THE FRENCH LEXICAL INFLUENCE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE
AN ANALYSIS OF FRENCH LOANWORDS IN THREE MIDDLE ENGLISH RELIGIOUS TEXTS (1200-1400)

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Introduction

The history of the English language is one of fascinating encounters between different peoples and cultures in the course of time. If one was to pinpoint one of the decisive socio-historical events bringing about profound and enduring changes, however, the Norman Conquest would be a suitable candidate. The Norman Conquest profoundly altered the English society and dramatically influenced its linguistic evolution. For nearly four centuries, French took over as the official language of the English nation, while the cultural outreach of the French culture reinforced its hold on English throughout the Middle English period (ca. 1100-1500). A trilingual society prevailed in England during the late Middle Ages, English, French and Latin coexisting in some sort of symbiotic relationship, “interpenetrating and drawing strength from one another”, eventually shaping “one culture in three voices” (Lerer 2007: 55). Nowadays, however, the situation has reverted itself and English has come to occupy the place that French had steadily held throughout the Middle Ages. Because of this reversal of sociolinguistic situation, the strong influence that French had once exerted on the English lexicon is no longer readily noticeable, at least to the layman.

This study aims at investigating that long-lasting influence of Old French on Middle English, more specifically its lexical influence, and situates itself in the theoretical framework of borrowing – lexical borrowing in particular – and of contact-induced language change. French influence on Middle English has drawn considerable attention among scholars and several attempts have been made at quantifying the French contribution to the English lexicon (Dekeyser 1986; Caluwé-Dor 1992; Nielsen 2005). In addition, the entrance into the lexis of Middle English of a large number of French loanwords did not only lead to a profound restructuring of the lexicon, but also deeply affected the English morphology and patterns of derivation (Kastovsky 1994), as well as the English syntax to some extent (Smith 2012; Haeberli 2010). However, although those changes have been acknowledged as decisive for the evolution of the English language, the aim of this paper is not to stress the disruptive influence of French, but rather to examine the lexical borrowing from French as part of a natural process of linguistic evolution and the degree to which the new vocabulary already integrated into the English lexicon during the Middle English period. Rather than the rupture, we want to
emphasise the continuity in the development of English and see how the foreign element has been integrated in its internal linguistic system in the course of time.

In order to undertake this analysis, three excerpts from religious texts have been selected as starting point. Those texts, spread over the Middle English period, are more likely to bear witness to the continuity of English writings since they are said to be part of a long and well-established English tradition of composition in the vernacular which finds its roots in the Old English period (Chambers 1957: lxvii). Our objective is not so much a quantitative as a qualitative approach. After having identified the presence of French lexical items in our excerpts, a qualitative and in-depth analysis of the words of our corpus will be carried out: we will first have a look at the type of words that are concerned, the semantics and connotations associated with those words and the reasons why they are used in such contexts. In a second step, we will describe how they have changed (or not) overtime, and the patterns or processes that they have followed. By doing this, we hope to come to conclusions regarding the extent of the integration and the degree of nativisation of the French loanwords in Middle English, both from a morphosyntactic and content perspective, as well as to unveil the mechanics at play behind the French lexical borrowing in the Middle English period as reflected in religious texts. We also want to see if a consistent pattern of evolution can be discerned.

This paper is divided into two parts: Chapter 1 and 2 cover the theoretical background necessary to undertake a proper analysis of loanwords. Chapter 1 contains a brief description of the mechanics of lexical borrowing as well as an overview of language contact in the history of English. The aims, material and methods are laid out in Chapter 2. The second part – the core of our study – is concerned with the corpus analysis. Chapter 3 discusses the semantics associated with the loanwords and aims at uncovering tendencies for the adoption of particular loanwords with respect to their semantic content. Chapter 4 explores the extent of the integration of the loanwords under examination into the lexis of English. Finally, this paper concludes by highlighting important findings and pointing towards possibilities for future research.
PART 1:
theoretical background
& methodology
Theoretical background

1.1. Theories on borrowing

1.1.1. Definition of borrowing

In his *Oxford Guide to Etymology*, Philip Durkin gives the following definition of borrowing: “borrowing is the usual term for the process by which a language takes new linguistic material from another language. […] Borrowing occurs in situations of language contact and is indeed an almost inevitable consequence of it, although the levels and types of borrowings which are found differ greatly in different types of contact situations” (Durkin 2009: 132). From that definition, several interesting points stand out for the research presented in this paper (1.1-1.4).

(1.1) A situation of language contact can be of different types (influence of substratum, superstratum or adstratum; geographical, social or literary contacts). It is important to define the type of language contact and its implications for the type of borrowing.

(1.2) When speaking of “languages in contact”, what it usually referred to is a situation of *users* of language in contact. The role of bilingual speakers, high officials and learned people is of particular relevance with respect to borrowing. Borrowing involve most often some degree of either mutual intelligibility or bilingualism (Durkin 2009: 156).

(1.3) Just as there are different types of contact situations, there are different types of borrowing. One refers in general to either lexical or grammatical borrowing: not only words might be borrowed from another language, but also morphemes, phonemes and even syntactic features.
There can be different levels of borrowing; foreign elements might be more or less integrated into the system of the receiving language. This implies some internal conditions for the acceptance of foreign characteristics, a certain proneness of the linguistic system to adopt particular features of the donor language.

From the definition presented above, it appears rather clearly that borrowing involves “externally-motivated changes” (Campbell 1989: 91), resulting first from a situation of language contact and further determined by the duration of the contact situation, the status held by the donor language and the intensity of the relations between the different linguistic groups. But the part played by internal, intralinguistic factors should not be overlooked. Even if he focused on grammatical borrowing in his essay, Campbell explored the so-called “structural-compatibility requirement” which claims that borrowing is only possible between very similar linguistic systems, such as dialects of the same language. This is a claim held by several linguists, the first being Jackobson: “a language accepts foreign structural elements only when they correspond to its tendencies of development.” (Jakobson 1938: 54, cited by Weinreich 1953: 25, in Campbell 1989: 92). Weinreich also suggested that “such latent internal tendencies exist even without the intervention of foreign influence; the language contact and the resulting interference could be considered to have, at best, a trigger effect, releasing or accelerating developments which mature independently”. Campbell nevertheless demonstrated that borrowing did not happen only in situations of shared structural similarity and that social factors might overcome structural resistance to borrowing (Campbell 1989: 94). In addition, lexical borrowing is less constrained than grammatical borrowing, so that lexical items are more easily borrowed than grammatical structures (Campbell 1989: 101). The structural-compatibility principle should thus be considered as a general tendency rather than an absolute constraint (Campbell 1989: 104). However, differences between the grammatical systems of any two languages may well have a significant impact on borrowing, because borrowing is in general easier between closely related languages or between languages presenting some degree of mutual intelligibility (Durkin 2009: 164). If borrowing is mainly triggered by external factors, internal factors within the linguistic system will have a crucial role to play in the scope of the borrowing and the extent to which the new elements will integrate and make their way into the borrowing language.
1.1.2. Lexical borrowing: typology

The type of borrowing that we are interested in in this paper is lexical borrowing. The lexis of a language is subject to two kinds of change: changes due to internal developments and word-formation processes inherent to the lexicon such as derivation, compounding, back-formation and conversion; and changes brought about by the external influence of another language (Aertsen 1989: 25-26). Lexical borrowing falls within this latter type of change. However, even if lexical borrowing is triggered by external influence and sociolinguistic factors, it is also motivated by internal factors such as morphological analogy and functional utility (Nielsen 1998: 82). The very act of borrowing is an act of inherent complexity and it is sometimes difficult to assess the share of external and internal factors in the process. Some attention will also be devoted to derivational processes in Chapter 4, but only as a secondary step resulting of the assimilation and naturalisation of foreign loanwords. Four different types of lexical borrowing are generally distinguished (1.5-1.8):

(1.5) Loanwords: this is the more general type of borrowing, when a word, its form and its meaning is transferred from the donor language into the borrowing language. There might be some degree of assimilation to the sound system as well as to the inflectional morphology of the borrowing language (e.g.: verb inflections or plural form). Loanwords show differing degrees of naturalisation from a phonological, prosodic or morphological point of view, which are often related with the date of entry into the lexicon (e.g. oblige vs. prestige: difference in vowel quality; syllable vs. campaign: difference in pattern of accentuation; appendixes or appendices: difference in morphological pattern). These will be the main focus of our study.

(1.6) Loan translations (or calques) are the replication of the structure of a foreign-language word or expression by means of synonymous word forms in the borrowing language. However, there is not always an exact correspondence between the words or expressions in either language. This was one of the preferred methods of Old English: instead of using Latin loanwords as such, Old English “translated” them by means of native words (e.g. Evangelium, ‘good tidings’, became godspell in English).
(1.7) Semantic loans: this was also a method frequently used by Old English. It consists in taking an existing word and extending its meaning to integrate or denote new concepts. (e.g. *Easter*, the name of the dawn Goddess, was eventually used to express a Christian celebration). In the case of a semantic loan, a word of the donor language influences the development of a word in the borrowing language, but only from a semantic point of view (it has little to no influence on its form).

(1.8) Loanblends (and hybrids): this category is considered by some scholars as an intermediate category between loanwords and loan translations (Durkin 2009: 138). It consists of the borrowing of a complex word where morphs in the borrowed word are replaced by native morphs (e.g. *ofservet* in the *Ancrene Wisse*). A loanblend is different from a hybrid in that the latter is a complex word deliberately built from elements with a different etymology through processes of derivation (e.g. *spushad* or *covershipe* in the *Ancrene Wisse*). As such, hybrids are considered by scholars as instances of indirect borrowing (Dekeyser 1986: 254). Hybrids and loanblends will be discussed in Chapter 4, section 4.3.3. of this study.

1.2. The mechanics of lexical borrowing

1.2.1. Lexical borrowing: a long-term process

The study of lexical borrowing is closely interconnected with cultural history and extralinguistic factors (Durkin 2009: 149), but we have seen that internal processes are also likely to play a part, although they are often secondary to and might be overcome by social factors. In addition, once a word has been borrowed, it has to spread further into the lexicon: “initial interlinguistic borrowing is typically followed by intralinguistic borrowing” (Durkin: 178). It is not because a loanword appears in the text of one specific author that it will automatically be used (and understood) by all other speakers of the language. We should thus be careful with single instances of a word in a text. The choice of words in the Middle Ages was largely idiosyncratic and often dependent on the choices of the author or the scribe (Bennett & Smithers 1968: 52). Internal or secondary borrowing can occur from one dialect to another, or from a very specific to a more general use (Durkin: 144) and is more reliant on internal factors since the loanword will exhibit a greater morphosyntactic integration.
It emerges from what has been said that borrowing is not a “once-and-for-all process”. Instead, the process of adoption and spread into the lexicon is a very gradual one (Durkin 2009: 141-142). Full acceptance of a lexical item as the dominant expression can take centuries to occur, if it ever does. Dance (2003: 311-313, cited in Durkin 2009: 163) further emphasises that “some lexical redundancy is natural within a system, as are other types of variation. […] Lexical borrowing can be seen simply as adding to variation in the first instance, and not as a drastic imposition on the core of a language’s vocabulary that needs to be accounted for by tremendous pressures of prestige attaching to the source tongue”. Dance’s affirmation is in line with our standpoint which tends to see lexical borrowing from French as a natural process of evolution resulting from situation of language contact, rather than a ‘counterintuitive’ or unnatural imposition by the dominant group of speakers.

