Book review:

Sara M. Pons-Sanz and Louise Sylvester (eds.), *Medieval English in a multilingual context: Current methodologies and approaches* (New Approaches to English Historical Linguistics). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023. Pp. xxvi + 549. ISBN 9783031309465.

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This book provides a practical guide to current theories and methodologies in medieval English multilingualism, as a response to the 'growing interest in the multilingual culture of medieval Britain and its impact on the development of English' (p. 1). This wide-ranging volume is designed to complement recent advances in the field, and arises from a network 'intended to offer space for scholars working in the different linguistic subdisciplines to engage in conversations about the approaches and theoretical frameworks they are using' (p. 4).

The volume is thematically organised around four topics: 1) research contexts, 2) lexical change, 3) morphosyntactic change and 4) textual manifestations of medieval multilingualism. While sections 2–4 each begin with a co-authored overview chapter which seeks to contextualise the following studies, Section 1 orientates the book as a whole. In dealing with multilingualism in the context of medieval English, the book covers not only Latin, French and Scandinavian languages alongside Old and Middle English, but also includes chapters investigating contact with Welsh, Frisian, Dutch, Norn and Older Scots, while attention is paid to specific dialects of English (e.g. Northumbrian, Yorkshire, West-Midland English) and different social contexts (e.g. religious writing, the language of trade). McIntosh stated that 'what we mean by "languages in contact" is "users of language in contact"' (1994: 137), and a key strength

of this book is that it locates historical language contact squarely in the usage of communities and speakers themselves.

Section 1 'Research contexts' contains two chapters, dealing with theory and sources respectively. The first of these, 'Contact theory and the history of English', by Susan Fox, Anthony Grant and Laura Wright (pp. 17–47), outlines key theories relating to modern-day language contact and sociolinguistics, and explores how they can inform our understanding of the language situation(s) in the medieval period. A case study on Multicultural London English (MLE) shows how factors such as language contact among young and adolescent speakers, and the lack of access to a stable target model, account for the rapid development of this present-day variety. Insights from MLE are used to shed light on processes in late medieval developments towards standard English, while Trudgill's (2004) model of new dialect formation is applied to further medieval contexts, illustrating the benefits of combining sociolinguistic theory and medieval data. This chapter effectively demonstrates how bringing evidence together from a variety of sources – medieval texts themselves and modern linguistic theory – can help build a more detailed picture of the processes at work in a historical multilingual society.

A counterpart is offered by Carola Trips and Peter A. Stokes in 'From original sources to linguistic analysis: Tools and datasets for the investigation of multilingualism in medieval English' (pp. 49–91). This contribution considers the resources available to researchers of multilingualism, with a particular focus on Digital Humanities tools. The authors detail the resources available to enable researchers to access manuscripts in facsimile, and to understand the processes involved in moving from manuscript to corpus. The final section puts this into practice through a corpus analysis of reflexives using a selection of parsed corpora. Trips and Stokes emphasise that 'all researchers

need to apply a critical understanding to their materials, […] and this in turn implies knowing the source of a dataset or tool, how and why it was produced, and what assumptions underlie it' (p. 50). The chapter provides an excellent overview of print and electronic catalogues and databases, outlining idiosyncrasies of some of their search functions, and encouraging users to think critically about the tools they use. Overall, these two introductory chapters, designed to orientate non-specialists, provide an excellent grounding and could usefully form the basis of introductory teaching materials on the topic. The following sections deal more specifically with particular approaches and subtopics in medieval multilingualism, and are intended both for specialists requiring more in-depth information as well as scholars with a more general interest.

Section 2, titled 'Medieval multilingualism and lexical change', opens with 'Contact-induced lexical effects in medieval English' by Richard Dance, Philip Durkin, Carole Hough and Heather Pagan (pp. 95–121). In this overview chapter readers are introduced to a range of research methods for dealing with lexical material, including onomastics, etymology and lexicography. In an area where data can seem abundant, the authors discuss the challenges and biases that the documentary record presents, noting that 'if we had more access to, and intense study of, appropriate documents, there seems little doubt that evidence of at least localised borrowing from Welsh [into English] would be more abundant', while our evidence for contact with Anglo-French and Latin comes from 'the very communities – literate, and professionally involved with writing – who were at the centre of the functional trilingualism of later medieval England' (pp. 110–11). Borrowing and codeswitching pose additional challenges, with multilingual material treated inconsistently by dictionaries, especially where words are ambiguous in their language affiliation.

