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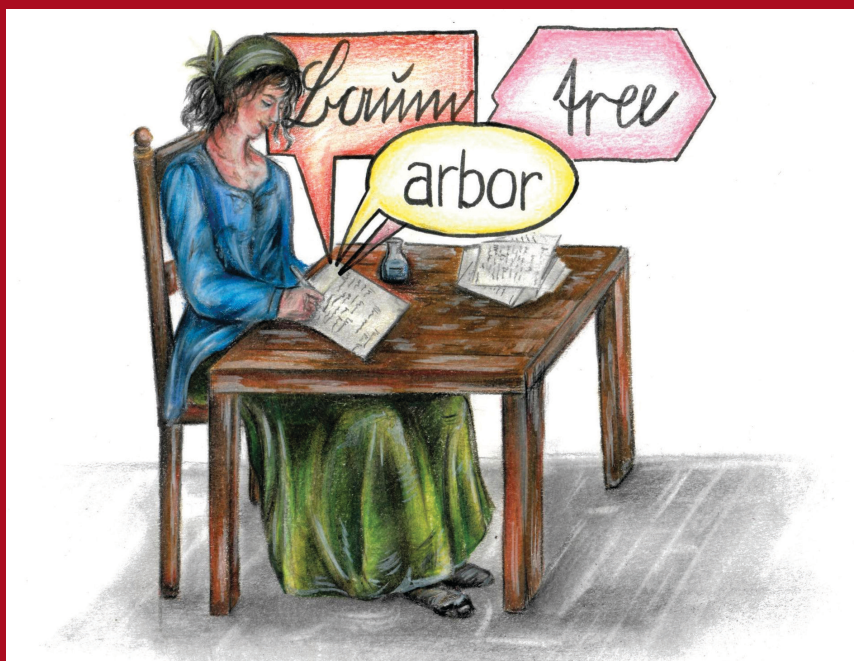
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# Intra-Writer Variation in Historical Sociolinguistics

Markus Schiegg and Judith Huber (eds)

## HISTORICAL SOCIOLINGUISTICS

Intra-individual variation is an emerging research field in linguistics with a rapidly growing number of studies. In historical sociolinguistics, this trend has been slow, as it is still largely dominated by the macroscopic approaches of earlier sociolinguistics. Microscopic studies focusing on intra-individual variation in writing, i.e. *intra-writer variation*, however, are able to reveal how writers functionalize social or text-type variation for reasons such as audience design or persona creation. They may also provide insights into how ongoing changes were perceived by speakers and writers. In general, micro-approaches are able to uncover a wide array of possible factors influencing variation, which may not always carry sociolinguistic functions.

This volume comprises twenty-two research articles on a wide range of languages and periods, all closely connected by their focus on intra-writer variation in historical texts and by their use of empirical and corpus-based approaches. The studies demonstrate that the challenges that historical material have for research on intra-individual variation can certainly be met and that the insights gleaned from analysing variation in individual writers are considerable.

Markus Schiegg works in German Linguistics at Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg. He currently leads the junior research group 'Flexible Writers in Language History' that is compiling a corpus of historical patient texts from the nineteenth and early twentieth century. His research focuses on historical sociolinguistics, in particular on language variation and change in the history of German.

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Intra-Writer Variation  
in Historical  
Sociolinguistics

# HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGICAL LINGUISTICS

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# Contents

List of figures	xi
List of tables	xvii
Acknowledgements	xxi
MARKUS SCHIEGG & JUDITH HUBER	
1 Intra-writer variation in historical sociolinguistics: The emergence of a new research field	1
PART I Intra-writer variation in letter writing	
37	
MARTINA SCHMIDL	
2 A qualitative approach to intra-writer variation in late Babylonian letters: Two near-duplicate letters from the Eanna archive (528 BCE)	39
ELEONORA SERRA	
3 The use of discourse-ending formulae: Exploring intra-writer variation in Michelangelo Buonarroti's correspondence	59
JUAN M. HERNÁNDEZ-CAMPOY	
4 Intra-writer variation and the real world of epistolary interaction in historical sociolinguistics: John Paston I's use of the orthographic variable (TH)	85



TAMARA GARCÍA-VIDAL

- 5 Patterns of stylistic variation in the use of synthetic and analytic comparative adjectives: Evidence from private letters in sixteenth- to eighteenth-century England 107

ANITA AUER, ANNE-CHRISTINE GARDNER &amp; MARK ITEN

- 6 Patterns of linguistic variation in Late Modern English pauper petitions from Berkshire and Dorset 133

ANNE-CHRISTINE GARDNER

- 7 Petitioning for the education of the poor: Self-corrections as stylistic choices in a Late Modern English draft letter 157

CHRISTINE ELSWEILER

- 8 Intra-writer variation in the requestive behaviour of two Early Modern Scottish letter-writers 181

LUCIA ASSENZI

- 9 Between societal constraints and linguistic self-awareness: Stylistic variation in the letters of Prince Ludwig von Anhalt-Köthen (1638–1646) 201

KATHARINA GUNKLER-FRANK

- 10 Intra-writer variation in clitics in German patient letters from the nineteenth and the early twentieth century 223

## PART II Intra-writer variation in contact and migration settings 247

JOSHUA BROWN

- 11 Intra-writer variation and linguistic accommodation in the letters of the Milanese merchant Giovanni da Pessano to the Datini network (1397–1402) 249

SARAH VAN EYNDHOVEN

- 12 Eighteenth-century Scots in correspondence during the Union Debates: An intra-writer perspective 271

NORA DÖRNBRACK

- 13 Variation in verbal inflection in the private writings of the Scottish emigrant Mary Ann Wodrow Archbald (1762–1841) 295

ANDREAS KROGULL, JILL PUTTAERT &amp; GIJSBERT RUTTEN

- 14 Assessing Dutch-French language choice in nineteenth-century private family correspondence: From intra-writer variation to the bigger picture 317

VERONIKA GIRININKAITĖ

- 15 Intra-writer variation in the multilingual *Diary* of Vytautas Civinskis (1887–1910) 339

DORIS STOLBERG

- 16 *Picnick* and *Sauerkraut*: German–English intra-writer variation in script and language (1867–1900) 359

PART III	From intra-writer variation to variation beyond the individual	383
THEODORE MARKOPOULOS		
17	Intra-writer variation in Early Modern Greek notary acts: Morphosyntactic patterns of accommodation	385
LAURA LINZMEIER		
18	What shall we do with the ‘writing’ sailor?: Style-shifting and individual language use in a French navigation journal from the eighteenth century	407
OXEL URIBE-ETXEBARRIA		
19	The linguistic choices of an early nineteenth-century Basque writer	431
CHRISTINE WALLIS		
20	Linguistic repertoires and intra-writer variation in Old English: Hemming of Worcester	451
YOKO IYEIRI		
21	Intra-text variation as a case of intra-writer variation: Middle English scribal behaviours, with a focus on the spelling variation of <i>WOMAN</i> in MS Pepys 2125	473
PHIL BEIER, GOHAR SCHNELLE & SILKE UNVERZAGT		
22	Intra-writer variation in Old High German and Old Swedish: The impact of social role relationship on constructing instructions	491

*Contents*

ix

OLIVER CURRIE

23 On the indexical meaning of literary style shifting: The case of word order variation in the sixteenth-century Welsh Bible translations	513
Notes on contributors	535
Index	545



# Figures

Figure 1.1	Sociolinguistic variation (Hernández-Campoy 2016: 30).	7
Figure 1.2	Dimensions of variation.	11
1 Intra-writer variation in letter writing		
Figure 2.1	Cuneiform tablet YOS 3, 17.	43
Figure 3.1	Discourse-ending formulae across the two ranks from 1496 to 1529 (in per cent).	75
Figure 3.2	Discourse-ending formulae across the two ranks from 1530 to 1563 (in per cent).	76
Figure 3.3	Types of discourse-ending formulae over time in Michelangelo's letters to family members (in per cent).	78
Figure 4.1	The Paston network(s): internal links.	93
Figure 4.2	The Paston network(s): external links.	93
Figure 4.3	John Paston I's sociolinguistic behaviour across the lifespan according to variant <th> and recipients.	96
Figure 4.4	John Paston I's use of innovative <th> for variable (TH) according to social status of his letter recipients (n = 2,507).	98
Figure 5.1	Distribution of comparative forms in informants with a lower social rank according to audience.	115

Figure 5.2	Distribution of comparative forms in lower social-ranked informants according to audience.	116
Figure 5.3	Internal variation in the use of synthetic (S) and analytic (A) forms.	117
Figure 5.4	Distribution of comparative forms in the presence of complex complements.	119
Figure 5.5	Distribution of comparative forms with Germanic/native adjectives in informants of higher social ranks according to audience.	121
Figure 5.6	Distribution of comparative forms with Romance adjectives in informants of higher social ranks according to audience.	121
Figure 5.7	Distribution of comparative forms with Germanic/native adjectives in informants of lower social ranks according to audience.	123
Figure 5.8	Distribution of comparative forms with Romance adjectives in informants of lower social ranks according to audience.	123
Figure 5.9	Distribution of synthetic (S) and analytic (A) forms with monosyllabic adjectives according to audience.	126
Figure 5.10	Distribution of synthetic (S) and analytic (A) forms with disyllabic adjectives according to audience.	127
Figure 5.11	Distribution of analytic forms with polysyllabic adjectives according to audience.	127
Figure 7.1	Self-corrections illustrated.	160
Figure 7.2	Thomas Lewis' identity construction: Character traits and interpersonal relationships.	169
Figure 7.3	The beginning of Lewis' draft letter to the bishop of Hereford.	171