1.2.2. Motivations for lexical borrowing

Several factors are at play for the adoption of a particular word into the lexicon. Durkin identifies “need and prestige” as two “traditional” motivations for lexical borrowing, but he also stresses the limitations of both concepts (2009: 142). Borrowing in order to fill semantic needs typically happens when the borrowing language lacks a word to express a particular reality, or when new concepts arise that need to be given lexical expression. However, if it is true that new concepts constantly appear in a given society, it would be exaggerated to assert that borrowing was necessary to fill structural gaps of Old English.

The hypothesis according to which Middle English would have borrowed heavily from French because of lexical gaps or insufficiency is challenged by the fact that Old English was very reluctant to borrow new words from Latin and preferred to use its own resources such as loan translations or semantic loans (Nielsen 1998: 133). However, those native resources gradually fell into oblivion simultaneously with the well-established West-Saxon literary tradition, as a consequence of tremendous historical and political changes (i.e. the Norman Conquest), whereas religious reforms and social changes, taking place both in England and throughout Europe during the 12th and 13th centuries, triggered the need for new means of expression (see Chapter 3, section 3.4.).

Lexical borrowing as a result of the so-called prestige of one language is not a comprehensive concept either, because it fails to account for the wide-ranging changes that occurred in the wake of the Conquest. Prestige is linked with stylistic choices: the author makes a conscious use of a foreign element into his language. Trotter refers to that type of loanwords
as ‘cultural borrowings’. Dominance would be a more suitable term to account for a type of lexical borrowing that involves the language of a politically or socially dominant class (Durkin 2009: 143). Lexical borrowing because of prestige involves awareness on the part of the author; dominance, on the other hand, leads to the gradual obliteration of native words because of the recurrence of words of the dominant language in a less conscious process. It mainly concerns words that have to do with the new social order established by the ruling class. Finally, Nielsen (2005: 104) and Trotter (2003: 91) identified a third type of loanwords, that resulting from linguistic coexistence. This category is mainly made up of everyday words, referred to as ‘core borrowings’.

Furthermore, the role of bilingual speakers should not be overlooked. For the scribal class, who operated in multilingual environments, Anglo-French and Latin were ever-present languages of record providing readily available lexical resources. According to Trotter (2003: 85), the traditional concepts of separate and separable languages owe possibly more to modern ideologies than to contemporary perceptions of linguistic reality and should be revised. Indeed, although they occurred in a situation of diglossia, Trotter suggests that Latin, French and English interpenetrated more intimately than our modern conceptions of language allow us to think, and that scribes, as all multilinguals do, plainly drew on every language at their disposal. The first attestation of a word of French origin into a Middle English text could therefore only be an isolated instance of code-switching and does not necessarily lead to the assumption that the word has been accepted in the general lexicon of the language on a larger scale.

Finally, the internal factor of morphological compatibility, if not considered as a motivation, will nonetheless facilitate the subsequent adoption of a word into the lexicon and ensure its ultimate fixation into the vocabulary (see Chapter 4, section 4.5.). The motivations for lexical borrowing are thus various and complex and go beyond the conventional explanations of political dominance or cultural prestige. One should therefore remain careful and critical with traditional motivations for fear of oversimplification of complex sociolinguistic situations (Timofeeva 2018a: 6).
1.2.3. Changes in form and meaning

Once they have integrated into the lexis of a language, loanwords are subsequently subject to change, both in form and meaning. The change in word form can give information about the provenance of a word and be traced back thanks to historical grammar. However, a corresponding historical semantics does not exist that would help the scholars trace back the semantic evolution of a word. Semantic changes are not easily predictable and depend heavily on extralinguistic factors (Durkin 2009: 259-260). As such, two words of identical etymology can develop in different ways in different languages. Our corpus presents much evidence of words borrowed from (Anglo-)French that have a similar (if not identical) form and meaning at that time, but that will overtime suffer a semantic evolution as well as changes in word form that will differentiate them utterly from one another. The loanword *charge*, recorded in the *Ancrene Wisse* and the *Cloud of Unknowing*, entered the vocabulary of Middle English with the same meaning as its French counterpart, ‘to weigh’. Overtime though, it came to signify ‘to accuse’. Modern English *very* was originally borrowed from Anglo-French *verrey* ‘true’ and evolved both in form and in meaning overtime, ultimately shifting from one word-class to another.

Changes also occur within the system itself. The process of analogy is very important in this evolution and often occurs between words (native or borrowed) that present a similar phonological structure or share some of their meanings. Two processes of analogy are worth emphasising: analogy in meaning (1.9) or in word form (1.10).

(1.9) We speak of semantic contamination when a word often occurs in a collocation with another word, and subsequently takes up the connotation associated with that other word to acquire in turn a more positive or negative meaning. This is the case of the word *knave*, meaning ‘boy’ in Old English and which evolve to denote ‘one of low birth’ in Middle English, then took up the negative sense of ‘rogue, rascal’ (Durkin 2009: 238).

(1.10) We speak of formal contamination when some words are remodelled on the basis of perceived formal parallels within the linguistic system. Such an analogical change is observable in the integration of the French loan *cacchen* into the paradigm of the native irregular verb *lacchen* ‘to seize’ in Middle English, as well as the integration of French *strive* in the paradigm of *drive*. This process of analogy and mutual formal influence will be strong in the adoption of some loanwords into the English lexis (Durkin 2009: 201).
1.3. Lexical borrowing in the history of English

As has been seen above, there were relatively few words of foreign origin in Old English. Old English preferred to fill the need for new words by resorting to its own native resources and word-formation processes rather than by borrowing words. Processes such as semantic loans and loan translations therefore outweighed by far direct Latin loanwords. (Nielsen 1998: 133, 141). However, the English language would later make extensive use of lexical borrowing. Due to its historical background, Middle English reoriented its borrowing strategies and exhibited a stronger proneness to lexical borrowing than Old English. From the 13th century onwards, a situation of complex trilingualism had established itself in England, where Latin and French coexisted with the native English language in a situation of tri-glossia, i.e. functional distribution of each language. The Anglo-Saxon culture of Old English thus contrasts rather strongly with the multilingual culture of later medieval England (Durkin 2009: 175).

The lexicon of present-day English exhibits several layers of borrowing which all reflect in part the history of England itself, a fascinating history of contact between cultures. In this paper, we will focus on the lexical borrowing that occurred in the Middle Ages, chiefly words transferred from Latin, Old French and Old Norse\(^1\), and leave aside later borrowing such as the Latin loanwords from the Renaissance, the Spanish and Portuguese influence during the Discoveries and later French influence, which remained strong throughout the Early Modern period up until the 18th century (Nielsen 2005).

1.3.1. Early Latin loanwords

The following three phases of early Latin lexical borrowing can be distinguished (Nielsen 1998: 141-151).

1.3.1.1. Continental Latin borrowing of the pre-Christian era (1st-5th century)

After the conquest of Britain, the Roman Empire established a trade zone between Gaul, Germanic provinces, the Low Countries and Britain. The vocabulary borrowed followed the

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\(^1\) There is a terminological problem with the designation “Old Norse”, since the forms commonly cited as “Old Norse” are in fact predominantly “Old Icelandic”, the earliest Scandinavian variety to have extensive written records (Durkin 2009: 141). However, this is a complex issue that goes far beyond the scope of our study. We will thus not indulge further in the matter.
trade routes and was mainly military and everyday words that reflected the types of contact prevailing between the Romans and the Germanic tribes. Those loanwords were typically concrete and semantically very restricted, related to material objects or technical improvements: e.g. dish, kitchen, cheese, street, mile, etc. (Nielsen 1998: 147).

1.3.1.2. Pre-Christian insular borrowings (ca. 450-600)

When the Anglo-Saxon invaders arrived in Britain in the 5th century, there was probably some – but very restricted – lexical and cultural influence of the Romanised native Celtic population, but the main source for lexical borrowing was most probably the ongoing trading relations with Gaul and the Franks, resulting in the following loanwords: anchor, copper, inch, the suffix -caster, etc. (Nielsen 1998: 151).

1.3.1.3. Latin loanwords of the Christian era in the British Isles (from the 7th c.)

This new influx of Latin loanwords under the impulse of Christianisation was much larger than the previous ones, and it is also of particular relevance for our research, since they are words linked with religious matters that will be reinforced by French during the Middle English period some centuries later. The Latin words borrowed during the Christian era are in general easy to distinguish from those of earlier periods, since they are learned rather than everyday words that had not undergone the early Old English sound changes (Nielsen 1998: 147). The following loanwords were already attested in (late) Old English: abbot, bishop, priest, cleric, prophet, apostle, angel, martyr, candle, hymn, etc.

1.3.2. Scandinavian lexical borrowing

The Viking incursions in the British Isles in the 8th and 9th centuries ultimately resulted in permanent settlements. This coexistence between the Danish invaders and the Anglo-Saxons culminated when the Danelaw was established by means of the Treaty of Wedmore signed by the West-Saxon King Alfred and the Viking leader Guthrum, in 879; and reached another climax when England was ruled by the Danish King Cnut (1015-1042). According to Nielsen (1998: 179): “The influence of Scandinavian on English culminated in the Middle English dialects of Northern and Eastern England. Some of these loans found their way into Modern
English, others survived only dialectally.” This affirmation points towards a long-term process of borrowing. Initial borrowing occurred in areas of extensive Scandinavian settlements, where speakers of the two languages were in direct contact, which highlights the importance of geographical proximity for Norse-derived lexis. Subsequent internal borrowing into the dialects of Middle English that had less contacts with Scandinavian settlements (such as the West Midlands) followed. This internal spread into other dialects of English was made possible by close typological affinities between languages of Germanic origin. Scandinavian loanwords were chiefly everyday words and seem to suggest social and cultural equality between the English native population and the Danish colonists, further reinforced by some degree of mutual intelligibility stemming from the fact that both languages are Germanic. Some recent and extensive studies have been carried out on Scandinavian borrowings, such as the research done by Dance (2003) and Townend (2002).

1.3.3. French lexical borrowing

The chief source of French lexical borrowing was the variant known as Anglo-French (Trotter 2003: 83), developed in England and based on the varieties of French spoken in western and northern France (Normandy, Anjou, Maine, etc.). However, the increasing cultural prestige of Central French, the variety spoken in and around Paris, ensured continuous continental influence. Continental influence was gaining momentum from the 14th century onwards, at the time when the increasing prestige of Central French caused the Anglo-French variety to fall into disuse (Nielsen 2005: 15). These facts hint at the complexity of assessing the exact provenance of French loanwords. Anglo-French worked as a superstratum, i.e. the language of the dominant group of speakers which has a long-lasting and rather profound influence on the borrowing language through language contact, without succeeding in replacing it altogether. Contrary to what might be expected, the period recording the highest number of French loanwords in the Middle Ages situates itself between 1250 and 1400 – with a peak around 1350 and a decline in the 15th century – that is, after the several waves of French immigration between 1200 and 1250 and after the loss of Normandy in 1204, at a time when the number of native French speakers was on the decline (Nielsen 2005: 9-10). If these observations seem rather puzzling at first glance, several factors might help clarify the situation.
The replacement of the Anglo-Saxon nobility by the Norman upper-class had been rather swift, but the official language introduced with the Norman nobility and clergy was Latin. However, the Normans stuck to their own idiom and English was consequently confined to the lower classes. Furthermore, the number of Norman and other French settlers was small, and the relations of the Norman kings and their English subjects were rather limited since they spent most of their time in their continental estates. French was thus not much used as a spoken medium outside the nobility and the clergy (Nielsen 2005: 11-12). It was only around 1200 that French seriously entered in competition with Latin and gradually imposed itself as the language of written record for government and the law.

