

MIDDLE ENGLISH

In Which We Learn That Your Father Was An Hamster

PREVIOUSLY, ON THE ADVENTURES OF ENGLISH:



2 KINDS OF COLONIZATION

ANGLO SAXONS & the Celts

- Only about one dozen words of Celtic origin remain in Mod. E.:
- Crag, tor = high rock
- Combe = deep valley
- London = (lon) wild
- Lincoln = (llyn) lake
- Avon River = (afon) river
- Cheetwood = (cheet) wood
- Brill = (bre) hill

VIKINGS & the Anglo Saxons

- PLACE NAMES:
 - Covenham, Alvingham (O.E. ham=settlement) less than 5 miles from Tharaby (Norse by=town or farm)
- BORROWINGS: 900+ Norse words (get, hit, leg, skin, want, wrong, sky):
- SYNONYMIC RICHNESS: O.E rear and Norse raise
- SIMPLIFICATION: shift from INFLECTION to SYNTAX + PREPOSITIONS.

SO (HWÆT!): linguistic clues tell us about the kind of colonization taking place in 5th & 8th-century England.

ENGLISH NATIONALISM

- ALFRED THE GREAT: CHAMPION OF THE **VERNACULAR LANGUAGE**:
 - Rebuilds monasteries;
 - Learns Latin to supervise the translation of religious texts into English;
 - Commissioned the *Anglo Saxon Chronicles* and the translation of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* (*The Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*, 731 CE)
- The pressure of Viking diaspora creates conditions for ENGLAND to emerge as a concept, and ENGLISH as a unifying language.
- VERNACULAR: "the language of the people"

TWO MINUTE PAPER

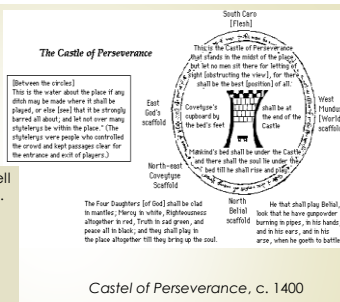
- What was the effect of the Danish Invasion on the English Language?
- Make your case by comparing this effect with that of EITHER the Anglo-Saxon invasion of the Celts, OR the 2nd Latin "invasion" by Christian missionaries.

And Now, For Your Father, The Hamster, OR, MIDDLE ENGLISH AND THE NORMANS

- <https://youtu.be/9V7zbWNznbs>
- C. 1050-1450ish
- 1066: NORMAN INVASION: English ceases to be the official language of England; used only as a **spoken language**;
- 1154: *Anglo Saxon Chronicle* abandoned;
- 1215: Magna Carta;
- 100 Years War: 1337-1453: England VS France;
- 1356: Richard II addresses peasants in English during Wat Tyler's Rebellion;
- 1422: Henry V's will is written in English

“For but a man know French men count
of him little.
But low men hold to English and to their
own speech yet.
I think there are in all the world no
countries
That don't hold to their own speech but ”
England alone

(Robert of Gloucester, 11C).



BAD ANGEL: To devil's dell
I shall bear thee to hell....

MERCY: O pater mixime,
et Deus Totius
Consolaciously.... (O
Greatest Father, and the
god of all comfort....)

Castel of Perseverance, c. 1400

**The Bad Angel and all of the Human
characters speak English, while the daughters
of God speak Latin.**

“Now Faustus, thou art conjurer
laureate
That canst command great
Mephistopheles.
*Quin redis, Mephistophilis, fratris
imagine!* ”

Marlowe, Doctor Faustus, Scene 3, 32-34)

Marlowe's Faustus uses Latin to conjure the demon,
Mephistophilis in 1604

The Language of Perseverance

How do we get from Robert of Gloucester to Christopher Marlowe? Why does English persist?

- DEMOGRAPHICS and THE WEIGHT OF ORALITY: 2% of population were Norman;
- WRITTEN HISTORY: Longer history of A.S. as a written language (Thanks, monks and King Alfred!)
- WAR and ENGLISH NATIONALISM: 100 Years War forces settled nobility to choose England or France; many chose England
 - INTERMARRIAGE
 - LAND HOLDINGS

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF THIS FORM OF COLONIZATION?

- INCREASED NUANCE: synonyms
 - E.g. King (O.E.=cyninge) → regal, sovereign, royal
- EXPANDED VOCABULARY: 10,000 new words 1200-1450
- EXCELLERATED DECAY OF INFLECTION;
- INCREASED LOAN-WORDS from Continental Trade:
 - Early M.E. =90% Anglo Saxon
 - Late M.E. =75% Anglo Saxon

LANGUAGE OF THE UPPER CRUST

What kinds of words do you think were most likely to enter the language at this time?

- ADMINISTRATION: revenue, tax, treason, government
- LAW: crime, pardon, prison, trespass, verdict
- MILITARY: ambush, navy, retreat
- FOOD: confection, spice, sugar, tart, olive, orange
- ART: joust, falcon, tragedy, poet, rhyme
- SCIENCE: anatomy, calendar, pain, physician, plague
- HOME: chandelier, chimney, curtain, latch, pantry, turret

ENGLISH NATIONALISM, ENGLISH CORPUS

- *History of the Kings of Britain* (Geoffrey of Monmouth, 1100-1155): ARTHURIAN TALES present Arthur as the king of a New Troy, whose victories against the A.S. and the French reverse the history of colonization;
- MAGNA CARTA (1215/25): NOTE: written in Latin, not English, but is the foundation of British & International Law;
- WYCLIFFE BIBLE (c. 1380): early stirrings of English Reformation rejection of Latin liturgy;
- *Canterbury Tales* (c. 1400): reflects the linguistic idiosyncrasies of a range of vocations, regions and classes.

Each contributes to the shaping of a distinctive English identity.

“
 At this time Britain was called Albion....
 Brutus then called the island Britain from
 his own name.... A little later the
 language of the people, which had up
 to then been known as Trojan or
 Crooked Greek, was called British”
 ”

Geoffrey of Monmouth

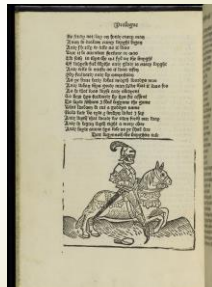
Arthurian legend creates a Classical genealogy that neatly authorizes British supremacy and, eventually, its own imperialist sense of destiny.

Chaucer: Transition to the Modern Age

Ellesmere MS,
c.1400



Caxton's Printed *Tales*,
1483



“
And Frenssh she spak ful fiare and
fetishly,
After the scole of Stratford ate Bowe,
For Frenssh of Parys was to her
unknowe.”

Chaucer's "Prioress"

By 1400, the "Frenchified" English had become an object of parody. The Prioress speaks French as an affectation of status, but Chaucer notes its "provincial" mawkishness.

So HWÆT!

- England has become a national identity;
- English goes from a language of peasants to the language of great literature and kings;
- WHY?
 - PERSISTANCE OF THE VERNACULAR;
 - WEIGHT OF ORALITY + CULTURE OF WRITING;
 - EXTERNAL PRESSURE → NATIONALISM