Figure 7.4	Example (6) illustrated.	172
Figure 7.5	End of Lewis' draft letter.	173
Figure 7.6	Self-corrections across four lines.	175
Figure 8.1	Distribution of requests by directness in Scottish non-private and private letters, 1570–1640 and 1640–1700.	186
Figure 9.1	Length and composition of complex sentences.	212
Figure 9.2	Subordination degree of embedded clauses.	212
Figure 9.3	Sentence distribution and complexity in Ludwig's letters to Christian II.	214
Figure 9.4	Sentence distribution and complexity in Ludwig's letters to August II.	215
Figure 10.1	Grammaticalization stages of preposition article clitics (Christiansen 2016: 3).	226
Figure 10.2	Absolute frequencies of different types of clitics in the corpus.	230
Figure 10.3	Inter-writer variation in the use of clitics (forms per 100 tokens).	233
Figure 10.4	<i>wie's</i> [as they] (Georg B. (kfb-966), 29 April 1884) vs <i>wies</i> [as it] (Magdalena R. (kfb-2950), July 1936).	235
Figure 10.5	Frequencies of different types of clitics in private and official letters (forms per 100 tokens).	236
Figure 10.6	Absolute frequencies of clitic and full form <i>es</i> and <i>sie</i> close to the left bracket in the texts of three writers.	239



## II Intra-writer variation in contact and migration settings

Figure 11.1	The distribution of Gallo-Italic in Italy.	252
Figure 11.2	Tuscan vs Milanese vs 'hyper-correct' past participle endings.	263
Figure 12.1	Mosaic plot of variants in Lockhart and Tweeddale.	279
Figure 12.2	Normalized frequencies of Scots variants per 10,000 words across all recipients of Tweeddale.	281
Figure 12.3	<i>ctree</i> for Tweeddale's use of Scots by participant political affiliation.	284
Figure 12.4	Normalized frequencies of Scots variants per 10,000 words across all recipients of Lockhart.	286
Figure 12.5	<i>ctree</i> of Lockhart's variable usage by the political positioning of his recipients.	289
Figure 13.1	Number of words per text type per year (N = 435,549).	300
Figure 13.2	Past participle forms of <i>write</i> including passive voice, following auxiliary <i>have</i> in perfect aspect and adjectivally modifying a noun (N = 97).	303
Figure 13.3	Preterite forms of <i>keep</i> (N = 71).	306
Figure 13.4	Preterite forms of <i>catch</i> (N = 23).	306
Figure 13.5	Verbal -s for all persons other than third person singular ( <i>has</i> , N = 22).	309
Figure 13.6	Verbal -s for all persons other than first and third person singular ( <i>was</i> , N = 72).	309
Figure 14.1	Language choice across gender constellations	326
Figure 14.2	Language choice across familial relationships	327

Figure 15.1	The twenty-eight notebooks of the <i>Diary</i> of Vytautas Civinskis.	340
Figure 15.2	Distribution of languages in the twenty-eight notebooks of the <i>Diary</i> (1904–1910).	346
Figure 16.1	Language and script switch (31 January to 1 February 1870).	368
Figure 16.2	Hybrid compound <i>glas marbles</i> (4 March 1867).	369
Figure 16.3	Letter of condolence (16 June 1888).	370
Figure 16.4	<i>Picnick</i> (1 June 1868).	373
Figure 16.5	<i>Sauerkraut</i> (25 October 1870).	373

### III From intra-writer variation to variation beyond the individual

Figure 17.1	Token frequency of the negative particles <i>δεν</i> and <i>μην</i> in combination with the <i>-όντα</i> participle.	392
Figure 17.2	Token frequency of genitive variants.	396
Figure 17.3	Residence of main participants in acts exhibiting the form <i>του άρχοντος</i> .	397
Figure 17.4	Residence of main participants in acts exhibiting the form <i>του άρχων</i> .	397
Figure 17.5	Token frequency of the construction <i>ήθελα</i> + infinitive per act.	401
Figure 17.6	Token frequency of the construction <i>ήθελα</i> + infinitive per 1,000 words.	401

Figure 18.1	Journal du vaisseau le François, commandant de Voutron, de La Rochelle au grand banc de Bonnaventure, 1716.	418
Figure 19.1	Map of Basque dialects, sub-dialects and varieties in the nineteenth century (Bonaparte 1863).	437
Figure 19.2	Comparison of the percentages of use of the variants <ce>, <ci> and <ze>, <zi> in native words (left) and loanwords (right).	443
Figure 19.3	Example of the grapheme <ḡ> in the word <i>gaiḡo</i> (manuscript O, fol. 178r).	445
Figure 20.1	<i>wallan</i> in the Charters (total frequencies).	459
Figure 20.2	o+N in <i>OEB3</i> .	461
Figure 20.3	Comparison of o+N in Hemming's charters and in Cott. Aug. ii.6.	463
Figure 20.4	Selected <ward> spellings in <i>OEB3</i> .	465
Figure 21.1	Raw frequencies of <i>h</i> -forms and <i>h</i> -less forms of IT in <i>Chastising</i> .	478
Figure 21.2	Raw frequencies of <i>hit</i> and <i>it</i> in different quires of <i>Speculum Vite Cristi</i> .	480
Figure 21.3	Raw frequencies of <i>mm</i> and <i>m</i> forms of WOMAN in <i>Chastising</i> (folios 1–28).	483
Figure 21.4	<i>wo~man</i> , MS Pepys 2125, 1r.	484
Figure 21.5	<i>wo~me~</i> , MS Pepys 2125, 1v.	484
Figure 21.6	<i>wommen</i> , MS Pepys 2125, 1r.	484
Figure 21.7	<i>wy~men</i> , MS Pepys 2125, 32v.	487
Figure 22.1	Distribution of the variants imperative, modal verbs and subjunctives in social role relationship categories.	501
Figure 22.2	Distribution of the variants imperative, modal verb <i>skula</i> and subjunctives in social role relationship categories.	506

# Tables

## I Intra-writer variation in letter writing

Table 3.1	Michelangelo's letters	67
Table 3.2	Number of letters containing at least one discourse-ending formula/total number of letters in each category	71
Table 3.3	Distribution among Michelangelo's correspondents of the discourse-ending formulae used by Michelangelo	75
Table 3.4	Distribution of types of discourse-ending formulae in Michelangelo's letters in relation to addressee and time	77
Table 4.1	Use of (TH) in letters by John Paston I by time period and according to recipients' rank	94
Table 4.2	Symmetries and asymmetries between John I and his letter recipients	97
Table 4.3	Symmetries and asymmetries between John I and his registered-based letter recipients	100
Table 5.1	Informants and social rank	109
Table 5.2	Word count according to social-ranked addressees	113
Table 6.1	Overview of the Soudy and Green data	138
Table 6.2	H-dropping in the Soudy letters	144
Table 6.3	Long s occurrence in the Soudy letters	148
Table 6.4	Long s occurrence in the Green letters	150
Table 7.1	Frequency and types of self-corrections	167
Table 8.1	Word count in the non-private and private correspondence sub-corpora	183

Table 8.2	Thomas Hamilton's correspondence	191
Table 8.3	Letters by John Erskine to William Douglas	195
Table 9.1	Composition of the corpus and details of the addressees	208
Table 9.2	Average sentence length	211
Table 10.1	Corpus of this study	228
Table 10.2	Forms and absolute frequencies of preposition article clitics in the corpus	230

## II Intra-writer variation in contact and migration settings

Table 11.1	Voiced vs unvoiced intervocalic consonants	258
Table 11.2	Past participle endings of 1st conjugation verbs < -ĀTU(M)	261
Table 12.1	Levels of distinction for Scots variants with English equivalents	277
Table 12.2	Counts of variants and variable in both authors	278
Table 12.3	English equivalents to the Scots features identified in Tweeddale's extracts and frequency across the Tweeddale collection	283
Table 12.4	English equivalents to the Scots features identified in Lockhart's extract and their frequency across the Lockhart collection	288
Table 14.1	Dataset of nineteenth-century private family correspondence	325
Table 14.2	Relative distribution of language choice in the nineteenth-century dataset (N = 1,329)	325
Table 16.1	Language choice, 1867–1900	367