However, by the time Norman French was firmly established as a language of written record and had developed into an insular variety referred to as Anglo-French (ca. 1250), the number of native French speakers had dropped (Nielsen 2005: 14). Interestingly thus, at the moment when French could have been expected to be ousted out of England because of the lack of native speakers, “fashion came in to reinforce French” (Chambers 1957: lxxxviii). The political power of the king of France was reinforced by the regaining of the French estates previously held by the English, while French literary developments ensured the exceptional cultural outreach of France throughout medieval Europe. By the early 13th century, the growing importance of French as a language of international politics and culture ensured its continued use in England (Nielsen 2005: 14), whereas the gradual loss of the English literary standard, occulted by the written use of Latin and French, prevented a dialectally-fragmented English to compete with a rather uniform Anglo-French at a supra-regional level (Nielsen 2005: 25). The number of bilingual people, therefore, dramatically increased because knowledge of French was needed in several domains such as government, law, education and literature. Bilingualism was not restricted to the upper classes but was extended mainly to traders, lawyers and clerks (Nielsen 2005: 13). Lexical borrowing was thus facilitated by mutual intelligibility and code-switching. According to Nielsen (2005: 19), the period of heaviest lexical borrowing from French is thus delimitated by the rise of bilingualism after 1200 and the re-emergence of English as an official language of literacy after 1400.

The impact of the French language upon English was further reinforced by the political events of the time, namely what Chambers called “the futile pursuit of the crown of France”, which has led to “four centuries of wasted efforts”, burying with it the ideal, initiated by the West-Saxon kings, of a united Britain (Chambers 1957: lxxix). The Hundred Years’ War was crucial to the development of the English language in two ways. At first, it rather impeded its development, as speaking French was deemed a means for the kings of England to legitimate
their claim to the throne of France. However, as the war raged on, French came increasingly to be seen as the language of the enemy, which help arouse a shared sense of English identity. It would nevertheless take more time to consider the English language as a means of expression of that identity, and although English nationality had asserted itself, “custom still demanded that Latin or French should be used” in the 13th and 14th century (Chambers 1957: cixiii). French would retain its status, especially as language of the law, up until the 18th century (1731) (Nielsen 2005: 17; Wilson 1951: 57). When English was finally restored as the official language in domains that French had previously held in the 14th and 15th centuries, a lot of French terminology was transferred into English (Nielsen 2005: 19). The French lexical element remained strong in Early Modern English (1500-1660) and up to the 18th century. However, we will not devote too much attention to those later borrowings since they are beyond the scope of this study.

1.3.4. Differences between French and Scandinavian lexical borrowing

The conditions for borrowing from French or from Scandinavian languages were very different, and this must be taken into account in an analysis of French loanwords. Three important points distinguish Scandinavian from French (and Latin) lexical borrowing. First of all, Anglo-French speakers occupied well-defined and key positions in society, whereas the Norse-speaking community was largely confined to particular geographical areas of settlement (mainly in the North and the East of England) (Durkin 2009: 163). French-speakers also generally enjoyed a higher social status while evidence from Scandinavian loanwords points towards a social and cultural equality between the English and the Danish (Nielsen 1998: 187). Finally, French-speakers made up only a small proportion of the total population whereas the Scandinavian community is expected to have been of a considerable size. The size of the group was thus not the determinant factor for French borrowing; rather, it was their social status which ensured extensive word transferring.

A contrast can therefore be established between Norse loanwords, which were initially geographically delimited, and French loanwords, which are not linked to any specific geographical area. Nielsen (2005: 30-35) notes that the French loanwords were rather homogeneously distributed across the five dialects in the text samples that he analyzed, whereas the borrowing of Old Norse lexical items was more or less restricted to the texts which had been written in the former Danelaw. We can conclude at this point that the motives and mechanics
at work behind Norse and French lexical borrowing were thus very different, too. Scandinavian borrowing relied heavily upon geographical contacts between populations of equal status, whereas French borrowing was motivated by the social status and worked mainly through literary, i.e. written contacts, which ensured a uniform distribution of the French loanwords across the dialects of Middle English. French borrowing in England can be referred to as vertical (social and supra-local) borrowing, while Scandinavian borrowing would rather be a type of horizontal (geographical) borrowing (Nielsen 2005: 188).

1.3.5. From French native speakers to English bilinguals

Only extremely limited borrowing is possible in a contact situation if neither the speaker of the donor language nor the speaker of the borrowing language knows anything of the other’s language. For extensive borrowing to occur, we must have either a situation in which two dialects or languages are at least in part mutually intelligible, or one in which at least one speaker of one language has at least enough knowledge of another language (Durkin 2009: 156). A certain degree of mutual intelligibility between the speakers is more important than a high number of speakers, and the importance of bilingual people is crucial. As time went on, the number of bilingual speakers increased: the officials of the kingdom, who had at first been Norman noblemen, were in large measure English and “moved freely from one language to another” in a situation of complex trilingualism (Nielsen 2005: 14). As a result, Rothwell pointed out that “insular French evolved in parallel and in constant contact with Middle English on the soil of England” (cited in Nielsen 2005: 14), while Trotter (2003: 84) goes further by saying that Anglo-French could hardly be considered as a foreign element in medieval England. Trotter (2003: 86) further advocated to devote more attention to the role of code-switching typical of bilingual speakers in order to reassess the status of some French loanwords. It will be examined if this claim is sustainable with respect to the excerpts of texts analysed in this paper (see section 4.6.).
1.4. Conclusion

Borrowing is a complex process in which several factors have to be taken into account, external as well as internal. According to Jesperson (1938: 28), there is “nothing to induce one to use words from foreign languages for things one has just as well at home”. We ought to remain very critical when explaining the reason why one word replaced another that was native in origin. Considering the multiple linguistic resources of Old English, one can wonder why such a gap-filling process was needed at the level of vocabulary. However, it is better understood when we know that the substitution of French and Latin for the English vernacular in written use led to the loss of the West-Saxon literary standard and to the re-emergence of geographically fragmented dialects. English would then inevitably lose some of its more literary vocabulary, as well as vocabulary of specific domains that French had taken over. Lexical borrowing is a natural process that happens in any language, but it might at some point in the history of a language be reinforced by a disruptive element. This is what happened in England when French replaced English as the official language. Political events and decisions strongly influence linguistic use, and profound transformations in late medieval Europe will reinforce linguistic change. The extensiveness of the changes from Old to Middle English further points towards an influence that went beyond the vocabulary, to the borrowing of grammatical structures and devices as well.
Aim, material & methodology

This paper aims at investigating the French loanwords appearing in religious texts from the Middle English period as well as unveiling some of the mechanics at play behind the French lexical borrowing of that period. It comprises a semantic analysis of those loanwords as well as an examination of their level of integration into the lexis of Middle English (from a phonological and morphosyntactic point of view). The excerpts that will constitute the main focus of this study are Part Three of the *Ancrene Wisse* (composed ca. 1215) entitled “Lessons from Nature”, the 20th homily (third Sunday in Lent) from the *Northern Homily Cycle* dated from ca. 1350, and finally the first 15 chapters of the mystical treatise called the *Cloud of Unknowing* written ca. 1375. The material was retrieved from the critical editions of those texts compiled by the *Robbins Library Digital Projects* (University of Rochester). Variation between manuscripts will not be taken into account in our analysis, no comparison between manuscripts will hence be made. The translations provided in the various examples across the text will traditionally come from Bella Millett’s translation (2004) in the case of *Ancrene Wisse*, and from Clifton Wolters (1978) for the *Cloud*. All translations from the *Northern Homily Cycle*, however, are mine. Any recourse to other sources for translation will be indicated accordingly.

The *Ancrene Wisse* – the Guide for Anchoresses – is undoubtely the most famous of our selected texts. Originally composed for three young women of gentle birth who had withdrawn from the world, the literary and practical value of the *Ancrene Wisse* led to its adaptation some years later to a broader audience, ca. 1230. Its popularity will last throughout medieval England up until the early 16th century. It is recognised as a landmark in English literature and the stylistic quality it achieved reinforces the argument in favour of the continuity of English prose. The high internal consistency of its dialect is worth noting (Zettersten 1965: 24), as well as its building upon a literary tradition inherited from Old English (1965: 295).

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2 The dates given are approximate and are far from achieving unanimous support among scholars.
The Northern Homily Cycle is rarely cited as a work of major influence in the history of English literature, but it is nevertheless beyond any doubt part of the homiletic tradition that goes back to the pre-Conquest writings of Ælfric. Although the dividing line between early and late Middle English is traditionally drawn around 1300 (Nielsen 2005: 29), the Cycle appears rather conservative in spite of its late date of composition, which is reflected in its treatment of loanwords. Finally, the contrast is sharp between the two previous texts and the Cloud of Unknowing, which is definitely the most modern and innovative text of our corpus. Chambers (1957: ci) claimed that the influence of the Ancrene Wisse upon the Cloud of Unknowing is discernible in the same plain and authentic style, ensuring the continuity of religious prose.

The selected texts span a period of nearly two centuries (from the early 13th to the late 14th century) and come from three distinct geographical areas – respectively the West Midlands, North and East Midlands. As such, they show that French loanwords were not geographically restricted and are likely to give an overview of the diversity and evolution of French lexical borrowing through time. They were written in a period when Norman rule was established and the Norman dialect of the settlers had evolved into the variety of insular French recognised as Anglo-French (Le Coultr 2013: 3). Meanwhile, Old English had evolved into the five traditionally recognised Middle English dialects: Northern, West Midland, East Midland, South-Western and South-Eastern (Burrow & Turville-Petre 1999: 7). Arguably, this period also corresponds to the period of steady increase in lexical borrowing from French, delimitated by the rise of bilingualism after 1200 and the re-use of English as language of record after 1400 (Nielsen 2005:19). Finally, the background against which those authors were writing was bound to be a multilingual environment at the crossroads between Latin, (Anglo)-French and English.

The first step of our analysis was the constitution of a database listing all French loanwords comprised in our excerpts. The database (see Appendix IV) included the following information, retrieved either from the Middle English Dictionary or the text itself: loanword, frequency, alternate spellings, French etymon, potential native counterparts and translation. In order to analyse the loanwords semantically, we had in a second step to define semantic categories, which has been done according to two sources: the categories defined under chapter 10 of Nielsen’s From Dialect to Standard (2005) and the UCREL Semantic Analysis System3.

