys pyn.

[If you were ever so foolish

to swear great oaths horribly,

As we fools do all day,

Dismember Jesus as much as we can.

Gentlemen, for great nobility,

suppose that great oaths are courtesy

But by blood, feet and eyes

They scorn Jesus, and mock his pain] (*Handlyng Synne*, ll. 665-680. Emphasis my own.)

Whereas the Anglo Norman *Manuel* also refers to the act of "desmembrer Ihesu", it does not provide examples of such oaths; these allusions are added by Mannyng. The phrase "dysmembre Ihesu" is a particularly pertinent one, since it participates in a popular discourse within late-medieval affective piety: the idea that swearing on God's body will cause him to suffer anew in Heaven. *Jacob's Well* (c.1440) for instance, states that people who swear such oaths "rende god iche lyme fro oþer" [rend God limb from limb] *(Jacob's Well:* 153). This is an idea echoed in John Mirk's *Festial* (a collection of sermons, c.1403) in which Jesus pleads with his followers not to martyr him anew by swearing on his face, eyes, arms, nails, heart, and blood (*Festial:* 113).

Even in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, we see an example of moral outrage at these "grete oþys" when the host swears by "goddess bones", to which the Parson responds:

The parsoun him answerde ben dicite

what eyleþ þe man so synfully to swere

[The Parson answered them, Benedicte!

What is wrong with man that he so sinfully swears?] (*Man of Law's Tale*, ll.1170-1171)

The Parson's objection represents this aforementioned body of pastoral concern about swearing on the body of Jesus. However, the Parson's objection is mocked by the Host, who calls him a "Iankyn" [a name "applied contemptuously to priests" (MED), l.1172] and a "loller" [Lollard, l.1173]. The Host's joking response to the Parson's moral outcry is indicative of differing conceptualisations of this behaviour. This scene, alongside the marketplace dialogue from the *Manières*, reveals a further dimension to language attitudes concerning oath swearing. Whereas the oaths sworn by the Host and the vendor semantically reflects those condemned by the writers of exempla texts as a matter of devotional aberrance, Chaucer's Host has no such problems with *per membra Christi* oaths, and the buyer in example (2) objects to the oath only because it is unnecessary or impolite: it is, rather, a *social* aberrance. Thus, whereas the oaths blasphemously misrepresent God, they are also used as a taboo linguistic behaviour to shock, emphasise and insult. Swearing *per membra Christi* technically falls within the remit of blasphemy, however, the function and motivation of these behaviours is to offend, shock, or as emotive expression, rather to merely "blaspheme". These constructions are what Irma Taavitsainen describes as secondary interjections, parts of speech (beyond vocative sounds such as *oh* or *ha*) that are used as exclamatory utterances (Taavitsainen 1997: n2). *Par la mort Dieu* and *by goddes bones* are both examples of secondary interjections since they are derived from already-existing words, and therefore may also be used outside of the typical remit of interjection (i.e. emphasis and emotive expression). The phrases (and other *per membra Christi* oaths) may therefore be applied to both interjection and other types of utterance. Due to the dual nature of secondary interjections, pragmaticalisation and semantic bleaching of the theological referent are crucial topics in a discussion of *per membra Christi* interjections. However, firstly, I will examine the application of *per membra Christi* oaths in Anglo Norman, to see whether it is as varied or widespread as the Middle English attestations.

4 The Anglo Norman context

To situate the *Manières'* marketplace oath into a wider vernacular context, I searched the *Anglo Norman Textbase* (ANT) for more instances of swearing by God and his body. The ANT is a corpus of 77 texts that spans multiple genres including legal, administrative and diplomatic text types, as well as chronicles, hagiography, romances and language pedagogy.[2] Here, I would be looking for either reported or represented direct speech containing oaths. I approached my search from two angles, looking firstly for body parts (the most common feature of such oaths) before looking for oaths via the aforementioned syntactic structure <*par* […] *Dieu*>. I initially used the ANT's semantic search 'human anatomy' as a guide for body parts to look at. I furthermore searched for <*mort*> to see if I could find any further examples of *mort Dieu*. I did not find any other attestations using either of these searches. Turning to the *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français* (DMF), which returned a varied list of swearing by God's body parts and attributes in late medieval continental French, such as by his *foutre* [semen], *ventre* [guts] and *sange* [blood], I attempted to see if I could find any

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[2] While more data from corpora and more sociohistorical background would be helpful, these simply are not available, due to the imperfect preservation of medieval sources. The scope of the present article is thus a philologically-driven historical pragmatic analysis, using all currently available data. Future research could look towards later corpora to detect wider trends.