### III From intra-writer variation to variation beyond the individual

Table 19.1	Total number of pages and words in each manuscript	434
Table 19.2	Frequency of <b> in Umerz's manuscripts	440
Table 19.3	Native words that show <b>/<v> variation and number of tokens in each manuscript	441
Table 19.4	Spelling of sibilants	442
Table 19.5	Frequencies for variable Z	443
Table 19.6	Frequencies for variable X	445
Table 20.1	Manuscripts containing Hemming's hand	456
Table 20.2	Frequency of o+N in samples from the OE <i>Bede</i>	462
Table 21.1	The forms of WOMAN in <i>Chastising</i>	482
Table 21.2	Distribution of the <i>mm</i> forms and those with strokes in <i>Chastising</i>	485
Table 22.1	Proportion of the SRR-categories in spans and in tokens	499
Table 22.2	Distribution of instruction variants according to SRR in OHG	500
Table 22.3	Proportion of SECTION-annotation in spans and tokens	503
Table 22.4	Distribution of sections TRANS and COMM according to variant of instruction	503
Table 22.5	Distribution of instructions in A 65 and E 8902 according to SRR-categories	506
Table 22.6	Distribution of instruction types according to SRR-categories	506
Table 23.1	Composition of the corpus	520

Table 23.2	Relative frequency (%) of different persons of the verb in Salesbury 1567	522
Table 23.3	Relative frequency (%) of different persons of the verb in Morgan 1588	522
Table 23.4	Percentage frequency (%) of AIV vs PSV orders in Salesbury 1567	523
Table 23.5	Percentage frequency (%) of AIV vs PSV orders in Morgan 1588	524
Table 23.6	Percentage frequency (%) of AIV order in PDMCs with nominal subjects in Salesbury 1567	524
Table 23.7	Percentage frequency (%) of AIV order in PDMCs with nominal subjects in Morgan 1588	525

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Markus Schiegg and Judith Huber  
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## 20 Linguistic repertoires and intra-writer variation in Old English: Hemming of Worcester

### ABSTRACT

This chapter explores intra-writer variation in the works of Hemming of Worcester, an eleventh-century monk whose hand has been identified in seven surviving manuscripts. A corpus compares selections from Hemming's written output alongside parallel selections from other textual witnesses. The resulting scribal profile builds on data in Wallis (2013a) to analyse his variation in four features which deviate from 'standard' or 'focused' Late-West-Saxon: <wæ> spellings, o+nasal, retraction of *-ward*, and unstable <h> (h-deletion and h-insertion). Hemming's variation is shown to be due to two main factors, *constrained selection* (influenced by exemplar forms) in 'local' texts, and his own preferred usage, based on ongoing sound changes in late-Old English.

### 1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on variation in the writings of Hemming of Worcester (*fl.* c.1095), whose hand has been identified in a number of late-eleventh-century manuscripts, writing both Latin and Old English (OE) (Ker 1985 [1948]; Tinti 2002).<sup>1</sup> An experienced Anglo-Saxon scribe, Hemming is unusual in that his name, place of writing and certain

1 That the same hand is responsible for the writings discussed in this chapter is not in dispute, though the identification of this hand with Hemming of Worcester is less clear; Ker prevaricates over whether Hemming is to be identified as his hand 1 or hand 2 (the hand under consideration here), before coming down in favour of hand 2: '[t]he arrangement of the five sections of Tib. II can only be due to Hemming if he is identical with the scribe of ff.119–25 [...] That this scribe is Hemming seems to me probable.' (1985 [1948]: 56).

other biographical details are known to us. He was a monk at Worcester under Bishop Wulfstan II (1062–95), and is described by William of Malmesbury as a sub-prior, while his name appears alongside those of other Worcester monks in the Durham *Liber Vitæ*, in an entry dating to the time of Wulfstan II's successor, Bishop Samson (1096–1112). In the Worcester cartulary to which he gives his name, London, British Library MS Cotton Tiberius A.xiii, Hemming names himself as the monk and priest ('*monachus et sacerdos*') who compiled the collection of charters (f. 131v). Tinti reads the cartulary as a reaction against the social and political instability that followed the Norman Conquest, with a particular focus on the recuperation of lands that had been lost to the monks, and on the new Norman bishop Samson, whose behaviour is negatively contrasted with that of his two predecessors, described as the monastery's 'admirable benefactors' (2002: 60). Thus, as a rare instance of a known, named Anglo-Saxon scribe, and one responsible for the (partial) copying of several manuscripts, Hemming makes an ideal subject for a study of intra-writer variation in a period whose surviving textual evidence presents a number of practical and theoretical challenges for historical socio-linguistic analysis.

Despite our comparatively detailed picture of Hemming's later life however, we know little of his origins or of his scribal training. Ker describes Hemming's hand as 'old fashioned' (1985 [1948]: 41) when compared with the other hands contributing to the cartulary, indicating that he was perhaps older than his colleagues at the time of that manuscript's production in the 1090s. On the basis of his performance as the scribe of Cambridge, University Library Kk.3.18 (a copy of the Old English translation of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*; 'the OE *Bede*'), Wallis (2013a) identified Hemming as a translator scribe, albeit one who retained a number of relict forms in his copy.<sup>2</sup> This chapter provides a more detailed assessment of Hemming's

2 Benskin and Laing (1981) identify three main types of scribal behaviour: *litteratim* scribes copy their exemplars faithfully, retaining the spelling of the original; *translator* scribes replace exemplar forms with functional equivalents from their own repertoires, although occasional *relict* features may be transmitted from the exemplar and appear as 'show-throughs' in the new copy; a *mixer* scribe adopts both strategies, sometimes transmitting the exemplar faithfully and sometimes translating its

OE scribal practice by assessing his variation across a number of his copied texts, namely selections from the OE *Bede*, two prayers, four charter bounds and a curse,<sup>3</sup> totalling around 22,000 graphic units. A selection of features are examined which show variation in Hemming's writing: (a) spellings showing <wæ> rather than <we>; (b) o+nasal spellings; (c) retraction in words ending in *-ward*; (d) unstable <h>.

## 2 Theory and method

One of the challenges of using OE texts for historical sociolinguistic research lies in their status as copied texts. Unlike data from later periods, the majority of extant writing from the Anglo-Saxon period represents copies of pre-existing work, of which the author's original text rarely survives. In cases like this it is less easy to detect a writer using variation as a way of appealing to their audience, or as an act of self-fashioning in the way that, for example, Hernández-Campoy and García-Vidal (2018) demonstrate in late-Middle English letters by male members of the Paston family. Nevertheless, Hemming *does* show variation in his written output, in terms of dialect (Late-West-Saxon (LWS) vs Mercian), and in his selection of various features on a scale that could be labelled conservative-innovative (archaic vs modern, or exemplar forms vs trained

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features, though the degree to which each strategy is pursued may change over the course of their writing. A *Mischsprache* scribe is a mixer who maintains their mixing behaviour consistently throughout the text.

- 3 'In medieval books, most notably in monastic libraries, an anathema was a curse or imprecation written into the book, usually by a librarian, calling down sorrows upon the head of anyone who stole it [...] Some scribes also included anathemata in their colophons against unauthorized copyists into whose hands the manuscript might fall' (Beal 2008, s.v. *anathema*). Hemming's warning follows a Latin text outlining Bishop Wulfstan's motivations in having the cartulary compiled, and threatening excommunication on anyone interfering with Worcester's lands. The curse, then, could be read as referring both to the physical lands, and to the cartulary which was meant to record and protect Worcester's claim to them.

preferences) (Wallis 2018: 82). The question posed by this chapter, then, is: how are we to understand Hemming's variation? Is it an expression of regional or ethnic identity? Worcester was one of only two dioceses to keep its Anglo-Saxon bishop after the Norman Conquest, and is distinguished by its long-standing tradition of post-Conquest production and consumption of texts in English (Treharne 2007). Or, should we rather view Hemming's variation as having its roots in the mechanics of textual copying? Historical sociolinguistic analysis of OE texts is challenging, not least because of our lack of social information about the writers involved, but also because of the kinds of textual production involved in the majority of our surviving documentation of the language; as most of the texts are copies, we are able to see only how a writer reacts to an exemplar in front of them, meaning that we rarely get a glimpse of how that writer might have written a text that they were able to compose spontaneously or autonomously for themselves.

Hemming is the copier (rather than the author) of the texts in his hand, and so theoretical frameworks based on concepts such as audience design (Bell 1984) are less relevant to the study of this material. Therefore the corpus is instead investigated using a framework developed to interrogate Middle English scribally copied manuscripts for dialect evidence, using a scribal profile approach (McIntosh 1974; Benskin & Laing 1981). In this approach, a number of linguistic features are selected, and all tokens of each feature are collected from the sample texts. In this way, a scribal profile is created, with each feature adding further detail to the picture of the scribe's writing habits. In this study Hemming's variation is investigated in two ways: in the first, the text is used as a control; a number of the texts Hemming copied survive in multiple witnesses (e.g. the OE *Bede*, one of the prayers, and one of the charters), meaning that we can compare Hemming's own scribal choices with those of other copyists. This enables us to gauge the kinds of features that might lie behind Hemming's exemplars, and to detect relict forms (i.e. forms that have 'bled through' from the exemplar). The second method is to use the scribe as a control; comparing Hemming's output across a number of texts with different exemplars enables us to judge which features are representative of Hemming's training, and which may be attributed to his *passive repertoire* (Benskin & Laing 1981: 58).