Table 1 below is an adapted list which aims at filling the specific needs of our analysis of French loanwords in religious Middle English texts. The semantic field was added in the database by means of the corresponding letter (see Appendix IV).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Broad semantic categories</th>
<th>Sub-categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Rank in church hierarchy; Spiritual life, vices &amp; virtues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Secular government &amp; the public domain</td>
<td>Rank, legal matters, financial issues, institutions, crime and punishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>Scholarship, science and arts</td>
<td>Education, intellectual activity, science and technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>Military terminology</td>
<td>War, violence, fighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>Entertainment, sports &amp; games</td>
<td>Including hunting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>Commerce &amp; trade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>Life &amp; living things</td>
<td>Nature, animals, plants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td>Substances, materials, objects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Including farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td>Houses &amp; the home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>The individual &amp; the body</td>
<td>Including names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>Physical actions, states and processes</td>
<td>Including processes of change, appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>Psychological &amp; Mental actions, states and processes</td>
<td>Including emotions, morals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>Social actions, states and processes</td>
<td>Including manners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>Linguistic actions, states and processes</td>
<td>Including discourse markers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q</td>
<td>Location &amp; movement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Numbers &amp; measurement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>General &amp; abstract terms</td>
<td>Words with no extralinguistic reference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: analytical framework for the semantic analysis

a semantic category to each word employing a comprehensive semantic category scheme, rather than providing word definitions. For the purpose of our study, we adapted the 21 major discourse fields based on contemporary English presented in this paper to the Middle English period.
We thus started from the initial list of semantic labels from the UCREL system, which we adapted or refined when some words did not seem to fit exactly in them, or when one category seemed too broad to capture differences. The resulting semantic categories of Table 1 are ordered according to their expected relevance, starting with the categories that are likely to bring together a substantial number of French loanwords. Since we are analyzing religious texts, the category “religion” comes on top of the table, and considering that after the Norman Conquest, most institutions were held by a Norman and chiefly French-speaking aristocracy, “secular government & the public domain” comes next. This category subsumes in turn everything that has to do with public institutions, including chiefly legal issues and financial matters. Crime and punishment are also included within that category. As the authors of those religious texts are likely to have been learned men endowed with a certain level of education, they may be assumed to have borrowed some French (or Latin) words when referring to the field of “scholarship, science & arts”. In this category we find words linked with education, intellectual activity, science and technology. “Military terminology” has been established as a separate group since it is typically a domain where the socially dominant group will impose its own words. As a category related to politics, it was also submitted to strong Norman and French influence. “Entertainment, sports & games” follows, which might reflect the interests and activities of the French-speaking elite. Hunting and other worldly and leisurely activities are regrouped under this denomination. Since our texts are mainly religious in nature, we might expect a rather low amount of this kind of loanwords, though. “Commerce” is the next category, as the merchants and traders were likely to be, if not bilingual, at least acquainted enough with French to carry out their transactions. “Life and living things”, brings together everything that is connected with nature: animals, plants, the environment, etc. “The individual & the body”, on the other hand, is concerned with everything that distinguishes a human being, including names. In between comes the semantic field of “substances, materials and objects”. “Food and farming” and “houses and the home” are two categories that are likely to have retained their English character because it is related to domestic and everyday life, domains of life which have been little influenced by French. We find subsequently four categories of actions, states and processes, where we can expect to find a great deal of verbs: physical, mental and psychological (under which emotional), social and linguistic. Under the label “linguistic actions”, we include interjections and discourse markers punctuating the text. Second to last, we find three more abstract categories: expression of “Time”, “Location & movement” and “Numbers &

4 The same had happened in French, which picked up Germanic words in that field when the region of present-day Northern France was under Frankish rule: guerre, heaume, etc. (Van Der Auwera & Patard 2015: 3).
measurement”. Finally, the last category, “general & abstract terms”, refers to words that have no extralinguistic reference. Because the semantic analysis presented in this paper focuses on lexical borrowing, we have left out the category “grammatical words”, on the one hand because they convey little meaning, and on the other because few grammatical words were directly borrowed from French.

Naturally, such an analytic framework is far from infallible and some ambiguous words are likely to be found which could fit into more than one category. This is for example the case with the words denoting vices and virtues. Instead of categorising them as physical or mental processes (for *glotonye* or *covetise* respectively), we decided to label them as religious terms since they are strongly connoted as such. Furthermore, *mercy* is listed under the label “religion”, since this word occurs most often in our texts in the sense of God’s forgiveness. The interjection *Allas* has been described as a linguistic act since it really refers to a typical spoken usage, although it reflects a mental and emotional state. Some loanwords have thus been subject to closer attention in order to determine the category in which it would fit best. A further problem is that those categories are broad and might sometimes need refining in order to get a more accurate picture of the semantic distribution of loanwords. For instance, this table does not establish a distinction between positive and negative mental actions, states and processes. Such a refinement of the semantic analysis will be done during the discussion below for the more relevant aspects.
PART 2:
CORPUS ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION
Semantic analysis

3.1. Preliminary considerations: influence of the genre

The type of text is very likely to have some influence on the extent of the lexical borrowing and the nature of the loanwords. Before a semantic analysis of loanwords is carried out, it is important to consider some features related to the textual genre. All three texts submitted to discussion in this paper are religious in nature: a homily and two excerpts from devotional treatises. Admittedly, religious texts do not seek to achieve purely literary purposes – they carry a moral and educational purpose beyond a merely entertaining one. Furthermore, religious writings seem to form part of an unbroken tradition of original composition into English, and it is also a genre that shows very little influence of French linguistic, literary and rhetorical techniques in general (Wilson 1951: 147). As such, religious texts occupy a position of particular importance in the history of English literature and this is bound to affect lexical borrowing accordingly.

3.1.1. The homiletic tradition: between continuity and rupture

According to Chambers (1957: xc), religious devotional prose established a link between the pre-Conquest West-Saxon prose and the new secular prose that emerged by the end of the 15th century. After the Norman Conquest, a lot of Old English homilies, among which those of Ælfric, continued to be actively copied and devotional treatises such as the History of the Holy Rood Tree and Vices and Virtues showed that the practice of writing religious texts in English was not stopped, even under the supervision of Norman bishops and abbots. From about the year 1200, new collections of homilies were being composed, drawing upon the tradition established by Ælfric, and before the work of this great homilist from the Old English period was forgotten, a new great master of prose writing, the author of the Ancrene Wisse, arose to
carry on their work (Chambers 1957: xci-xciii). Internally and stylistically, this continuity can be witnessed in the use of alliteration and remnants of oral techniques of composition, well into the 14th century. Parallels can even be drawn between the *Cloud of Unknowing* and the *Ancrene Wisse*, although they are separated by a 150-year gap and a different style (Gunn 2008: 159). Those religious texts were the strong ground upon which authors from the 15th and 16th centuries such as Thomas More would rebuild an English prose suitable for a larger number of purposes and able to fill the needs of 16th-century England (Chambers 1957: liv).

Chambers’ arguments support the claim – and the stance we chose to adopt – of the continuity of English vernacular composition, as opposed to a view of the Norman Conquest as the gravedigger of English prose. In this view, the lexical borrowing integrates itself into a continuous and steady linguistic evolution: the foreign element (i.e. French) has not been imposed upon but has gradually entered the English language and its literary traditions as the result of a long history of language contact. Furthermore, it could be argued that Anglo-French could hardly be considered a foreign element in England at the time when our texts were composed, since this insular variety of French developed on the British Isles from the speech of the conquerors (Wilson 1951: 56), where it achieved literary prestige and closely coexisted with Middle English (Trotter 2010: 83).

However, other authors such as Bennett & Smithers (1966: 224) have argued against that assumed continuity, putting forward that the *Ancrene Wisse* presented a style radically different from that of the homilists of the Old English period. According to them, the *Ancrene Wisse* and Ælfric’s *Catholic Homilies* “belong to different worlds” and consequently, the statement that the *Ancrene Wisse* is a main example of the ‘continuity’ of Old and Middle English prose is “a major error of literary history”. The reason they gave for that is that new techniques of exegesis and instruction had developed along with universities in the 12th century, and that the new scholasticism and the increased study of logic had brought about major changes in the way of preaching. Those changes highlighted by Bennett & Smithers, however, do not seem to be linked at all with French influence. They are rather accounted for as literary and intellectual developments of the period which occurred throughout Western Europe. In this respect, it seems inappropriate to talk about a rupture, since intellectual and literary improvements are a natural process of evolution, inevitable in the course of time.

It would probably be safer, while acknowledging the importance of the *Ancrene Wisse* in the history of English literature, to conclude with Hasenfratz who edited the text for the Robbins Library Digital Projects that “although it has some important connections to the late Old English homiletic tradition, *Ancrene Wisse*’s vernacular prose does not descend directly from
it” (Hasenfratz 2000). Arnovick (2012: 556, 574) also supports a more general continuity hypothesis for the Middle English literary language, while acknowledging the extent of the breach caused by the Norman Conquest.

### 3.1.2. Moral purpose and literary quality

Authors of religious texts did not only build upon an existing writing tradition, but also upon a particular spirit, which demanded to make accessible religious matters to the less learned. As Wilson puts it (1951: 108-109), “in post-Conquest times, homiletic teaching in their own language was still necessary to the common people, and when the traditions of the old literary dialect were broken, the work was carried on by dialects which had retained some tradition of composition in the vernacular”. This strong tendency pervaded all of England and found its highest expression in the King James Bible of 1611 (Chambers 1957: xlvii).

The texts analysed in this study show a common concern that the lay people may get knowledge about the Christian faith. This very purpose is also a token of the continuity of English religious writings, long before the Reformation. What is at stake in those texts is to ensure the understanding of a less learned audience. From the 12th to the 14th century, “to save someone’s soul or to improve someone’s morals were seemingly the only motives which could suffice to persuade an Englishman to write his native language” (Pollard 1903: 19, cited in Chambers 1957: cxi). The audience was thus one of the main causes for the composition of so many religious texts and was of two types. The former were the unlearned laymen who needed to be taught in their own mother tongue and in a rather plain language. This audience ensured the continued tradition of writing homilies in the vernacular. The second type of audience was typical of the Middle English period and encouraged the writing of devotional treatises aimed at would-be recluses, i.e. a feminine audience that was not expected to be as familiar as men would be with Latin (Chambers 1957: xciii).

Although these kinds of writing were aimed at a somewhat less learned audience, they were to remain literary works. That tension was already found during the Old English period: in the preface to his translation of Gregory’s Pastoral Care, King Alfred advocated translations of Latin works into English in order to make basic theological knowledge available to everybody, but his aim was also to achieve a literary prose in the vernacular. Linguistically, this tension was expressed between the use of Latin, the official language of the church, and the use of
English to make basic theological and religious knowledge available to anyone – one of the main aims of Christianity. Latin rhetorical devices would, in addition, always underlie preaching in the vernacular.

The literary quality of the *Ancrene Wisse* and the *Cloud of Unknowing* was indeed recognised by scholars, among others by Chambers (1957: xcvi) and Zettersen (1965: 22) in whose opinion there must have been a literary tradition behind such a uniform and consistent style, hence a compliance with some stylistic rules. In addition, the target-audience of the *Ancrene Wisse* was not particularly uneducated: the Guide was initially written for three sisters of noble birth who wished to withdraw from the world and become anchoresses (Bennett & Smithers 1966: 223). Their noble birth hints at the fact that their education might have included knowledge of French. Clark (1966: 120) reinforces this idea by saying that “not only for the author but also for the recluses for whom he was writing, French must have been a natural medium for the interpretation of learned material”. The anonymous author, however, also aimed at a wider lay audience for whom French might have been more obscure.

A balance was thus to be found in producing a text of literary quality that was able to be understood by the larger possible audience. A permanent tension is discernible between the written medium (a genre requests some particular literary conventions) and a particular concern to teach a lay audience, which requires oral techniques and a consideration of the inferior knowledge of those people. However, the choice of words was not as conscious a process as it would become in the Early Modern period. “Wryting ornatly” would only become a chief concern in the 16th century, a period during which English writers would assume a position alternating from ‘aureation’ to purism regarding French loanwords (Nielsen 2005: 164-165).