Anglo Norman counterparts from these attested continental examples. I conducted a proximity search using variants of a noun, for example, *sang* (which could be spelled *senge, sang, saung, sange*)[3], within five words of a variant of *Dieu* [*deu, dé, dee, deus, dex; di, diex, dieux, dieu, diez, diu*]. I repeated this using the other words found in the DMF, such as *foutre* and *ventre*. This did not return any results that matched the attestations in the DMF.

Looking instead at the syntactic structure, I then searched using a preposition (*par, por, pur* and *per*, all meaning either "by" or "for") in the same manner, hence the query <*par/por/per/pur* [10] *deu/dé/dee/deus/dex/di/diex/dieux/dieu/diez/diu* >, which would return *par* within 10 words of a form of *Dieu*; and therefore return results matching the structure of *per membra Christi* oaths outlined in Section 3. I used a broad range in my search (10 words) in order to account for longer constructions such as *par la foye que je doie a Dieu* [by the faith that I owe to God], found in *Anglo-Norman Letters and Petitions* (Legge 1941: 113). Although I do not include such phrases in the category of *per membra Christi* oaths (since the faith that one owes to God is not strictly a part or attribute of him), I did not want to rule out any other longer constructions that may exist in the corpus.

4.1 Results

Table 1: Concordance search results

Query		Number of passages
par [10]	Dieu	850
	Deu	391
	Deus	154
	Di	15
	Dieux	30
	Diez	1
	Di	15
	Diu	5
pur [10]	Dieu	202
	Deu	445
	Deus	123
	Dieux	18
	Diez	1
	Di	45
per [10]	Deu	5
	Deus	1
	Dieux	1
	Dieu	2
por [10]	Deu	12
	Deus	9
	Dieux	1
	Dieu	15
	Di	2

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[3] All spelling variants supplied by the *Anglo-Norman Dictionary*.

I have only included queries that returned results in the above table. The majority of the results for these searches were variants on *par la grace de Dieu* [by the grace of God]. After eliminating these instances from the results (among other non-positive results), there were a small number of positive results for emphatic *per membra Christi* oaths:

Table 2: Per membra Christi *oaths in the ANT*

Text	Occurrences	Example
La Estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei (c.1245)	1	"Par la mere Deu, sanz faile, Ne te larra nis une maile!" [By the mother of God, without fail, he will not leave you at all]
Manières de langage (1396-1415)	4	"Par la mort Dieu, biau sire […]" [By the death of God, good sir]
La Vie de Thomas Beckett (c.1174)	12	"Pur les oilz Deu, fist il, pur quei me hunissiez?" [By the eyes of God, he said, why do you dishonour me?]

4.2 Discussion

Regarding texts containing *per membra Christi* oaths, the *Manières* represented the second-largest group of these constructions, with the only other results being from *La Vie de Thomas Beckett*, and *La Estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei*. *La Vie de Thomas Beckett*, has 12 swear phrases *per membra Christi*, more than in the *Manières*, although they are all by *les oilz Deu* [God's eyes]. There is an obvious didactic element to these oaths, since it is the antagonistic King Henry II who swears on the eyes of God in anger:

Pur les oilz Deu, fist il, pur quei me hunissiez?

Ne fu mais par les suens nuls hum si avilliez.

[By God's eyes, he said, why do you shame me ?

I was not, but by their useless men, so disgraced] (*La Vie de Thomas Beckett*, ll.1501-1505)

This oath is uttered at a point of heightened emotion, as Henry II is angry at the disrespect he has been shown. When one considers the pastoral literature discussed in Section 3, alongside the fact that *La Vie de Thomas Beckett* is a text that celebrates Thomas as a spiritual martyr, it is not difficult to see that blasphemous oath-swearing carries negative social evaluations. Indeed, we can see in these instances that swearing on God's body occurs at highly emotional junctures (most often, if not exclusively, rage). This is also the case for texts outside of the corpus, for example, *L'Histoire*