Table 20.1 lists Hemming's surviving scribal output and shows the text selection used in this study. Manuscripts which provide alternative witnesses to texts copied by Hemming are numbered 1a, 2a, etc.

As part of his work at Worcester, Hemming copied both Latin and OE manuscripts (see Table 20.1), and much of his output is related to episcopal concerns; Hatton 114 (no. 5 in Table 20.1) is a collection of homilies probably written for and used by Bishop Wulfstan, while CCC 391 (no. 2) was formerly known as *Wulfstan's Portiforium* and CCC 146 (no. 7) as *Samson's Pontifical* (Da Rold et al. 2010). It has already been noted that Hemming's Cartulary seems to be part of an ongoing project by the cathedral's monks to restore lost or alienated property. It is also clear from Hemming's surviving manuscripts that he sometimes worked as part of a larger team of scribes: part 2 of Hemming's Cartulary (no. 3) was written by three main hands, CCC 391 (no. 2) contains four hands writing OE, while at least six hands were responsible for the homilies in Hatton 114 (no. 5) and its sister volume (Hatton 113). Eleven scribes worked on the homilies in Junius 121 (no. 6). Hemming's copy of the OE *Bede* (no. 1), by contrast, was predominantly a solo project, with only a few chapter headings provided by the monk Coleman, and running heads supplied by a further hand (Ker 1957: 37; Da Rold et al. 2010).

The textual selection for this study aims to provide enough data to compare (a) Hemming's scribal output in a number of texts with different underlying exemplars (intra-writer variation), and (b) Hemming's scribal practice with that of other scribes copying the same text (inter-writer variation). To this end, the selections from Book 3 of the OE *Bede* (*OEB*<sub>3</sub>) used in Wallis (2013a) have been supplemented with further material in the form of samples from the text at the beginning of that manuscript (*OEB Intro*) and Book 1 (*OEB*<sub>1</sub>). The aim of including this additional material was to see whether Hemming has a 'writing in' period, where he adjusts his own copying to the language of his exemplar (Benskin & Laing 1981: 66).<sup>4</sup> Only two of the four extant *Bede* manuscripts are complete at the beginning of the text, and Hemming's copy is one of these, meaning that we can see

4 See also Chapter 21 by Iyeiri in this volume, who utilizes Benskin and Laing's framework to explore progressive translation in Middle English texts.

Table 20.1. Manuscripts containing Hemming's hand

	Manuscript	Contents	Text selection used in this study (graphic units)
1	Cambridge, University Library MS Kk.3.18 (Ca)	The OE <i>Bede</i>	<i>OEB Intro</i> (2,468) <i>OEB1</i> (2,751) <i>OEB3</i> (15,533)
1a	Oxford, Bodleian MS Tanner 10 (T) Oxford, Corpus Christi College MS 279B (O) Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 41 (B)	3 copies of OE <i>Bede</i>	<i>OEB3</i> (c. 15,000)
2	Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 391	Liturgical texts	OE prayer (475) Bilingual prayer (434)
2a	British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A.iii; British Library, MS Royal B.2.v	2 copies of OE Prayer	(c. 480)
3	British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A.xiii	'Hemming's Cartulary' Charters S786, S1598, S1554	3 charter bounds (403) Admonition on excommunication (42)
3a	British Library, MS Cotton Augustus ii.6	Charter S786	(123)
4	British Library, Harley Ch 83.A.3	Charter S1421	1 charter (111)
5	British Library, MS Hatton 114	Homilies	
6	Oxford, Bodleian MS Junius 121	Liturgical/ecclesias- tical texts	
7	Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 146	Pontifical	

what Hemming's copying behaviour was like as he became accustomed to the language of his exemplar. His manuscript begins with Bede's *Preface*, followed by a West-Saxon regnal list and a list of chapter headings, before Books 1–5 of *Bede*. The transmission of the OE *Bede* is complex, however, and Whitelock suspected that the creator of the chapter headings was 'not likely to have been the translator of the work' (1974: 275). Furthermore, Miller (1890: lvi) doubted the presence of the regnal list in the original translation, while Waite (2015: 31f.), argues that 'the Preface is the product of a writer working some time after the *OE Bede* was completed, possibly in West Saxon circles'. This has implications for the language of the underlying exemplar; if the preface, regnal list and chapter headings (*OEB Intro*) were not part of the original translation, then their dialect(s) may have been different, and it will be more difficult to gauge Hemming's own contribution to the text at this point. Therefore, an additional sample was taken from the beginning of Book 1 (*OEB1*), where the underlying dialect is more likely to be consistent with that in the rest of the OE *Bede*.

For some of the texts in Table 20.1, further witnesses are available. The OE prayer in CCC 391 (no. 2) appears in two mid-eleventh-century copies (no. 2a), while charter S786 survives as a late-tenth or early-eleventh-century single-sheet (no. 3a), in addition to the later cartulary copy (no. 3). Although short, these additional witnesses allow us to compare Hemming's copying with that of other scribes, in a variety of text types, dates and dialects.

Finally, items 5, 6 and 7 (highlighted in grey in Table 20.1) do not form part of this study. CCC 146 contains only Latin texts in Hemming's hand, while facsimile copies of Hatton 114 and Junius 121 were not available due to Covid pandemic restrictions.<sup>5</sup>

5 A further manuscript, the rather damaged British Library, MS Cotton Otho C.i.2, is listed by Da Rold et al. (2010) as possibly containing sections in Hemming's hand (ff. 149r–155v), however this assessment is not shared by Ker (1957). Therefore the manuscript has not been included in the present study.



### 3 Data

This section presents and discusses the data for each of the four features under investigation. It begins with <wæ> spellings, before considering o+ nasal, *-ward/-weard*, and unstable <h>. None of these features are part of what might be described as ‘standard’ Late-West-Saxon (LWS), the ‘focused’ variety of OE used in the late-tenth and eleventh centuries (Smith 1996: 66), and this section investigates what it means when Hemming uses such non-LWS features in his writings.

#### 3.1 <wæ> spellings

Hemming is one of a number of OE *Bede* scribes to transmit variant Mercian spellings with <wæ> for <we>. Many such spellings derive from the i-umlaut of /a/ (e.g. <wærma>, <wærgan> for <werma>, <wergan>; Campbell 1959: §193a), while a further group of words exhibits a change from Mercian <e> to <æ> following /w/ (e.g. <wæg> for <weg>; Campbell 1959: §328). <Wæ> spellings in the first group remained only in the West Midlands, later becoming ME /wa/; however, the ‘precise significance and cause [of group two <wæ> spellings] remain uncertain’ (Hogg 1992: §5.179). Examples in *OEB*<sub>3</sub> include <wærgra> [accursed], <onwæg> [away] (T) and <wærgan> [accuse] (O), in positions where other scribes write <we>. To add to these instances, Hemming has <wærminge> [warming] (noun), <onwæg>, and this distribution, together with its absence from *OEB Intro* suggests that it was a feature of the OE *Bede* archetype.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to *OEB*<sub>3</sub>, <wæ> spellings can also be found in some of Hemming’s charter bounds, as shown in Figure 20.1.

6 The spellings <godwæbbe> [fine woven material] and <fræt-wædnysse> [ornament] also appear in *OEB*<sub>3</sub>. These spellings do not appear in *DOEC*, however they each appear once in the attested spellings listed by *DOE*, with Hemming as their only source.

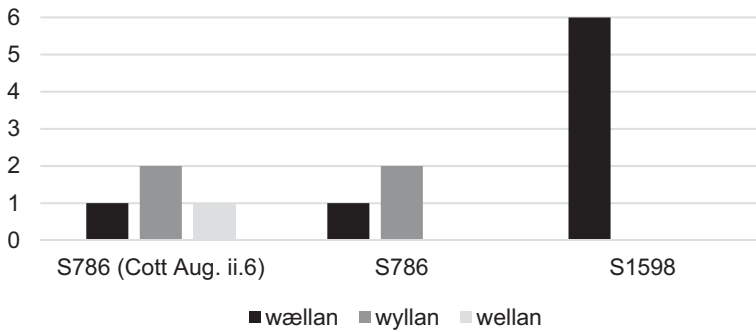


Figure 20.1. *wellan* in the Charters (total frequencies).

Alongside the LWS form <wyllan>, Hemming frequently writes <wællan> [well, spring]. This form is also found once in a second textual witness of charter S786, in British Library, MS Cotton Augustus ii.6; see (1):

- (1) of sondburnan on **sceadwællan** of **sceadwellan** [...] in **clægwyllan** of **clægwyllan** in æðelstanes graf  
[from sandburn into the shady well, from the shady well [...] to the clay well, from the clay well to Æthelstan's grove]<sup>7</sup>

The scribe of this parallel version includes a variety of spellings, including LWS <wyllan>, alongside Mercian <wellan> and <wællan>. <Wællan> is an Anglian – and specifically a West Mercian – spelling: ‘<æ> consistent or sporadic is spread right across the Hwiccean region including E. Wark, [...] N. Glouc. [...] and all over Worc.’ (Kitson 1990: 209, fn. 41). It appears, then, that in <wællan> we are dealing with a local spelling, reflecting a local document detailing the relevant land boundary. The fact that both Hemming and the Cotton Augustus scribe transmit Mercian forms indicates that the underlying exemplar possessed Mercian dialect features, including spellings like <wellan> and <wællan>.