3.1.3. Conclusion

All things considered, one might ask what kind of influence the genre is likely to have on lexical borrowing and why those considerations about the genre are relevant to our analysis. Two points stand out from what has been examined above. First of all, religious texts draw upon a pre-existing English literary tradition. As such, they present some sense of self-containment that seems to make the interference of French needless. As a typical English tradition that goes back to pre-Conquest times, the French foreign element is likely to be less strong. Secondly, the intended audience of religious texts encourages the authors not to indulge too much in literary periphrasis and to “keep it simple”. Those texts are written in English in
order to make basic theological knowledge accessible to anyone, chiefly unlearned men. This will, in turn, make up for the sobriety of the style of religious writings. Their plain and simple style accounts for the authenticity of religious texts, which kept themselves out of courtly fashions (Chambers 1957: cxv). In this way, the genre of the texts is thus likely to influence lexical borrowings in that the authors will not attempt to elevate or augment the English language according to French or Latin models – such as literary movements in the 15th and 16th centuries will consciously do (Nielsen 2005: 164) – and avoid excessive learned borrowing.

However, even though this sense of self-containment might affect the mechanics of borrowing, it will not prevent lexical borrowing from happening for some of the following reasons. Particular theological concepts will need to be worded, which find expression in (Church) Latin. This makes the presence of Romance loanwords more likely. Moreover, English had lost many words during the centuries of banishment from court, and this will also be felt in the long run even in the religious prose tradition. The high frequency of use of some French words would ultimately ousted native words from the everyday vocabulary. Technical expressions would also have to be borrowed, for new ideas developing in this period that were usually expressed in French or Latin. But from this point of view, lexical borrowing had always existed in English (see section 1.3.). Finally, religious texts form part of a literary tradition, which means that a certain stylistic level must be achieved. The tension between the audience and the literary requirements has to be taken into account when the borrowed lexical items are examined: they might be the result of some sort of process of vertical convergence between learned authors and unlearned audience. Arguably, as the authors addressed monolingual speakers and chose to write fully and consistently in English, the French lexical items present in our corpus are more likely to be the result of a process of borrowing rather than code-switching. In the following analysis, the validity of those hypotheses and the extent to which they can be upheld will be examined.
3.2. Preliminary results

Table 2 below summarises our findings concerning the percentage of French loanwords present in our excerpts of text and their semantic distribution. The percentage has been established on the basis of the total number of individual tokens. The steady increase in the number of loanwords in each text is immediately visible and in keeping with most scholars’ findings. Dekeyser (1986: 258) gave evidence for the gradual increase of Old French loans and demonstrated that the climax of lexical borrowing was spread over the first half of the 14th century. Similarly, De Caluwé-Dor (1992: 501-502) advocated a steady progression of loanwords in the course of the 13th century rather than a peak in the middle of it. Yet, considering the time interval between the Ancrene Wisse and the Cycle, larger than between the Cycle and the Cloud, one might have expected a higher rate of loanwords in the Cycle. As for the semantic analysis, only types have been taken into account, not the number of individual tokens. The number of types is indicated between brackets next to the title of the work. The results that are in our view most interesting and subject to discussion in this chapter are indicated in bold.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ancrene Wisse</th>
<th>Northern Cycle</th>
<th>Homily</th>
<th>The Cloud of Unknowing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total occurrences</strong></td>
<td>316</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>817</td>
<td>9,33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(tokens)</td>
<td>3,26%</td>
<td>6,07%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Broad semantic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>categories</strong></td>
<td>147 (types)</td>
<td>73 (types)</td>
<td>250 (types)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secular government &amp;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the public domain</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>17,6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarship, science &amp;</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10,8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military terminology</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2,8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment, sports,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>games</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce &amp; trade</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2,4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life &amp; living things</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substances, materials,</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>objects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food &amp; farming</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,2 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When having a look at the distribution of the French loanwords across the various semantic categories, it can be observed that almost all the lexical fields are represented in the earliest text of our corpus, the *Ancrene Wisse*, which shows that the loanwords recorded in texts from the early 13th century were not restricted to one particular semantic field. However, their distribution is rather heterogeneous, in that not every category is equally represented. In the *Cloud of Unknowing*, the same repartition across the categories is observable, but their distribution appears a bit more homogeneous than in the *Ancrene Wisse*. By contrast, the distribution of loanwords in the *Northern Homily Cycle* is rather unbalanced: 7 of the categories are not represented in the 20th homily, against 3 in the *Ancrene Wisse* and 1 in the *Cloud*.

The first two texts of our corpus present the same basic distribution of loanwords: the most prominent category is “secular government & the public domain”, closely followed by “religion”. This distribution is not very surprising: since they are religious texts, they are likely to present a high number of words connected with religion, while administration was the first domain to undergo profound changes after the arrival of the Norman settlers. As might be expected, it was the first domain to be lexically affected, and some of those words, such as *prisun* and *tresor* are even attested as early as in the *Peterborough Chronicle* (Lerer 2007: 46). However, the third most prominent lexical field is different for both texts: in *Ancrene Wisse*,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Value 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Houses &amp; the home</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The individual &amp; the body</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical actions, states and processes</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological &amp; Mental actions, states and processes</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social actions, states and processes</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic actions, states and processes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location &amp; movement</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers &amp; measurement</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General &amp; abstract terms</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Semantic analysis

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<tr>
<td>Linguistic actions, states and processes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location &amp; movement</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers &amp; measurement</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General &amp; abstract terms</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“psychological and mental processes” is a well-represented category whereas “military terminology” prevails in the homily.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad semantic categories</th>
<th>Ancrene Wisse (147)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secular government &amp; the public domain</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological / Mental actions, states and processes</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3: most prominent lexical fields in the Ancrene Wisse*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad semantic categories</th>
<th>Northern Homily Cycle (73)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secular government &amp; the public domain</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military terminology</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4: Most prominent lexical fields in the Northern Homily Cycle*

In the *Cloud of Unknowing*, “religion” is pushed out of the three top-categories. While “secular government” still ranks first, the two next categories are respectively “psychological-” and “physical actions, states and processes”. The semantic field of religion is relegated at the 5th place with a total of 10%, whereas it represents respectively a quarter and a fifth of the words of French origin in the *Cycle* and in the *Ancrene Wisse*. The sharp increase in the *Cloud* of the category “psychological & mental actions, states and processes” in comparison with the previous texts (almost the double) is also worth noting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad semantic categories</th>
<th>The <em>Cloud of Unknowing</em> (250)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secular government &amp; the public domain</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological / Mental actions, states and processes</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical actions, states and processes</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5: Most prominent lexical fields in the Cloud of Unknowing*
Beyond the distribution of the loanwords, the Cloud of Unknowing presents a series of innovations in comparison with the other texts. First of all, the Cloud is the first text where the category “numbers and measurement” is represented, with a 2%-rate. Indeed, where the author of the Ancrene Wisse writes the other reisun, the Cloud’s author writes the second chapitre. Secondly, the following categories (3.1-3.5) are under-represented (less than 2%), whereas a sharp rise can be observed in the semantic fields of “psychological processes” (16%), “scholarship, science and arts” (10,8 %) and “general and abstract terms” (6,4 %).

(3.1) “Life & living things” (1,2 %)
(3.2) “Substances, materials, objects” (1,2 %)
(3.3) “Food & farming (1,2 %)
(3.4) “Houses & the home” (0,4 %)
(3.5) “The individual & the body” (1,2 %)

By contrast, the Ancrene Wisse presents a higher percentage for each of the categories listed above (1-5), ranging from 4,8 to 0,7 %. In addition, a steady rise in “general and abstract terms” can be observed from one text to another. This seems to point to the fact that the Ancrene Wisse used more words rooted in concrete reality than the Cloud. Finally, evidence such as the higher rate of words linked to scholarship in the Cloud of Unknowing suggests that lexical borrowing relied more heavily on written French in this text, whereas the French loanwords in the Guide and the Cycle display more influence of spoken use. This hypothesis will be submitted to closer analysis in the last section (3.5.) of this chapter.

The reasons for such a distribution need to be examined. A closer look at Table 2 has raised some questions: how to account for the uneven distribution of the loanwords across the texts, hence across time? Why are some categories more prominent in some texts than in others? Is there a semantic evolution to be uncovered? The connection with the historical context as well as stylistic requirements and their impact on the development of the Middle English lexis will be investigated, as will the tension between the literary requirements and the need to educate that we discussed in section 3.1.2. We will also contrast our findings with the traditional motivations for borrowing listed in section 1.2.2. However, if the table summarising the initial findings can offer valuable insight into the semantic distribution of loanwords, one should remain aware of the limitations of such a semantic analysis that does not take into account the interweaving of the semantic categories, nor the connotations (positive or negative) associated with each of the words labelled under the same lexical field.
3.3. Internal factors: filling a structural gap

Borrowing in order to fill semantic needs happens when the borrowing language lacks a word to express a particular reality, or when new concepts arise (Durkin 2009: 142). This can be observed to some extent in the Ancrene Wisse in the lexical field of “life & living things”: whereas well-known animals or plants are expressed with English terms (wulf, fox, spearewe), French-derived words are used to denote exotic animals or plants that are not to be found in England (animals: liun, strucion ‘ostrich’, pellican, unicorne; plants: fier ‘fig tree’, figes). However, this observation does not account for the whole set of French loanwords in the text and is thus not a satisfying answer. A possibly strong argument against the structural gap hypothesis is the profusion of native words used along French-derived words in the text of the Ancrene Wisse. Those native words testify to a very rich lexicon inherited from Old English, that was self-sufficient and reliant on its own internal resources. This is in keeping with the previous observations (see section 1.3. above) according to which Old English was reluctant to borrow from other languages but preferred to resort to compounding, semantic loans and calques.

In our corpus from the Ancrene Wisse, a native synonym has been found alongside French loanwords in almost every semantic category (with the exception of “house & the home” and “time” which only record one instance of French loan). The same is true to some extent for our excerpt of the Northern Homily Cycle. Two explanations have traditionally been given to account for the use of native words alongside borrowed words. The first is the need for explanation triggered by the use of foreign words. Nielsen (2005: 110) acknowledges the fact that it is tempting to interpret such doublets as endeavours to ensure that the French loanwords were properly understood. The other reason for using such synonymous pairs would be a matter of style: according to some authors (Blake 1992b: 516, cited in Nielsen 2005: 110), “the grouping of words into doublets became a feature characteristic of the Middle English literary language”, well into the writings of John Trevisa or even Thomas More (Chambers 1957: cxxii). In our view, it is this last explanation that can most adequately account for the use of native and Romance synonyms in the text of the Ancrene Wisse.