The following four chapters enlarge on these themes. In 'The West Germanic heritage of Yorkshire English' (pp. 123–58), Arjen Versloot reviews evidence for Old Norse loanwords in northern English. His analysis of data from dialect dictionaries and the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) leads him to suggest that the number of loans from Old Norse may have been overestimated. Specifically, Versloot argues that many items identified as Scandinavian have cognates in West Germanic languages such as Frisian, where there is limited historical evidence for contact with Scandinavian varieties. These putative Old Norse loans could be alternatively accounted for by processes of lexical support in contact situations, whereby the presence of a cognate helps reinforce and preserve a lexical item. In the next chapter, Louise Sylvester and Meg Tiddeman's 'Reframing the interaction between native terms and loanwords: Some data from occupational domains in Middle English' (pp. 159–86), examines the lexical field of TRADE. As part of the lexis of everyday life, this study contrasts with previous work focusing on elite domains such as the language of religion and the church. Using data from the 'Technical Language and Semantic Shift in Middle English' project, this study finds that in the domain of TRADE '[i]t is not the case that loanwords regularly oust native terms' (p. 181). Rather, the terms most likely to be preserved are those in earliest use (whether native or loans); the data reveals the co-existence of several terms, ultimately leading to an enrichment of the vocabulary. In also dealing with urban culture and the language of trade, Helen Fulton's 'Cheapside in Wales: Multilingualism and textiles in medieval Welsh poetry' (pp. 187–212) makes an excellent companion to the previous chapter. Fulton charts the Welsh borrowing of textile terms, often from French via Middle English, and outlines the linguistic consequences of English political influence on the development of urbanisation and trade in fourteenth-century Wales. A

focus on the communities where language contact takes place (from aristocratic households consuming romances to the rapidly growing market towns which provided the backdrop for the love poetry of writers such as Dafydd ap Gwilym) enables Fulton to investigate not only the borrowing and subsequent semantic change of textile terms, but also the role these goods played as markers of social status. The final chapter in this section, 'Caxton's linguistic and literary multilingualism: English, French and Dutch in the *History of Jason*' by Ad Putter (pp. 213–35), makes a case for recognising the influence of Dutch on William Caxton's English, in addition to French. Putter roots his investigation of Caxton's role as an author and translator in the biographical details of his life: for over thirty years he lived in the Low Countries, where merchants routinely worked in French and Dutch. A close examination of Caxton's writing suggests that his English shows interference from Dutch, a fact hitherto unrecognised by editors of his work, and by the OED. The chapters in this section work together to challenge established narratives about the nature of language contact and its influence on medieval English lexicon. They also reveal the key importance of mercantile language and contacts as vehicles for language change in the period.

Section 3 contains five chapters on the theme of 'Medieval multilingualism and morphosyntactic change'. George Walkden, Juhani Klemola and Thomas Rainsford provide an introduction to the section in 'An overview of contact-induced morphosyntactic changes in early English' (pp. 239–77). The authors note that studying morphosyntax from a contact perspective can be more challenging than studying lexical transfer, for example. With this in mind, the authors use frameworks of borrowing and imposition, and complexification and simplification, as lenses through which to view contact between English and Celtic, Old Norse and French. Contact situations are not

static, and changes in the relationships and power dynamics between social groups may impact the types and scale of contact-induced language change; the four following chapters demonstrate how changing situations can lead to different processes and language outcomes, including acculturation, koineization, widespread borrowing and language shift.

'Traces of language contact in nominal morphology of Late Northumbrian and Northern Middle English' by Elżbieta Adamczyk examines evidence for Scandinavian influence on medieval English morphology (pp. 279–310). Comparing nominal inflections in unproductive declensions from northern texts with contemporary ones from the south, the study shows a number of patterns in Late Northumbrian which coincide with areas of Scandinavian settlement. However, while the earlier data can be interpreted as reflecting linguistic simplification and therefore a koineization scenario, the Middle English material shows an increase in previously unproductive patterns such as *i*-mutation and *-r-* plurals, which Adamcyck interprets as evidence for complexification via long-term bilingualism. A further exploration of the level of Old Norse influence on English comes from Marcelle Cole and Sara M. Pons-Sanz's 'Origin and spread of the personal pronoun *they*: *La Estoire del Evangelie*, a case study' (pp. 311–42). Building on Cole's (2018) re-evaluation of the Scandinavian origins of *they* in Middle English, this chapter examines the performance of multiple scribes (cf. Benskin & Laing 1981) to investigate dialectal rewritings of the poem from West and South-West England. *Þ*-type pronouns are sensitive to several factors, including phonological environment and contexts where Old English demonstrative pronouns were favoured, and the authors conclude that *þ*-pronouns are likely the result of polygenesis, rather than solely arising from language contact. From a methodological perspective, further work

on intra-writer variation will be crucial for our understanding of language change (see Schiegg & Huber 2023). In 'Language contact effects on verb semantic classes: Lability in early English and Old French' (pp. 343–75), Luisa García García and Richard Ingham investigate psych and *destroy*-verbs to understand whether French contact was responsible for the temporary rise in labile verbs in Middle English. Although French had a number of labile verbs in these domains, evidence for contact influence is mixed. The authors conclude that French influence alone was insufficient to effect a rise in lability, and the lack of labile Old English verbs to provide a model hindered the transference of lability. The final chapter in this section, 'Exploring Norn: A historical heritage language of the British Isles' by Kari Kinn and George Walkden (pp. 377–404), examines Norn as a contact variety. A small corpus of charters and historical ballads is used to test the influence of Older Scots on Norn, and the results compared with parallel corpora in historical Norwegian and present-day American heritage Norwegian. The authors suggest that Older Scots contact may be responsible for the presence of Norn possessors in prenominal position, but they note the difficulty of ascribing their results purely to language contact, given the small dataset. Nevertheless, Kinn and Walkden are able to bring a new perspective to Norn through the application of a heritage language approach.