None of Hemming's other texts contain <wæ> spellings, and the reason for this may well be that both the *Bede* and the charters are in some way ‘local’ texts; the *Bede* because its textual history places it firmly

7 All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

in a dialect area (Mercian) to which Worcester also belonged, and the charters because these were texts written at the behest of (and possibly by) Worcester's monks. It therefore seems likely that <wæ> spellings are a feature which is part of Hemming's *passive repertoire*: 'those forms which are not part of the active repertoire, but which are nevertheless familiar in everyday usage as the forms of other writers, and which the scribe does not balk at reproducing' (Benskin & Laing 1981: 58).

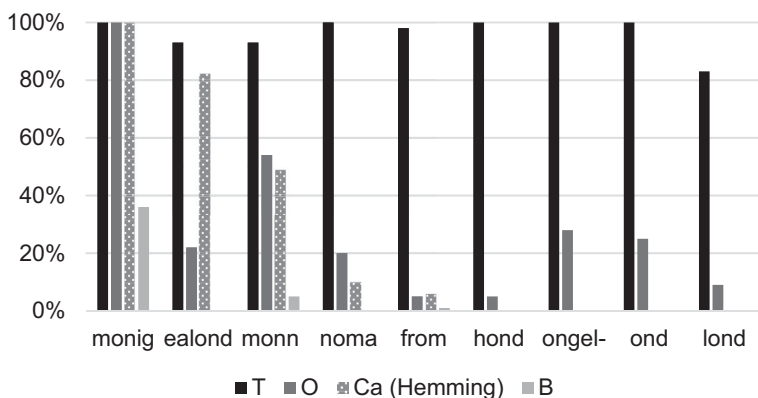
This would indicate that Hemming was familiar with Mercian dialectal features and so content to incorporate them into his own copy. Judging by his scribal output for Worcester, he was an experienced scribe, and one who was entrusted on at least one occasion with the task of copying a substantial text (the OE *Bede*) alone. His familiarity with Mercian written forms is therefore unsurprising.

### 3.2 *o+nasal*

In LWS words with <a> followed by a nasal, non-West-Saxon spellings often favour o+N, as in <hond> [hand], <monn> [man], <ond> [and], and this feature is found particularly in Mercian texts such as the OE *Bede* (Hogg 1992: §5.5). In *OEB*<sub>3</sub> the occurrence of o+N varies according to the scribe, as demonstrated by a selection of common examples in Figure 20.2. T's scribe retains the greatest number of o+N spellings across a variety of words (394/405 of the total words in Figure 20.2). In contrast, the later manuscripts (including Ca, written by Hemming), are much more variable and typically have far lower frequencies of o+N (O: 101/272; Ca: 60/270; B: 24/304).<sup>8</sup>

The fact that T has high overall counts for o+N is not surprising because it retains many other Mercian features from the OE *Bede's* archetype. Interestingly, Hemming has high use in some words but not others; across all

8 The total number of words with potential o+N varies according to manuscript, accounted for by lexical variation, and a divergent translation of chapters 16–20 in O and Ca. Furthermore, as *and/ond* is frequently abbreviated in O, Ca and B, we are unable to determine their scribes' preferred spellings for this item.

Figure 20.2. o+N in *OEB*<sub>3</sub>.

*Bede* scribes, <monig> [many] is most likely to be transmitted with an <o> spelling, even in B (18/50), which habitually transmits LWS equivalents of Mercian archetype features. <Ealond> [island] is also usually spelled with <o> by Hemming (14/17), and <monn> [man] is the preferred spelling in nearly half (35/75) of all instances. While some of Hemming's frequencies are close to those of O and might be explained by that manuscript's closeness to Hemming's (e.g. <monn>, <noma> [name], <from>), the two scribes clearly do not pattern alike in their preferences for which words should have o+N. The O scribe's intermittent and erratic use of o+N should not surprise us as he is a *Mischsprache* scribe (Wallis 2013b).<sup>9</sup>

It should also be noted that the raw frequencies for each word vary widely; frequent words in Ca are <monig> (41), <monn> (75), <from> (69) with total o+N spellings at 100 %, 49 % and 6 % respectively. Among the less frequent words, many have only a+N spellings in Hemming's copy: <hand> [hand] (18), <angel> [Angle-] (17), <and> [and] (10), <land> [land] (13), while only one of the ten instances of <noma> has o+N. Word frequency does not, therefore, seem to be the underlying factor in the difference.

9 That is, he is a mixer scribe, and this strategy is maintained throughout the text.

Given the rather intriguing results for o+N from *OEB*<sub>3</sub> (the middle of the text), an examination of Hemming's copying from the beginning of the manuscript might indicate whether he has a 'writing-in period', whereby when faced with an unfamiliar text 'the medieval scribe [...] begins by copying closely, even *literatim*, until he reads his exemplar fluently and at a glance' (Benskin & Laing 1981: 66).

The advantage of Hemming's manuscript is that his copy of the *Bede* is complete. However, as noted above, the text at the beginning of the manuscript is probably not part of the original translation. This matters because we cannot be sure what the dialect of the exemplar was; in other words, we don't know what kind of language Hemming was responding to as he was getting used to his copying task. Therefore, this part of the study uses a sample of c. 2,500 graphic units from the beginning of the manuscript, incorporating the entire *Preface* and regnal list, and the first part of the chapter headings. A second sample of c. 2,700 graphic units was taken from the beginning of *OEB*<sub>1</sub>. As we are dealing with low frequencies the data is tabulated in Table 20.2.

The evidence from the beginning of the *Bede* suggests that o+N may indeed not have been a feature of the earliest parts of Hemming's exemplar (which would be consistent with Miller's (1890), Whitelock's (1974) and Waite's (2015) observations). Although Hemming has opportunity to use o+N spellings, he does not do so, and the absence of the feature in his

Table 20.2. Frequency of o+N in samples from the OE *Bede* (total frequency (o+N) + (a+N) in brackets)

	Preface	Reg List	Ch Heads	<i>OEB</i> <sub>1</sub>	<i>OEB</i> <sub>3</sub>
from	0 (4)	0 (1)	0 (17)	1 (24)	4 (69)
monn	0 (8)	–	2 (9)	7 (13)	37 (75)
ongel-	0 (3)	–	0 (4)	3 (20)	0 (17)
ealond	0 (1)	–	4 (7)	17 (17)	14 (17)
monig	–	–	0 (2)	4 (4)	41 (41)
lond	0 (1)	0 (2)	–	0 (8)	0 (13)
noma	–	–	0 (1)	0 (4)	1 (10)

exemplar may well be the reason for this. The *Preface* and regnal list have no instances of o+N. In the chapter headings *monig* (which had 100% o+N spellings in *OEB1* and *OEB3*) only appears with <a>, and the only <o> spellings occur in <monn> (2/9) and <ealond> (4/7). The three instances of <ealand> occur right at the beginning of the chapter headings, and this *might* indicate a writing-in period, before Hemming reverts to a preferred <ealond>, however the evidence for <monn> does not pattern so neatly, as the two occurrences appear in the middle of the selection. Compared with the evidence from *OEB3*, where <o> forms contribute a far higher proportion of spellings (<monn> 37/75, <ealond> 14/17, <monig> 41/41), it is evident that the language of the underlying exemplar is indeed different in the earliest section, and that is what accounts for the differing frequencies.

It is clear, then, that Hemming's use of o+N is to an extent dependent on his exemplar: the more frequently o+N appeared there, the more likely Hemming was to write it in his own copy. What we cannot tell from the OE *Bede* alone, however, is whether o+N was Hemming's preferred spelling. To answer this question the evidence of the charters and prayers is required.

From the three sets of charter bounds in Hemming's hand in Cotton Tiberius A.xiii, there are three relevant lexical items, <land> (x3), <sand> (x5) and <andlang> (x3). On every occasion Hemming spells the relevant word with <a>. In the Harley charter he writes <land> (x3), <hand> and <and> (1 each), again with <a> (see Figure 20.3).

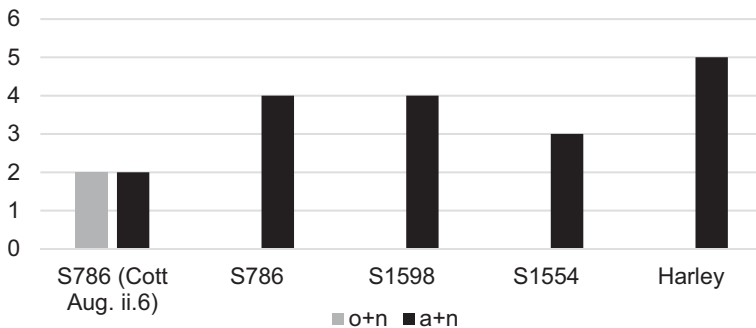


Figure 20.3. Comparison of o+N in Hemming's charters and in Cott. Aug. ii.6.