By looking carefully at Part Three of the Ancrene Wisse, the assumption according to which each French loanword needed be explained or paraphrased for the sake of proper understanding can be quickly discarded. First of all, it has been seen in table 2 that French loanwords cover nearly all possible lexical fields, which goes against the assumption that French words have
only entered specific domains of society, but proves on the contrary a more pervasive penetration of loanwords. Likewise, native synonyms also occur in all lexical fields, and are not restricted to one specific area that would need more paraphrasing than another. Secondly, those synonymous pairs do not always occur in close proximity within the text. Some synonyms occur side by side, linked by the conjunction *ant* (3.6) or appear in close proximity in the same passage (3.7), whereas others are scattered in the text (3.8). Moreover, it is not always the French or the English word that occurs first in the excerpt, but their appearance in first position varies freely. As such, no clear pattern of explanation can be detected, whether a French word would be first introduced, then immediately followed by a native, more explicit counterpart, or whether a French word would only appear when the native word had been established firmly enough. [the *italics* indicate words of French origin]

(3.6) *‘mearci ant are’; ‘i privite ant dearnliche’; ‘feble ant unstrong’; ‘wite ant wardi’; ‘reste ant peis’*; etc.


Only twice in Part Three are French loanwords explicitly explained. This is the case of *Trinite* (3.9) and *contemplatiun* (3.10) [cf. underlined words], and can easily be accounted for: the former for lack of transparency, the latter for introducing a new concept. In addition, both words show a clear influence from Latin and can be classified as learned borrowings. The loanword *Trinite* is clearly modelled on Latin ‘trinitas’, of which the etymology is less transparent for an English speaker than the Old English calque *thrumnesse* where the number ‘three’ is still discernible. More than a foreign word, it is a theological concept that is pointed out by the author as potentially problematic and subsequently explained: *thrumnesse* does not seem to be a satisfying or self-reliant explanation since the author goes on to explain that the *thrumnesse* is made of the ‘Feader’ (Father), the ‘Hali Gast’ (Holy Spirit) and the ‘Sunne’ (Son). Likewise, it is more the concept behind the foreign word rather than the word itself that is explained in example (3.10). In addition, the first attestation of the word *contemplatiun* recorded in the *Middle English Dictionary* is from the Corpus Christi text of *Ancrene Wisse*, “where *contemplatiun* is defined (as though a neologism) as *heh thoht* ‘high thought’ and used to describe the elevated and solitary life of the anchoress” (Gunn 2008: 161). Contemplation is a
new religious concept that will become increasingly important throughout the Middle English period. This will be discussed later in this chapter, when examining the external causes of lexical change.

(3.9) ‘Ther the Hali Trinite - "thrumnesse" on Englisch - schawde hire al to him: the Feader in his stevene, the Hali Gast i culvre heow, the Sune in his honden.’

(3.10) ‘Alswa schal ancre fleon with contemplatium - thet is, with heh thoht, ant with hali bonen bi niht toward heovene.’

It has long been assumed that the role of native synonyms was to illustrate new and obscure French loanwords (see Nielsen 2005: 110). It might be asked, however, if the reverse may not have been true. By the time the Ancrene Wisse was composed at the dawn of the 13th century, the Norman settlers had established a new legal and administrative, if not educational, system in England for some 150 years already, which undoubtedly had had time to leave its mark on the language. During this century and a half that had elapsed since the Norman Conquest, the West-Saxon literary standard had broken down and local dialects had strengthened, while spoken French was pervading the monasteries under Norman rule, even if Old English texts were still being copied, especially in the region where the Ancrene Wisse originated (Smith 2012: 437).

If the conservatism of the West Midlands might account for the wide range of English vocabulary, it would be inadequate to consider that the language of the Ancrene Wisse might have remained impermeable at the French influence and that its audience needed a translation for each of the French loanwords. Lerer (2007: 57-58) argues that the English version of the trilingual Proclamation of Henry III issued in 1258 displays a “deliberately old-fashioned English”, in which all French-derived modern English words were systematically replaced by a native Anglo-Saxon counterpart. He further claims that those French words were already attested in the early 13th century and that “none of them would have been absolutely opaque to an English speaker at the time of Henry’s Proclamation. Likewise, it would probably be an exaggeration to claim that the variety of English used in the Guide – just as the words used in the Proclamation – was getting too old to be properly understood, but it is nonetheless possible that some words of Anglo-Saxon origin were already becoming archaic or obsolete and had retreated into the passive competence of a great deal of the speakers.

Hasenfratz (2000) noted in his Introduction that the Ancrene Wisse author found in the West Midland dialect a “language already adapted to literary uses”; and a literary language arguably
often makes use of old-fashioned words. Moreover, the first target audience of the Guide for Anchoresses, “a gentle and lettered female readership” (Smith 2012: 438), was assumed to have some (at least passive) knowledge of French, since the author advises them to occupy their time “reading in English or in French” (Gunn 2008: 6). Middle English speakers might thus well have been better acquainted with the majority of French words present in the text that would be expected from the outset. Consequently, a reversal of perspective might be posited. However, it remains to be investigated to what extent the older Old English tradition was still understood by Middle English speakers by the time the Ancrene Wisse was composed.

The following example aims at refuting simplistic explanations and illustrating the complex way in which French and native synonyms intertwine. The English verb ‘bitacneth’ and its French counterpart ‘spealeth’ (<OF ‘espeler’) have a peculiar distribution within the text: they occur alternately independently (3.11-3.12) or in close proximity (3.13-3.14). The word *bitacneth* occurs 11 times throughout the text, of which 8 times before *spealeth* first occurs, whereas *spealeth* only appears three times in the same passage, of which twice in combination with *bitacneth*. Because the first appearance of *spealeth* is closely followed by its English synonym *bitacneth*, it might be thought at first sight that the latter is used in order to make the meaning of *spealeth* plainer to the reader/hearer. However, even though they show a similar meaning, *spealeth* seems to be ultimately semantically distinct from *bitacneth*: the word *spealeth* is exclusively used to explain the meaning of proper nouns (in some sort of linguistic explanation), whereas *bitacneth* is used in cases of analogy. Their respective translations could be ‘signifies’ and ‘symbolises’ [the following translations are mine].

(3.11) ‘The eadmode cwen Hester *bitacneth* ancre.’
   [the humble queen Esther symbolises the anchoress.]
(3.12) ‘"Mardoche" is *i-spealet* "bitterliche totreodinde thene scheomelese."'
   ['Mordecai’ signifies ‘bitterly trampling down the shameless man’].
(3.13) ‘This nome Assuer is *i-spealet* "eadi" ant *bitacneth* Godd eadi over alle.’
   [This name ‘Assuer’ signifies ‘blessed’ and symbolises God, blessed above everything.]
(3.14) ‘This word "Jerusalem" *spealeth* "sithe of peis" ant *bitacneth* ancre-hus.’
   [This word ‘Jerusalem’ signifies ‘sight of peace’ and symbolises the house of the anchoress.]
Thus, although the French and native words are nearly synonymous, they are already subtly differentiated in meaning and their functions are distinct. Consequently, they do not serve to explain each other. The pair *essample*/*forbisne* presents a similar subtle meaning differentiation. The Middle English term *forbisne* occurs more frequently than *essample*, because it covers a wider range of meanings than its French counterpart: “the word *essample* is used four times in *Ancrene Wisse*, once each in Parts Two, Three, Four and Six, and each time it introduces a short story about a man in some circumstance that would have been recognised by a contemporary audience [my emphasis]” (Gunn 2008: 152). Another sort of functional distribution is found in the pair *bile* and *beaki*, where the former is a noun (meaning ‘beak’) and the latter its related verb, or between the French word *Seint* used exclusively in front of proper nouns, and the adjective *hali* used in the other contexts. Other doublets, by contrast, present a real synonymity, such as *juggildeme; remedies/boten; estoires/spelles*, etc.

What the examples above demonstrate is that some differentiation in meaning had already occurred or was occurring in the early Middle English period. This supports Timofeeva’s hypothesis according to which the more specific a concept was, the more likely was lexical borrowing (2018b: 76). The specialised French term would gain a more general character over time and, in some cases, eventually oust the English counterpart.

In our view, the use of native words alongside French loans can therefore be more appropriately designated as a new stylistic device, rather than a systematic attempt at clarifying the potentially obscure meaning of a foreign word. Indeed, this kind of association between a native and a foreign word seems to obey to requirements of style, such as alliteration patterns (3.15-3.18) or variation to avoid repetition (3.19). Furthermore, the association of synonymous pairs seems to have developed into a stylistic device typical of Middle English: doublets have taken over the various appositions formerly used by Old English (Arnovick 2012: 558) and are still frequent is later texts such as the *Cloud of Unknowing* (3.20).

Examples from *Ancrene Wisse* [the *italics* indicate words of French origin].

(3.15) ‘thurh eise ant thurh este’ [through comfort and through pleasure]
(3.16) ‘recchinde ant reginde’; ‘rengeth ant reccheth’ [prowling and roaming about]
(3.17) ‘cointe ant cover’ [cunning and vicious]
(3.18) ‘wite ant wardi’ [guard and protect]

‘trussen ant purses; baggen ant packes’; [bundles and purses, bags and packs]
‘eorthliche weolen ant worltliche rentes’. [earthly riches and worldly income]
‘The other *reisun* is - the bere a deore *licur*, a deore-wurthe *wet* as *basme* is, in a *feble* vetles, *healewi* i *bruchel* gles, nalde ha gan ut of thrung bute ha *fol* were? This *bruchel* vetles, thet is wummone flesch, thah no-the-leatere the *basme*, the *healewi* is *meidenhad* thet is th'rin other eft[er] meith-lure, *chaste* cleannesse.’

[the second reason is: if someone were carrying a valuable liquid, a precious fluid such as balsam, in a frail vessel, an ointment in fragile glass, surely she would head out of a crowd unless she was stupid? This frail vessel is woman’s flesh, although nevertheless it contains the balsam, the ointment that is virginity, or, after the loss of virginity, chaste purity.]

Example from the *Cloud of Unknowing*:

(3.20) ‘willinges or desiringes’; ‘the wille and the desire’; ‘desirable and wilnable’.

The examples (3.15) to (3.17) reinforce the idea that those combinations of words are stylistic rather than explanatory: *eise* and *este* (3.15) are distinct in meaning and are not strictly speaking synonymous; the expression might begin with either the French or the English word (*recchinde ant reginde* appear alongside the opposite version in the text: *rengeth ant reccheth* (3.16)). Finally, in *cointe ant cover* (3.17), both words are French loans. A passage such as (19) bears witness to how intimately Romance and native vocabulary alternate in the *Ancrene Wisse*. It follows a pattern of alternation that enhances the lexical diversity of the text. The explanatory hypothesis is not entirely ruled out in this excerpt, since the French word is systematically followed by a native word. If one looks at it the other way around, however, it might be argued that the context firmly established by means of more easily accessible French loanwords made possible the use of older English words that were not readily understandable anymore: it would be because *licur* and *basme* have been posited that *wet* and *healewi* are retrievable. However, the data from our corpus does not allow us to settle the matter completely and further investigation in that sense would be required to confirm this hypothesis. Three French loanwords are nevertheless used in this passage without explanatory counterpart: *reisun, fol* and *chaste*. Those words have, in addition, no synonyms at all within the excerpt. Other combinations of words are used throughout the text in order to avoid repetition: ‘gold-hord’ is used in combination with ‘tresor’, ‘baptist’ with ‘fulluht’, ‘forschuppet’ with ‘changeth’, ‘smech’ with ‘savur’, ‘stille’ and ‘stilnesse’ with ‘silence’, etc. It still has to be determined if the author seems to favour any of those words. From this excerpt, no sign from the alternation patterns between French and native words seems to indicate such a thing.
The use the author made of the synonymous pairs argues against the hypothesis of lexical gaps. What can be observed for sure is simply the coexistence of different lexical forms. A choice has not yet been made between them, nor a norm established. The language of the *Ancrene Wisse* is in a stage of transition: an obvious tension is felt between innovatory and conservative tendencies. New norms are gradually making their way, but traces of an older literary tradition are still present, even if they remain geographically restricted to the West Midlands (Schaefer 2012: 524). In the meantime, the variation merely exists. There is not yet fixation of or replacement by a particular norm. However, the transition seems to be over in the *Cloud of Unknowing*: variation has settled and the number of synonyms has dramatically dropped – from 40.1% (59/147) of recorded synonyms in the *Ancrene Wisse* to only 12.4% (31/250) in the *Cloud*. In addition, nearly all the native synonyms used in this latter text have survived into Modern English (e.g. *will*, *wonder*, *wealth*, *truly*, *sorrow*, *might*, *likeness*, etc.), contrary to the synonyms used in the *Ancrene Wisse*, the majority of which has eventually fallen into disuse. More generally, Arnovick (2012: 558) qualifies the early Middle English period as a transitional period with respect to its literary style. This intermediary stage is also palpable in the morphological integration of the French loanwords into the lexis of English. This will be the object of the next chapter.
3.4. External factors: reconstructing lexical change against the social changes of the time