de Guillaume le Maréchal [The History of William Marshal]. This text contains multiple examples of swearing *per membra Christi* in moments of anger. For instance, while complaining about Marshal's overgenerosity, Sir Hugh swears on God's mouth ("Par la boche Dé", *William Marshal*, ll.6855-6856) to which Marshal responds "Por Deu, refrenez or ceste *ire*" [By God, refrain from this *anger*] (*William Marshal,* l.6862. Emphasis my own.). The mention of *ire* demonstrates that Marshal objects to the unnecessary expression of anger that is represented by the oath. The presence of these oaths in the chivalric *Histoire* is particularly interesting in light of Mannyng's remark in *Handlyng Synne* that "Gentyl men, for grete gentry, wene þat grete oþys beyn curteysy" [Gentlemen, for great nobility, suppose that great oaths are courtesy]. We can interpret this comment in two different ways: as an ironic statement or as an indication that *per membra Christi* oaths, while perceived as offensive, were also part of a courteous register. If Mannyng is being ironic, he is using the word "curteysy" to describe a discourteous (i.e. a rude) behaviour, and thereby implying a negative value-judgement. While this interpretation is entirely possible, the abundant presence of these oaths in *William Marshall* (as well as the attestation in *Ayenbite of Inwyt* of a '*knyȝt* […] þet zuor be godes eȝen" [a *knight* who swore by God's eyes. Emphasis my own.]) leaves open the possibility that such oaths were also associated with knightly culture.

Elsewhere in the *Anglo Norman Dictionary*, in the letters of Edward I, we see a similarly emotive swear phrase that is more overtly a threat:

E si vous la sueffrez plus tost travailler, *par la quisse Dé* vous le comperez

[And if you suffer her to travel earlier, *by God's hip* you will pay] (*Private Letters of Edward I*, 85)

While this is occurring in an angry utterance, it is crucial to bear in mind that the oath here is being used for emphasis. Furthermore, the oath appears at the beginning of the clause, modifying the threat. It is noteworthy that in all examples of *per membra Christi* oaths, the oath appears at the beginning of a clause or utterance. As shall be discussed in Section 5, this plays a vital role in the oaths' semantic development. There are two pragmatic possibilities for this oath (as well as other *per membra Chrsiti* oaths): the speaker is aware that he is swearing blasphemously by the hip of God (i.e. the oath is semantically "full") and this act of blasphemy is used in order to create pragmatic force; or, the oath is a semantically bleached marker for emphasis. This question will be looked at further in the next section.

To return to where we started, with the *Manières*, although swearing by *la mort Dieu* participates in swearing *per membra Christi* by sharing syntactic structure, sentence position, and the idea of swearing on God, the *Manières* do not actually engage with the dismembering of Jesus, since the death of God is an attribute rather than a body part. It was specifically dismembering that caused offence in the literature outlined in Section 3. Although the *Manières* oftentimes appear to be vulgar and ludic texts, there is something unexpectedly conservative in this observation. An explanation for this may be an interest in moral education alongside language pedagogy. In the *Manières* the scribe supplies *mort Dieu* perhaps as an example of this kind of behaviour without risking torturing Jesus in Heaven by dismembering his body. However, the offended reaction functions as an exposition of how offensive it would be if the students were to use the phrase (or other *per membra Christi* phrases). The metapragmatic commentary of the buyer at the marketplace can thus be viewed as a teaching aide, designed to communicate to students not only how to speak but also how to behave, thus upholding positive behavioural ideals. This aversion to representing an oath

sworn on the body parts of Christ is perhaps an instance of language taming, since dismembering Jesus was considered an act of blasphemy by some in the Middle Ages. The widespread tradition of exempla tales necessitated a Jesus that semantically refers to the Son of God; however, for some people, such oaths had become pragmaticalised to the point of being merely offensive interjections.

5 Pragmaticalisation of *per membra Christi* oaths

In their medieval contexts, oaths invoking God were socially and spiritually distasteful, however, there has since been semantic bleaching of God on both sides of the channel:

Les moins religieux comme les plus irréligieux n'ont que Dieu à la bouche, comme les gens chez nous qui disent « oh my gawwd » […] en français moderne quand on dit adieu à quelqu'un, ou Mon Dieu ! dans un moment d'émotion ou de surprise, la désémantisation du vocable est toute transparent.

[The less religious, and the more irreligious, have only God on their lips, such as people over here who say 'oh my gawwd' […] in modern French when one says adieu, or 'My God!' in a moment of emotion or surprise, the semantic bleaching of the term is completely transparent.] (Beck 2006: 198)

In this passage, Jonathan Beck demonstrates succinctly how invocations of God have lost their referential function.

However, the above evidence suggests that this semantic bleaching was already occurring in the high and late Middle Ages, because while *per membra Christi* oaths retained the function of blasphemy (as evidenced by the moral outrage they provoked) they had also assumed the extra function of emotive interjection, hence why the buyer at the marketplace does not raise questions of blasphemy at all. Beck (2006) touches upon this idea in his study of invocations of God in the 15th-century French morality play *Bien avisé Mal avisé*. In his argument, Beck demarcates the *sens plein* (the "full" biblical sense, referential to the Judeo-Christian God) and the *sens vide* (the "empty" sense, which includes emotive and expressive interjections such as *dieu*! and *pardieu*!) (2006, 199-200). What Beck is referring to is pragmaticalisation, the process whereby the original meaning of a lexical unit is bleached, while it assumes another pragmatic function. For example, *pardieu* is an interjection or an emphatic addition to an utterance that comes from swearing "by God". However, this binary between *plein* and *vide* senses describes an end point, not the process of pragmaticalisation.