In the charters, Hemming's use of o+N is zero. The fact that o+N appears intermittently in the Cotton Augustus version of S786 (2/4 instances) suggests however that somewhere in that text's transmission there *was* o+N, though it is not possible to tell whether Hemming copied his charter directly from the Cotton Augustus version or another. Nevertheless, we are left with the fact that although Hemming *could* have written <o> in words like <sand> and <land>, he did not. It is also notable that o+N never occurs in Hemming's copies of the prayers in words like <fram> or <nama>, and occurs only once in the short admonition on excommunication, in <noma>:

(2) ic bidde

7 eac on godes **noman** halsige þ̅ ælc mann hine sylfne  
georne wið þisne curs warnige. 7 þissere stowe  
hold sy. 7 getreowe. 7 se þe elles do. hæbbe him  
wið gode gemæne. 7 swa swa þes curs swutelad̅.

[I beg and also pray in God's name that each man should eagerly take heed of this malediction and be faithful and honest in this place. And he who does otherwise, let him account to God. And so this curse declares.]

Therefore the evidence points to o+N being an example of *constrained selection* on Hemming's part. Laing (2004: 63) describes constrained selection as 'when a scribe suppresses some of his own habitual spellings in favour of the (functionally equivalent) others that he finds in front of him'. These spellings must be part of a scribe's active or passive repertoire, and will skew the relative frequency of functionally equivalent forms. O+N occurs frequently in *OEB<sub>1</sub>* and *OEB<sub>3</sub>* and is, as we have seen, very likely to be a feature of the original translation, as it is transmitted to a greater or lesser degree in other OE *Bede* manuscripts. The fact that it rarely occurs elsewhere suggests that it is indeed only transmitted by Hemming when it occurs in his exemplar, and given the charter evidence, probably not always then.

3.3 *-ward spellings*

A further idiosyncrasy of Hemming’s is the retracted spelling <ward>, alongside the more usual spelling <weard>, which shows breaking of the vowel before r+C (Campbell 1959: §144). Figure 20.4 shows a comparison of each *Bede* scribe’s usage in *OEB3*: Hemming is the only scribe to use retracted spellings for words ending in *-ward*. Although breaking diphthongs appear in common adjectives like <toward> [future], <widerweard> [contrary, adverse] and <ondweard> [present], each of these words also occurs with retraction. Less common words can occur with both spellings (e.g. <yrfeward>/ <yrfeward> [heir], <inneward>/ <inneward> [inward, internal]), only with retracted spellings (e.g. <æfward> [absent]), or only with breaking (e.g. <upward> [turned or moving upwards]).

Retracted spellings are unlikely to have been part of Hemming’s exemplar. They do not appear anywhere in the other manuscripts, including T, which is by far the oldest and most conservative of the *Bede* copies. In addition, retraction before r+C is a feature of Northumbrian; as the *Bede* is an originally Mercian text we would not expect to see this feature in its earliest witnesses.

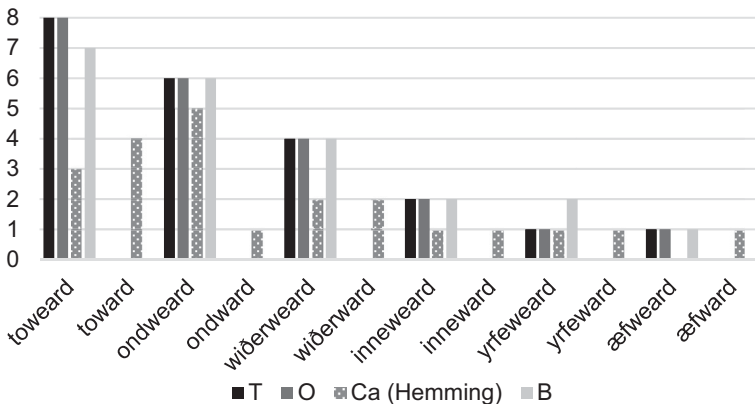


Figure 20.4. Selected <ward> spellings in *OEB3*.



Another explanation for the presence of retraction lies in the unstressed nature of the syllable. Campbell (1959: §338 and fn. 1) states that breaking may fail in unstressed syllables, and Hogg (1992: §6.7) adds that ‘the second element of obscured compounds’ is a usual environment for the phenomenon.<sup>10</sup> Notably, <ward> is also the preferred spelling of the Worcester scribe who copied London, British Library, MS Cotton Nero E. i, part 2. He consistently updates <weardes> in his exemplar (charter S1280) to <wardes>, a move which Wiles (2013: 232) interprets as reflecting a ‘changing phonological situation’ in the late eleventh century.

Retracted spellings appear to be part of Hemming’s own preferred style; in addition to *OEB*<sub>3</sub>, <ward> occurs in the chapter headings, *OEB*<sub>1</sub>, the OE prayer and the Harley charter (3–5):

- (3) þa **foreward** þe wæron geworhte  
[The agreements that were made] (Harley Charter)
- (4) And se ðe þas **foreward** tobreke  
[And he who breaks this agreement] (Harley Charter)
- (5) 7 forgif þa(m) libbendu(m) gesundfulnesse on þisum life. ge on þam **towardan**  
[And give to the living health in this life and the next] (OE Prayer)

However, <ward> is rarely the only spelling of the element, and as in *OEB*<sub>3</sub>, broken forms occur alongside retracted ones (e.g. <toward>, <toward> (OE prayer); <toward> (Bilingual Prayer)).

### 3.4 *Unstable <h>*

In this section, two separate but related phenomena are examined: h-deletion and h-insertion, either in prevocalic environments in stressed syllables, or as part of the initial consonant clusters <hl hn hr hw>. As Lass and Laing (2010: 346) note, ‘[t]hese two phenomena are two aspects of the same process: loss of initial [h] and consequent “hypercorrect”

10 As support for this explanation, Hemming has only breaking spellings in stressed syllables in a similar labial environment, for example, <wearp>, <wearð>.

employment of the now “non-referential” *littera* “h” in positions where it is not expected to be associated with a *potestas*.<sup>11</sup>

Hemming’s writings show both h-deletion and h-insertion. Examples of the former from *OEB*<sub>3</sub> are <reas> [fell], <gerinan><sup>12</sup> [to touch] and <nescan> [soft] for <hreas>, <gehrinan>, and <hnescan>. In two cases, the omission is noted and corrected:

- (6) ic sceal hraðe deað **under\h/nigan**  
[I will soon submit to death] (*OEB*<sub>3</sub>, f. 37r)
- (7) medmycelne dæl \h/lafes  
[a small piece of bread] (*OEB*<sub>3</sub>, f. 43v)

In each case, <h> is added in superscript. It is difficult, in such a brief intervention, to determine whether these corrections are in Hemming’s hand or not; Da Rold et al. (2010) suggest that at least three correcting hands contribute to the OE *Bede* text, in addition to Hemming himself, and while the correction in (6) certainly looks like Hemming’s hand, that in (7) is less certain. Clearly, either Hemming or another reader noticed the h-deletion and restored the words to their etymological spellings. Whether this was by comparison with the exemplar, or a spontaneous correction is difficult to tell. Nevertheless, it is striking that not every instance of Hemming’s h-deletion was noticed and corrected.

In addition to h-deletion, Hemming is responsible for a number of instances of h-insertion. One such example is in the OE prayer (8), where Hemming’s copy reads <hlæne> [lean, thin] instead of <læne> [temporary, transitory, frail]:

- (8) Ac loc hwænne min tima beo. 7 þin willa sy. þ̅ ic þis **hlæne** lif forlætan scyle.  
[And whenever my time is, and it is your will, that I should leave this thin  
(*hlæne*)/ transitory (*læne*) life] (OE prayer)

Hemming’s text has a misreading here; the penitent is clearly thinking about the time when they will leave this *transitory* life. *Læne* is also used

11 Lass and Laing (2010: 345, fn. 2) use the medieval terminology of the *littera* (the abstract ‘letter’), which can be described in relation to its *figura* (symbol or shape), *nomen* (name) or *potestas* (sound value, lit. ‘power’).

12 The prefix *ge-* is always unstressed (Campbell 1959: §74).

to describe something that is on loan for a temporary time, and ‘generally used as an epithet of things of this world when they are contrasted with those of the next’ (*BT*, s.v. *læne*). As confirmation, the other two textual witnesses to the *OE Prayer* read <læne> at this point.