Social and political changes can account for lexical borrowing to a considerable extent. Some semantic categories are restructured as a result from historical circumstances. It is thus possible to establish a link between semantics and the socio-cultural context of the time. The dominance of the Norman aristocracy in the aftermath of the Conquest made for the large influx of words linked to “secular government & the public domain”, due mainly to the frequency of use of this type of lexis. The Norman Conquest was not only followed by profound changes in the administrative domain, the Church also underwent considerable evolution. Furthermore, new intellectual and religious movements stemming from the continent made their way into the British Isles: while the 12th century witnessed an intellectual Renaissance in Western Europe, the 13th century was a period of important religious reforms. The lexicon of Old English could not appropriately reflect the transition towards a feudal society that had occurred after the Conquest, nor keep up with the later intellectual and religious developments of the time. Those changes will thus be reflected in the lexicon of respectively early and late Middle English, through a reorientation of its borrowing strategies.

However, if new concepts arose both in the religious field and secular government from an early point, everyday French words made their way just as early into the English lexicon, words that were by no means specialised, words such as unstable, simple, change, crie ‘cry’, eir ‘air’, chere ‘cheer’, clere ‘clear’, etc. in the Ancrene Wisse. Those words were not introduced for reasons of superiority, but simply because of linguistic coexistence, as a result of the growth of English-French bilingualism in the 13th and 14th centuries (Nielsen 2005: 104). Moreover, French had an advantage over English in that it was – at England’s scale – a supra-dialectal language. As such, borrowing from French was a suitable means to overcome dialectal limitations. In the following sections, we will explore the changes in the fields of religion and secular government, since they are on the whole the most well-represented semantic categories in our excerpts, while keeping in mind that semantic change is always the result of a complex combination of factors.
3.4.1. Changes within the Church

Considerable changes affected and restructured the Church in the course of the 13\textsuperscript{th} century, mainly after the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. Timofeeva (2018b: 55) states that “the religious life of western Europe around 1200 saw a remarkable re-orientation towards greater emphasis on moral instruction of the laity, especially following the decisions of the Fourth Lateran Council and the spread of the mendicant orders from the 1220s onwards”. Just as the Benedictine reform of the 10\textsuperscript{th} century had a profound influence on the literature of the Anglo-Saxon period, the religious reforms of the 13\textsuperscript{th} century would also (re-)shape the literary landscape of England. Furthermore, still in Timofeeva’s view (2018a: 27), “the reform movement of the late 12\textsuperscript{th} – early 13\textsuperscript{th} century can be seen as the major driving force behind the introduction of new Romance-based religious terms in Middle English”. This reform was not restricted to England alone, but considering the peculiar trilingual situation of post-Conquest England, it will be interesting to examine its lexical impact in our corpus. This analysis will nevertheless only account for the religious vocabulary of our excerpts, which represents from 10 to 25\% of the French loanwords of the texts.

3.4.1.1. Pastoral care and mendicant orders

One of the first main concerns of the reform was pastoral care, i.e. moral and religious instruction of lay people. Pastoral care was carried out in several ways: it was required of the clergy to preach in the vernacular, and of the laity to confess their sins. Another way was to make religious treatises available in the vernacular for the benefit of a lay audience. In this way, “in using and adapting Latin literature in a vernacular work intended for a lay or semi-regular audience in the first half of the 13\textsuperscript{th} century, the author of the \textit{Ancrene Wisse} was at the forefront of the dissemination of \textit{pastoralia}” (Gunn 2008: 175). Likewise, the \textit{Cloud} author’s decision to write in English was a “sign of pastoral care for a readership that seems not to have known Latin” (Taylor 2005: 33). According to Timofeeva (2018b: 55), “the growing demand for large-scale popular preaching was answered in particular by the mendicant orders”. Both the Dominicans (established in England in 1221) and the Franciscans (in 1224) saw preaching as well as hearing confessions and bringing people to repentance as central to their mission. Our three excerpts of text testify to those changing religious practices. Confession is the exclusive
topic dealt with in Part Five of *Ancrene Wisse*, and Dominicans and Franciscans, designated as *Freres Prechurs* and *Freres Meonurs* by the author, are recommended as confessors (Gunn 2008: 29). In the *Cloud of Unknowing*, the author warns against the ill-use of knowledge, when it is *swollen with pride*, such as in some clergy who then become *not meek scolers and maystres of devinité or of devocion, bot proude scolers of the devel and maysters of vanité and of falsheed*. The implicit message of putting learning and knowledge to good use, i.e. teaching the laity, is discernible. But it is in the 20th homily from the *Northern Homily Cycle* that the concern of pastoral care is most powerfully expressed. It contains a lengthy and daring diatribe against bad clergy, inspired by Jesus’ condemnation of the Jews who do not “gather souls to God”. The importance of preaching is further reinforced by an exemplum of Saint Bede preaching to the stones – the moral of which is to preach God’s word under any circumstance and with good intention. Furthermore, the French-derived verb ‘preach’ and its derivatives are used 8 times in the homily without any native counterpart: *prechinge, prechis, prechid*. There is a strong concern on the part of the poet of the *Cycle* that the priests should teach the laymen, which is their utmost duty: *lerid men suld lawde lere* ‘learned men should teach the laity’, but he also emphasises the layman’s own possibility to be redeemed from his sins through confession, *for schrift clenses man of synne* ‘for confession purifies a man from sin’.

This pastoral reform, however, has to be nuanced: teaching the laity had long been a chief concern in England, also under the Anglo-Saxons. King Alfred (871-899) had advocated translations of Latin religious works into the vernacular and inspired a long homiletic tradition in (Old) English, upon which authors from the 12th and 13th might still draw (Old English homilies were still being copied at the time when the *Ancrene Wisse* was composed). This accounted for a large set of English religious terminology already available to preachers. If such a tradition in the vernacular was so well established, one might wonder why the semantic field of religion underwent changes on such a large scale. Timofeeva (2018b) attributes the innovation and subsequent spread of new French-based religious lexis to the new preaching practices developing in the wake of the Fourth Lateran Council and to the emergence of mendicant orders and gives four reasons for it. The first is that new theological concepts were developing and religious practices were changing, and this needed to be expressed accordingly. Secondly, friars from the new mendicant orders typically came from France. As Paris-trained preachers, they were likely to make use of a French-influenced terminology. Thirdly, the new educational system of England used French as a vehicular language for grammar-school and university teaching throughout the 13th century: a functional command of French was thus
typical of educated clergymen. The last reason is the extent of the geographical and social mobility of the friars: since they travelled freely across England as well as among people of all social standing, there was a growing need for a supra-dialectal religious terminology. For all the reasons cited above, the introduction of French terms was often preferable (Timofeeva 2018: 28). It was thus both the use of French as a new medium of communication and the introduction of new theological concepts that led to the obsolescence of Old English words, strongly linked with the pre-Conquest tradition.

A new religious terminology was thus developing in the Middle English period, articulating the ancient Old English religious vocabulary with French-derived neologisms. Older native lexical resources that were firmly established and widely used were maintained: the more frequent and general (i.e. unmarked) a term was, the more likely it was to be preserved (e.g. *sin, heaven, father, lord, holy*, etc.). In addition, its semantic connection to the secular (feudal) world was another determining factor in the preservation (or not) of a word, as opposed to words whose use was restricted to poetic or very specific contexts. Conversely, the most specialised terms denoting new concepts or a shift in meaning were replaced (Timofeeva 2018a: 8-12). In the Middle English period, the words associated with changing practices – chiefly preaching, confession and contemplative life – were gradually replaced with French loans (Timofeeva 2018a: 27). The lexical change in those paradigms will be examined in the two following sections.

3.4.1.2. Confession and the treatment of the sins

The renewed importance of confession in the wake of the Fourth Lateran Council made it necessary to have a common terminology for vices and virtues readily available so that every penitent could know what was susceptible of being a sin, name his sins and make proper confession. Although the (capital) sins had been important topos in moral theology since the early days of Christianity, they saw their importance renewed in the 12th and 13th centuries, and Franciscan and Dominican theologians were increasingly trying to establish the order and kinship of the sins and their opposites (Timofeeva 2018b: 59-60).
The treatment of sins as well as the lexical field of vices and virtues has thus evolved in the course of the 13th to early 14th century (Timofeeva 2018b: 77), and this evolution is reflected in our corpus. The three excerpts of text show a similar concern about the sins, although they deal with it in a different manner. The *Ancrene Wisse* presents one of the earliest instances of an elaborate and systematic treatment of the sins in English, paving the way for its assimilation into the popular imagery. Part Four consists of a systematic treatment of the seven deadly sins, which are divided into spiritual and carnal sins, and further associated with animals. Although the association of sins with animals is ancient, *Ancrene Wisse* is the first work to do so in English, making that representation available for a wider audience (Gunn 2008: 144-145). Part Three also resorts to the association of vices and virtues with animals and other elements of nature. As for the *Cloud of Unknowing*, the author begins by dividing between capital and venial sins and goes on to give a brief but systematic description of the seven deadly sins in his 10th chapter. Finally, the *Northern Homily Cycle* represents an intermediary stage between those two texts. Since the sins have acquired a more systematic character throughout the Middle English period, it would now be interesting to examine the terminology in use to name them.

According to Timofeeva (2018a: 24-25) and in line with the previous observations about the transitional state of the language of the *Ancrene Wisse*, texts from the 13th century still largely respect Old English lexical practice but also display new French terms, while texts from the beginning of the 14th century are increasingly more innovative. This gradual evolution in the terminology used around the practice of confession is observable in our texts. In the *Ancrene Wisse*, the old terminology coexists with and has not yet been ousted by innovative denominations. Modern tendencies can nonetheless be noted: the early attestation in the *Ancrene Wisse* of the terms *preachur* and *chearite* reveals innovations brought about by the mendicant orders rather straightforwardly. The modern denomination ‘vices and virtues’, on the other hand, had not yet managed to oust the old *theawes ant untheawes* used throughout the Guide for Anchoresses; however, the alternation between French-derived *temptatiuns* and native *fondunges* is revealing of the state of transition towards a newer terminology. Since temptation is the condition, or at least a first step on the way to sin, it is relevant to an analysis of the terminology for confession.