The conflicting attitudes towards oath-swearing in late medieval England suggest that such oaths were caught in the process of pragmaticalisation. In her discussion of the evolution of *Jesus* from a proper name to an interjection, Elke Geweiler suggests a process wherein a "concrete, 'objective' lexical element, the proper name *Jesus*, has come to express abstract, pragmatic functions, as well as the speaker's attitudes and beliefs" (2008: 84). This process reflects Elizabeth Traugott and Richard Dasher's *Invited Inferencing Theory of Semantic Change* (2002), which is a speaker-driven process wherein words or phrases acquire new pragmatic meanings. Traugott and Dasher outline that the speaker "may innovate a metaphoric use of a lexeme in an utterance-token" or the speaker might

exploit an already-existing conversational implicature. This results in "pragmatically polysemous meanings", wherein the original sense of an utterance is still dominant, or at least as 'accessible', as the newly-acquired meaning (2002: 34-35). This is true for the *per membra Christi* oaths examined in this paper, which are both seen as blasphemous (by writers such as Mannyng) while also expressing abstract pragmatic functions (e.g. emphasis) and speaker's attitudes (e.g. anger). Geweiler adds to this that the sentence-initial syntactic position of the word *Jesus* helped its development as an invocation in curses, oaths, and asseverations (2008: 85). It is perhaps noteworthy to point out this same positioning in the *Manières* marketplace utterance, *Par la mort Dieu*, as well as many like phrases in the *Canterbury Tales,* which may have helped them develop along a similar pragmatic trajectory to *Jesus*. Traugott and Dasher's *Invited Inferencing Theory* may be a partial explanation as to why medieval metapragmatic commentary on the same type of oath is multifaceted, because the "God" element retains both a referent to the Judeo-Christian God, as well as holding a newer interjectory meaning.

6 Conclusion

This paper has sought to demonstrate that swearing *per membra Christi* was likely caught in the process of pragmaticalisation in both languages. This behaviour was conceptualised very differently throughout the high and late medieval periods: as a courteous form of behaviour, as a blasphemous utterance that had catastrophic consequences for Christ's body in Heaven, and as an interjection.

As pertains to historical language contact in English, linguistic study of Anglo Norman has tended to focus on the enriched lexicon of English under sustained contact with French (see Ingham [2010], which reverses this trend with studies on syntax). This is noted by Olga Fischer, who states that "most linguists agree that the influence of French on English was mainly restricted to the lexicon (including the use of new affixes), to orthographic changes, and to changes in style including the use of metre and rhyme in poetry." (2013: 38). There are many studies in this area including Ragot's (2011) historical overview of lexical enrichment; Rothwell's study of the French influence on the English vulgar register (1996), Trotter (2010, 2011 and 2013) who examines the naturalisation of words from Anglo Norman to English; Sylvester's analysis of technical lexis (2017), and Wright's work on macaronic trade documents (2013). However, while the lexical analysis in the field has been rich, there has not been much study in the exchange of conversational behaviours between languages. An exception to this rule has been the work of Andreas Jucker on the borrowed (or imported) notion of *curteisie* into Middle English (2010, 2014). But there is much yet to be done.

Exploring pragmatic contact can indeed inform work from other fields of historical linguistics. For example, in demonstrating strong similarities in conversational behaviours between Middle English and late Anglo Norman (and their developmental trajectories), the current study supports Richard Ingham's picture of Anglo Norman 'as a contact variety of medieval French, showing influence of English but also to some degree itself influencing English' (2010: 23). This conclusion, based on an analysis of "atypical" morphosyntactic traits follows the model of structural convergence proposed by Donald Winford (2003). As Ingham understands, although a minority group, Anglo Norman speakers "enjoyed cultural dominance, so their use of a French-based structure in their English would plausibly have been regarded as a prestige variant to be adopted

by the wider English-speaking community" (2010: 22). This model would perhaps explain the coexistence of linguistic structures at conversational level in the later variants of these languages, such as swearing *per membra Christi*.

Corpora and dictionaries

Anglo Norman Dictionary. <http://www.anglo-norman.net/gate/index.shtml>

Anglo Norman Textbase. <http://www.anglo-norman.net/s- kwic-start.shtml>

Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse. <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/cme/>

Dictionnaire du Moyen Français (DMF 2015). <http://www.atilf.fr/dmf>

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