The *OE Prayer* also contains unetymological <h> in two readings of <onhliht> for <onliht> [to illumine, make shine] (a spelling which also occurs in *OEB3*), along with <gehrece> [rule, government], <hleoma> [limbs] and <hlihte> [alighted]. It is clear that both h-deletion and h-insertion are traits of Hemming’s own writing, as they occur in more than one text, and are only occasionally corrected. Hemming is not alone in his treatment of <h>, however; the other two textual witnesses to the *OE Prayer* contain the spellings <genexa> for Hemming’s etymological spelling <gehneaxa> (<gehnesian>, [to soften]), while the Cotton Tiberius A.iii scribe is a frequent h-dropper, whose spellings include <bereowsian> and <dægwaŋlice> for Hemming’s etymological <behreowsian> and <dæghwæŋlice>. For Hemming, unstable <h> appears in the consonant clusters <hl hn hr>; it is not a feature of <hw>, and it does not appear in prevocalic position.<sup>13</sup>

Hemming’s uncertainty about the status of some words with etymological [h] reflects wider changes in English during the late-OE period. As Scragg (2012: 213) notes, there is plentiful evidence for h-loss in early Middle English:

The written history of English suggests that the loss of the sound had occurred by the early Middle English period, although the possibility that it was lost in late Old English and survived in eleventh-century writings largely because of the success of the spread of a standard written form of the vernacular in eleventh-century England has rarely been considered.

Scragg suggests that the widespread use of LWS (what he calls the ‘standard written form’) masks the beginnings of h-loss, and the evidence of Hemming’s writings indeed indicates that these changes were already

13 Other scribes of this period, however, *do* show h-loss in these positions (e.g. the Cotton Tiberius A.iii scribe responsible for the *OE prayer* and *Monasteriales Indicia*).

under way in the late-eleventh century. The combination of h-deletion and h-insertion raises some tantalizing questions: do Hemming's (over) corrections indicate an awareness of h-loss, or variable pronunciation? And, further, do they indicate an awareness of a 'correct' or desired spelling, in contrast with his own speech?

#### 4 Conclusion

Hemming's variation reveals a number of interesting patterns. Firstly, it seems that constrained selection is responsible for features such as <wæ> spellings and o+N. O+nasal occurs in the *Bede* but not in the charters or prayers; even where an alternative witness of one charter preserves o+nasal, Hemming routinely writes Late-West-Saxon forms with a+N, and it seems that he only writes o+N where it appears in his exemplar, not spontaneously. On the other hand, <wæ> spellings occur in both the *Bede* and in the charters. This suggests that Mercian (and sometimes specifically West Midland) dialectal spellings are part of Hemming's passive repertoire, as the charters and the *Bede* (an originally Mercian text) can be classified as dialectally 'local' productions.

Secondly, *-ward* retraction and unstable <h> seem, from their distribution, to be representative of Hemming's own usage, as they are found across the corpus. These two features have their roots in ongoing sound changes in late OE, monophthongization in unstressed syllables (*-ward*) and the simplification of consonant clusters with initial <h>. It is possible that Hemming's use of <h> in unetymological positions and his self-correction of h-deletion represent an awareness on his part of a preferred or desirable spelling which is at odds with his own pronunciation of the affected words.

Hemming's variation, then, indicates a toleration of locally current written forms stemming from (historical) Mercian orthographical traditions found in the exemplars he copied from. At the same time he introduces spellings which are at odds with 'standard' or 'focused' Late-West-Saxon; these, however should be seen as the reflections of late OE developments

in pronunciation, rather than as reflections of a local, specifically ‘Mercian’ or ‘West Midland’ orthography.

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# Index

- accommodation 8, 13, 85–101, 107–29,  
181–97, 249–67, 347, 385–  
404, 448
- address term 41, 46, 95, 184
- addressee 39–53, 59–81, 85–101, 107–29,  
152, 161, 171–72, 175–76, 181–97,  
201–19, 229, 236–37, 240–43,  
249–67, 271–91, 317–34, 425,  
432, 434, 448, 491–509
- adjective comparison 107–29
- age 6, 13, 18, 59–81, 86, 95–96, 101, 187,  
295, 301, 327, 339–56, 359–78
- agency (of individual speakers) 9, 17,  
290, 531–32
- apparent time 18
- appellation (*see* address term)
- attention to speech/attention to  
writing 8, 14, 99, 117, 188, 201–  
19, 242, 265, 281, 349, 486
- audience design theory 8, 12, 16, 96–101,  
108–09, 188–94, 218, 223, 229,  
236–37, 243, 250, 273, 280, 385–  
404, 454
- auditor 21, 100, 189, 194, 197, 393, 397–  
98, 403
- Babylonian 39–53
- Basque 431–48
- Berkshire 133–53
- Bible translations 513–33
- bilingualism 328, 344, 351–52, 355, 359–  
78, 387, 402, 432
- borrowing 112, 175, 320, 359–78, 440,  
443, 447
- Briefsteller* (*see* manual)
- business writing 59–81, 99, 191–92,  
407–26
- chancery style/chancery documents  
201–19, 259, 261, 266
- clitics 223–43
- code fluctuation 15
- code-switching 13, 18, 241, 299, 323, 329–  
30, 339–56, 359–78
- codification 15, 64, 95, 134, 296, 413,  
435, 532
- Communication Accommodation  
Theory (*see* accommodation)
- community 1, 3, 8–10, 16–18, 78, 86–87,  
91, 101, 108–09, 112, 118, 133–34,  
152, 224, 312–13, 318, 321, 333,  
358–78, 387, 402, 417, 421, 436,  
491, 514
- comparative adjectives (*see* adjective  
comparison)
- complexity 66, 80, 107–29, 167, 175, 202,  
205–06, 209–19
- concentration 4, 11, 14
- constrained selection 451–70
- contact 111, 249–378, 387, 402
- convention 9–10, 47, 59–81, 181–97,  
201–19, 242, 276–77, 312, 353,  
407–26, 448
- convergence 117, 188–89
- copy/copying 11, 18, 165, 186, 189, 299,  
301, 412, 451–70, 473–89, 497
- correction (*see* self-correction)
- cyrillic (*see* script, cyrillic)
- deferential devices 182, 184, 193, 195, 196

- developmental variation (*see* variation, developmental)
- dialect 7, 89, 142, 205, 225–26, 232, 241, 252, 254, 259, 295–314, 342, 349, 353, 432–37, 446–48, 451–70, 476–78, 481, 514
- dialectology 1, 17, 475–76, 488
- diary 15, 18, 318–19, 321, 339–56, 359–78, 408, 411, 416
- diglossia 387, 395, 403, 432, 437, 448
- direct request strategies (*see* request)
- discourse-ending formulae (*see* formulae)
- discourse tradition 407–26, 514
- divergence 188, 219, 281–82, 287–88
- Dorset 133–53
- draft 66, 157–77, 340
- Dutch 299, 312, 317–34
- education 16, 60, 62–64, 133–53, 162–65, 235, 266, 295–96, 299, 304, 312, 314, 327, 362, 404, 431–48, 494, 507
- emotion 42, 48–52, 65, 202, 235, 241–43, 342, 351–52
- English 6, 12, 13, 85–101, 107–29, 133–53, 157–77, 271–91, 295–314, 340, 346–47, 351, 359–78, 451–70, 473–89
- enregisterment 9, 72, 81, 359
- epistolary formulae (*see* formulae)
- exemplar 18, 451–70, 473–89
- expert writing 416, 422
- external/social factors (*see* variation, functionalized)
- Field-Tenor-Mode model 491–509
- focused variety 458
- formality (*see* variation, functionalized)
- formulae 14–15, 45, 59–81, 182, 185, 193–94, 202–03, 206, 216, 218–19, 260, 287, 368, 385–404, 411, 416–17, 421–22, 424
- formulary (*see* manual)
- French 89, 111–12, 120, 203–04, 250, 252, 317–34, 340, 345–46, 348, 355, 374, 407–26, 432, 439, 444
- Gallo-Italic 249–67
- gender 6–7, 207, 227–28, 235, 242, 322, 324–26, 332, 334, 344
- German 5, 12, 14, 15, 201–19, 223–43, 340, 345–47, 349, 351–53, 355, 359–78, 491–509
- German cursive script (*see* script, German cursive)
- Greek 385–404, 515, 518–20
- guide (*see* manual)
- Guipuscoan 431–48
- b*-deletion/dropping/insertion 134–35, 141–46, 151–53, 467–69
- hierarchy 39–53, 162, 201–19, 327, 424, 494–95, 502
- historical paradox 16
- hypercorrection 100, 142–44, 152, 263–64, 466
- identity/identity construction 7–8, 10, 12–13, 42, 45, 53, 59, 80, 157–77, 181, 188–89, 202, 218–19, 224, 241–43, 258, 271–91, 333, 343, 344, 355, 374, 387, 396, 398, 426, 454, 514, 531
- ideology 7, 9, 271–91, 532
- idiolect 254, 295, 339–56, 371
- imperative 46, 50, 184, 195, 491–509
- indexical field 9, 532
- indexical meaning/variants 10, 108, 513–33
- indirect request strategies (*see* request)