The final section of the book gathers four chapters under the heading 'Textual manifestations of medieval multilingualism'. Taking as their basis the well-known multilingual miscellany Harley 2253, Ad Putter, Joanna Kopaczyk and Venetia Bridges introduce section 4 with 'Textual and codicological manifestations of multilingual culture in medieval England' (pp. 407–39), a chapter offering an 'overview of developments and desiderata in scholarship on multilingualism' (p. 407). The chapter

advocates considering multilingual manuscripts in their entirety, in order to understand the broader context of individual works; focusing on individual texts risks a distorted view of the overall volume, or a false sense of the monocultural Englishness of the period. This theoretical approach is exemplified by an exploration of trilingualism in Harley 2253, investigating contact influences such as codeswitching and poetic metre.

The following three chapters in section 4 showcase variations on this approach. Texts relating to the life of the Welsh saint Winefride are the subject of David Callander's 'Adapting Winefride in Welsh, Latin and English' (pp. 441–66). Although all ultimately descending from a now-lost Latin *Life* of St Beuno, the surviving Latin, Welsh and Middle English versions contain varying evidence for multilingualism, from accounts of interpreters to authorial statements about the etymology of Welsh personal- and place-names in the story. Callander demonstrates that evidence for language contact is not always found in the most obvious places; for example, the Middle English versions of the story reveal writers engaging with Welsh in Shrewsbury and Suffolk, as well as in more expected locations in the Marches. In 'Let each one tell its own story: Language mixing in four copies of *Amore Langueo*' (pp. 467–97), Mareike Keller and Annina Seiler use codeswitching and translanguaging theoretical frameworks to analyse four versions of a macaronic sermon in Latin and Middle English. Their analysis reveals that codeswitches into English happen primarily for rhetorical purposes, and that they reflect patterns of codeswitching found in studies of contemporary language. In one manuscript, the Middle English material is moved to an interlinear gloss and flagged with visual cues such as language labels. These are interpreted as features of written bilingualism, in contrast with the switches for rhetorical effect in oral performance found in other manuscripts. In the final chapter, 'The materiality of the *Manières de*

langage' (pp. 499–530), Emily Reed shows how mis-en-page and other material elements give clues about how particular manuscripts were used. Features such as manuscript size, signs of use, and the presence and contents of paratext, suggest different ways in which particular manuscripts of the text – a set of dialogues for teaching French conversation – were read. Evidence that manuscripts were used as shared class books, or volumes for private study, underlines the individuality and purpose of each instantiation of the text. Together, the contributions in this section reveal the importance of considering each version of a medieval text in its own right, and the crucial evidence for multilingualism that can be gleaned from a detailed examination of the ways each one is adapted and updated for subsequent users.

This volume works as an excellent introduction to, and overview of, approaches to studying multilingualism in medieval England. The book's continued focus on the communities where language contact took place is a useful reminder that medieval speakers' experiences of multilingualism would have varied depending on the time and place under investigation. There is also a clear focus throughout on the evidence available to present-day researchers. The range of texts and source types – sermons, charters, poetry, saints' lives, teaching texts, historical and dialect dictionaries, corpora, print and manuscript texts – allows contributors to showcase a range of methodological approaches, as well as offering insights into different multilingual situations in the past, from everyday community bilingualism to elite literate practices, heritage language use and language shift.

The book goes beyond the traditional 'English-French-Latin-Norse' model of medieval language contact in English dealt with in traditional histories of English. In addition, the focus is not solely on the influence of external languages on English; for

example, Fulton examines the influence of French (via English) on Welsh, while Kinn and Walkden investigate the impact of Older Scots on Norn. This allows for the kind of more nuanced, less Anglocentric viewpoint advocated by Putter, Kopaczyk and Bridges (p. 432). In addition to the range of text types and languages covered, the inclusion of contributions from a manuscript studies or materiality perspective in a linguistic work is most welcome, and a clear vindication of the relevance of philological and pragmatic approaches to this area. Some chapters would also be particularly useful for teaching; for example, the chapter by Trips and Stokes could form the basis for an advanced undergraduate or MA class dealing with how texts are processed to become Digital Humanities tools, and how these resources can be used. The detailed bibliographies at the end of each chapter will also be of use to researchers or teachers looking for further information.

Notably, many of these studies are co-authored, a deliberate choice on the part of the editors: 'collaboration and sharing, often across disciplinary boundaries, underpin the entire endeavour' (p. 4). These collaborations result in fruitful and interesting approaches to the material, and will doubtless inspire further avenues of enquiry. This volume is a cohesive, informative and thought-provoking 'how to' book, which will be extremely useful for a range of readers interested in the relationships between multilingualism and English in the Middle Ages. While those new to the topic will find support and guidance, more established researchers will find plenty of food for thought in these wide-ranging contributions.

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