- inexperienced writers 14–15, 56–81, 133–53, 205, 223–43, 353  
 informational maximalism 16  
 instruction 408, 410–12, 434, 446, 491–509  
 irregular preterites 305–07, 313  
 Italian 59–81, 203, 209, 249–67, 386–89, 394, 402–403  
  
 language change 2–3, 7, 10, 13, 15–18, 85–101, 107, 135, 204, 207, 225, 318–20, 333, 360, 458, 468–69, 474, 477, 479, 488–89, 518  
     from above 90, 432, 448, 483, 488  
     from below 483, 488  
     in the lifetime 13, 17, 19, 59–82, 85–101, 147, 151, 194–95, 197, 204, 207, 254, 295–314, 339–56, 359–78, 389, 431–48  
 language choice 317–34, 339–56, 359–78  
 language dominance 319, 361–62, 365, 369, 371, 373, 377–78, 432, 493, 508  
 language history ‘from below’ 12, 295  
 language mixing (*see Mischsprache*)  
 Latin 89, 111–12, 185, 251–53, 257, 266, 340–41, 346, 352–53, 365, 431, 436, 440–43, 447–48, 493, 498, 502–05, 508–09, 529  
 lenition 257, 260–61  
 letter-writing guide (*see manual*)  
 lifespan change (*see language change, in the lifetime*)  
 list 258, 260, 265, 297, 369, 415–17, 419, 457, 462–63  
 literacy/illiteracy 65, 90, 100, 137, 140, 205, 296, 343, 363, 387, 407, 432–33, 436–38, 446  
 literary style 60, 64, 257, 264, 432, 435–36, 448, 493, 513–33  
 Lithuanian 339–56  
  
 loan (*see borrowing*)  
 logbook 407–26  
 long-s 133–53  
 longitudinal variation (*see language change in the lifetime*)  
 L2 learning 5, 256, 265, 352–54  
  
 mandatory forms 5, 225  
 manual 60, 63, 133, 165, 186–87, 196, 202, 204, 219, 298, 302, 304–05, 310, 313, 409, 413, 417  
 maritime writer 407–26  
 merchant 63, 74, 209, 249–67, 411  
 Mercian 451–70  
 migration 13, 15, 18, 295–314, 319, 355, 361–63  
 Milanese 249–67  
*Mischsprache* 360, 453, 461, 476–77, 482  
 modal verb 193, 399–403, 492, 495, 499–508  
 montage 352  
 morphosyntactic variation 320, 343, 385–404, 491–509  
 multilingualism 251, 317, 319, 321, 323, 339–56, 387, 403, 493  
  
 navigation journal 407–26  
 network 61, 65, 73, 76, 79–80, 93, 273, 289, 412, 424–26  
 non-standard 63, 141, 205, 233–35, 295–314, 514  
 norm 8, 10, 14, 15, 89–90, 116, 134, 143, 151–53, 182, 187, 189, 197, 203, 205, 218, 281, 297, 342, 347, 351, 359, 421–22, 424, 432, 439–40  
 notary book 385–404  
  
 oath 42, 47–49  
 orthography 14–15, 17, 61, 69, 80, 85–102, 135, 143, 147, 149, 151, 206, 209, 263, 266, 276–78, 297–98,

- 341–44, 347–49, 353–54, 374,  
432, 431–48, 469–70, 529
- other-language item (*see* language choice,  
code-switching)
- otiose stroke 475, 484–87
- passive repertoire 454, 460, 464, 469
- pauper petition 133–53
- person reference 360–61, 364–65,  
374–78
- persona 10, 174, 196–97, 219, 273, 285,  
290, 531
- place names 262, 360, 364, 373–74,  
376–77
- poetic style 241, 356, 413, 513–33
- Polish 339–56
- politeness 41, 101, 188, 287, 421–22, 424–  
26, 495
- prescriptivism 134, 218, 297, 302, 304–05,  
310–11, 313, 447
- progressive translation 476–78, 482, 488
- range of variation 4, 96, 117, 253
- rank 47–48, 52, 59–81, 92, 94, 98–100,  
107–29, 166, 181, 194, 196, 204,  
208, 216, 219, 279, 285, 287, 296,  
318, 320, 341, 399, 448
- real time 13, 18
- Referee Design 96–101, 189, 206, 218
- region 1, 6–7, 90, 142, 146, 152–53, 205,  
223–43, 252, 262, 276, 431–32,  
436, 454, 459, 476, 514
- register 4, 8, 65–66, 71–73, 76, 79–81,  
96–101, 111, 124, 175, 206, 258,  
281, 360–61, 363, 365, 370, 386,  
394–95, 403, 432, 491–96, 508
- relationship 41, 44–45, 48, 52–53, 60, 65,  
66, 95, 101, 110, 112–13, 115, 117,  
120, 124, 129, 160–61, 168–70,  
176, 181, 208, 216–18, 229, 237,  
240–41, 243, 254, 262, 272–73,  
287, 301, 322–24, 327, 329–30,  
332–34, 360, 375, 424, 448,  
491–509
- Renaissance 59–81, 249–67
- request 14, 42, 46, 49, 52, 72, 152, 164,  
168–69, 176, 181–97, 240, 287,  
425, 492
- rhetoric 42, 44, 48–49, 52, 111, 172, 176,  
265, 289, 355, 513
- rhotacism 259–60, 265
- Roman script (*see* script, Roman)
- runic script (*see* script, runic)
- Russian 321, 339–56
- Scots/Scottish English 181–97, 271–  
91, 297–98
- scribe 39–53, 398, 451–70, 473–89
- script  
  cyrillic 339–56  
  German cursive 359–78  
  Roman/Latin 359–78  
  runic 87–90
- script choice 349–50, 364–65, 369–  
70, 373–78
- self-correction 14, 18, 145, 157–77, 366,  
372, 375, 469
- shift 13–14, 147, 310, 353, 362, 366, 375,  
377–78, 388, 402, 432, 446–  
47, 473–89
- situational parameter 4–5, 8, 15, 95, 99,  
116, 160, 164, 181, 187–88, 196,  
343, 412, 492–94, 499, 509
- social network (*see* network)
- social rank (*see* rank)
- social role, social role relationship 171,  
182, 190, 196–97, 229, 426,  
491–509
- speaker accommodation (*see*  
accommodation)
- speaker design 9–10, 12, 42, 87, 160, 183,  
188–90, 194–96, 218–19, 250

- speech community (*see* community)
- spelling (*see also* orthography) 14–15,  
69, 88–90, 145, 150, 152, 166–67,  
170, 172, 206, 217, 231, 275–77,  
283, 298, 312, 313, 348, 351, 353,  
365–66, 368, 371–72, 431–48,  
451–70, 473–89
- stance 170, 272
- standard 5, 14, 64, 69, 73, 95, 143–45,  
205, 206, 225, 232, 235, 239, 250,  
266, 272, 279, 281, 295–314, 348–  
49, 353, 402, 432, 435, 439, 442,  
447, 458, 468–69
- standardization 15, 89, 135, 206, 271, 276,  
297, 413
- status (*see also* rank) 13, 48, 50, 52, 59–81,  
85–101, 107–29, 152, 181, 187, 193,  
197, 272, 279–80, 282, 287–88,  
320, 353, 388, 448, 514
- style axiom 99, 118
- style shifting 3, 8, 13, 85, 87, 96, 98–99,  
101, 108–10, 116–18, 124, 128, 189,  
217–19, 407–26, 513–33
- subjunctive 402, 491–509
- Swedish 491–509
- syncretism 296, 302–05, 313
- syntactic constraints (on variation) 5,  
110–11, 224, 238–39, 519, 521–27
- Systemic-Functional-Linguistic frame-  
work 492, 494
- text function 59, 65, 91, 191, 407–26,  
492
- text linguistics 407–26
- text-structuring formulae (*see* formulae)
- third-wave of variation studies 8–9, 42,  
108, 514, 531–32
- translation 185, 203–04, 209, 218, 278–  
79, 351, 352, 372, 436, 446, 452,  
457, 460, 462, 464, 497–98,  
502–04, 508–09, 513–33
- Tuscan 63, 76, 249–67
- uniformitarian principle 15–16, 98,  
124, 134
- variation  
conditioned 4–5, 10, 14, 22, 88, 96,  
108, 110, 112, 117–19, 238, 440  
developmental (*see also* age) 364–66,  
369, 378  
distance/immediacy 12, 72, 202–06,  
218, 223–24, 235–37, 240, 242–  
43, 281, 283, 290, 343, 359, 377–78  
functionalized 3, 5–7, 10, 14, 65, 118,  
177, 240–43, 250, 320–21, 331,  
345, 365, 368, 371–74, 378, 398,  
495, 526, 528  
free/non-conditioned 5–6, 10, 14–15,  
153, 441  
longitudinal (*see* language change, in  
the lifetime)  
social (*see* variation, functionalized)  
stylistic (*see* variation, functionalized)
- verbal -s 295–314
- verb-initial 513–33
- Welsh 513–33
- West-Saxon 451–70
- writing experience (*see also* inexperienced  
writers) 14–15, 223–43, 451–60
- writing guide (*see* manual)
- Yiddish 340, 346, 351, 355



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