In the *Ancrene Wisse*, new terms to refer to sins coexist by and large with older ones. *Lecchurs* and *glutuns* coexist with *galnesse/flesches lustes* and *yivernesse*. By contrast, some terms seem already quite stable, such as *prude* ‘pride’ and *fol (folye)* ‘foolish, stupid’, which
appears in all three excerpts. *Pride* is already attested in late Old English, but it ultimately comes from Norman French *prud* meaning ‘valiant’. The negative meaning and its development to qualify the sin of Pride appears to be typically English: according to the *Online Etymology Dictionary*, the sense of “having a high opinion of oneself”, not found in Old French, might reflect the Anglo-Saxons’ opinion of the Norman noblemen who called themselves “proud” (cf. French “prud’homme” or “preux”). This meaning will prove resistant since it is found consistently in all three excerpts. However, the following words were not yet challenged or replaced by French competitors: the very word meaning ‘confession’ is still expressed by native *schrift*, and the feeling of contrition leading to confession is referred to as *bireowsunге* (3.21). Two vices (3.22) and two virtues (3.23) are exclusively expressed with words inherited from Old English.

(3.21) ‘This manere bruche mei beon i-bet thurh medecine of *schrift* ant *bireowsunге*’

[This kind of breach can be repaired through the medicine of confession and contrition.]

(3.22) *Onde* instead of ‘envye’; *yiscunge* instead of ‘coveitise’

(3.23) *Tholemodnesse* instead of ‘patience’; *eadmodnesse* instead of ‘humility’:

‘Her beoth twa eadi theawes to noti swithe yeorne, the limpeth ariht to ancre: *tholemodnesse* i the earre half, i the leatere, *eadmodnesse* of milde ant meoke heorte.’

[There are two blessed virtues to be carefully noted that properly belong to an anchoress: *patience* in the first part, the *humility* of a meek and mild heart in the second.]

By contrast, the *Cloud of Unknowing* systematically presents a French loanword for all the concepts mentioned above, without the support of any native synonym: to *confession* and *contricion* is added *conscience*, which replaced Middle English *inwit*. *Envye* and *Covetyse* definitively oust their native counterparts and *tholemodnesse* and *eadmodnesse* are nowhere to be found in the text. Instead, the former is replaced by French *pacience* and the latter by the Scandinavian loanword *meeknes*, not yet by French *humility*. The word *vertewe* ‘virtue’ had become well established and occurs 19 times within the excerpt, as well as *charité* (3.24). However, ‘humility’ is not yet a common word in Middle English.

(3.24) ‘And wel may theese two vertewes be *meeknes* and *charité*, for whoso might gete theese two, cleerly him nedid no mo: for whi he had alle.’

[These two virtues might well be *humility* and *charity* (love). For whoever has got these clearly needs no more: he has all.]
The transition towards a newer religious terminology occurring throughout the 13th and early 14th century thus seems fully accomplished by the end of the 14th century, such as is witnessed in the *Cloud*. While the *Ancrene Wisse* still presents a large number of words inherited from Old English, these seem to have fallen into disuse in the *Cloud*, which reduced the use of synonyms in that text. In the *Cloud*, the terminology for the seven deadly sins is almost the modern one: Wrath ‘wrath’, Envy ‘envy’, Sloth ‘sloth’, Pride ‘pride’, Covetousness ‘covetousness’, Gluttony ‘gluttony’, Lust ‘lust’. French-derived terminology has established itself firmly in 4 cases, Middle English *lecherye* being ultimately ousted by its English counterpart with which it had competed throughout the 13th century (*flesches lustes* and *lust of flehsse* are found respectively in *Ancrene Wisse* and the *Northern Homily Cycle*).

As for the *Northern Homily Cycle*, the 20th homily presents an intermediary stage between the two other texts. While it still exhibits some archaic aspects such as the use of an older terminology and – as it will be examined later – fewer complex patterns of derivation, its linguistic treatment of the sins gives away its later date of composition: the typical French-derived terminology is already in use: *liccherye*, *glotonye*, *pride*, but also and most importantly, *envye* and *covetise*, which points towards a text from the (early) 14th century. Other words from the modern terminology were making their way into the homily: this is the case of *prechinge*, *prechoure*, *sermoune* and *vertues*. The author’s utter concern for pastoral care is expressed in the high frequency of occurrence of the verb ‘to preach’ (8 times) and of the noun ‘sermon’. *Prechinge* refers to a particular kind of religious teaching and *sermoune* to a particular type of religious discourse, whereas their native counterparts, respectively *sawes/spelles* ‘words/stories’ and *kenne* ‘teach’, have a less specific meaning and are probably used alongside the French loanwords in an attempt for variety. In Timofeeva’s view (2018b: 68), the more specialised a concept, the more likely it is to be replaced by a borrowed lexeme. This type of religious borrowing seems fully accomplished by the time where the *Cycle*’s author writes since the French loanwords are not challenged by any serious native competitor anymore. *Vertues*, however, has not yet acquired the modern meaning it has today of ‘moral quality’ or ‘goodness’. In the homily, it is more appropriately translated as ‘power, crafts, skills’. Middle English *virtue* has indeed a sense of efficacy, probably inherited from the French phrase “en vertu de”. In the *Cloud*, a shift towards the modern meaning occurs, but the newly coined phrase *bi vertewe of* (most likely a calque of French “en vertu de”) preserves the Middle English sense of efficacy. This is also reflected in some Bible translations: the Wyclif Bible from the last quarter of the 14th century writes ‘virtue’ where the King James version of 1611 uses ‘power’.
On the other hand, old terms are still commonplace in the homily. The pair *thewelunthewe* for ‘vices and virtues’, found in the *Ancrene Wisse*, is still present in the *Cycle*. However, *thewe* (3.25) is in this case preceded by the adjective *gude*, which might indicate that the word was gradually losing its former transparency. In addition, it can be more appropriately translated as ‘habit’ than ‘virtue’, hence the need that arose for a more suitable term to denote that specific concept. Although the new terminology for sins seems already firmly fixed in the homily, the word *nythe* is used alongside its French counterpart *Envye*, whereas the Guide for Anchoresses used *onde*. We do not have enough material to be able to determine if the differentiated use of *nythe* and *onde* is a matter of regional use, but if it were the case, it would partly account for the eventual victory of supra-dialectal *Envye* over the native words. Another puzzling word used in the homily is *almos* (3.26), translated by Thompson in her critical edition of the text as ‘charitable’. According to the *MED*, this word goes back to Old English *ælmes*, which is a very early loan from Latin – Nielsen (1998: 141) dates it from before 900. Considering the early attestation of the word *charite* and the late date of composition of the *Cycle*, the occurrence of this rather old-fashioned adjective is worth noting. Finally, the example in (3.27) shows how old and new terminology still intertwines in this mid-14th century homily, where the Scandinavian *mekenes* and the French *covetise* coexist with the native *unthewe* and the more recent *pride*. *Catele* is also a French loanword.

(3.25) ‘His gude thewes sckatirs he’ [He squanders his good habits]

(3.26) ‘Yitt es a worde in oure Gospell, that almos ware yow for to tell’

[There is a word in our Gospell that it would be charitable to tell you]

(3.27) ‘For thare thai suld thaim *mekenes* schewe, thai schewe thaim *pride* and other *unthewe*; and thare thai suld kenne thaim to dele, and parte with god of thaire catele, thare kenne thai thaim with *covetise*.’

[For where they should show them meekness.

They show them pride and other vices;
And where they should show them to share,
And divide well their possessions,
They teach them with covetousness]

Just as the West-Saxon terminology was gradually fixed and disseminated in the wake of the Benedictine reform of the 10th century (Timofeeva 2018b: 77), a new terminology developed along the lines of the Franciscan and Dominican reform of the 13th century in order
to reflect the new theological concepts and changing practices of the period. It would consequently be standardised and spread, leading to the obsolescence of the older pre-Conquest terminology which could not appropriately reflect some Christian realities anymore. The universality of mendicant preaching played an important role for the diffusion of new lexemes across regions and social strata, introducing new learned terms to common believers, while the practice of confession helped activate their passive knowledge. (Timofeeva 2018b: 79).

Innovations in terminology were nonetheless no straightforward process, but rather travelled down different paths, borrowed words coexisting closely with their native counterparts. This coexistence would only be resolved after the Middle English period, with the standardisation of English, the preference for Latinate terms following the Renaissance and the need for a unified religious terminology.

3.4.1.3. Contemplation

In her analysis, Gunn (2008: 160) explored the *Ancrene Wisse* as a contemplative work, expressing a spirituality that was “both affective and ascetic”, and argued that asceticism and the privations of anchoritic life provided the necessary conditions for contemplation (166). Moreover, she maintained that by writing in the vernacular, the anonymous author made this new kind of spirituality available to those who did not or could not benefit from monastic teaching. The *Ancrene Wisse* establishes therefore a link with the 14th-century mystics like the author of the *Cloud* both through its content and its composition in the vernacular. In this way, the Middle English period witnessed a shift towards a new kind of spirituality described by Gunn (159) as “the possible approach of the individual to God through meditation and contemplation”, which finds one of its earliest expression in the Guide for Anchoresses: it is in this work that the *MED* records the first instance of the word *contemplacioun*. As has been said earlier, not only the word *contemplation* had a foreign origin, but also the Christian concept behind it: contemplative spirituality was a newly imported concept that was very unlikely to have found any echo in Anglo-Saxon society. Indeed, in contrast to the rich semantic fields of the Anglo-Saxon aristocratic virtues of courage, loyalty and generosity (Timofeeva 2018b: 74), the new contemplative spirituality focuses on aspects of inner life, on the state of mind towards sin and gives free way to the expression of emotions, while the possible approach of the individual to God emphasises the personal level at the expense of the importance of the group
in Anglo-Saxon culture. This new affective spirituality that developed from the the *Ancrene Wisse* up to the devotional treatises of the Middle English mystics can therefore possibly account for the rise in words related to psychological and mental processes, reflecting the new personal relationship with God.

The same themes are found in the *Ancrene Wisse* and the *Cloud of Unknowing*, but their treatment is somewhat different. Both authors understand the contemplative life as one removed from the world and resort to the parable of Mary and Martha to illustrate it. Life in society is described as a scourge (*sturbunge, baret* ‘disturbance, trouble’ in *Ancrene Wisse*) or as vain and empty (*veyne* in the *Cloud*), and the worldly pleasures of social life (*plesaunce, daliaunce, flateringes, delites*, etc. in the *Cloud*) have thus to be avoided. However, contemplation is not the main focus of the *Ancrene Wisse*, as it will become in the *Cloud of Unknowing*. The former is more concerned with pastoral care and draws heavily on the rhetoric of preaching and concrete images. In addition, its author stresses the importance of the outer rule as well as of the inner rule. By contrast, the incipit of the *Cloud* is revealing of the radical shift towards the spiritual that the devotional treatise is willing to undertake: *here bygynnith a book of contemplacyon*. Both texts will here be examined in order to trace back the evolution towards the personal and the emotional.

In his thesis, Toeda (2008) examined the evolution of the lexical field of “mind” from Old to Middle English. To do so, he based his analysis on the AB language texts, assumed to represent an intermediate stage between the Old English tradition and the future innovations of Middle English. The AB language texts are also referred to as the Katherine Group and subsume the following texts: *Hali Meidhad, Seinte Iuliene, Seinte Marherete, Seinte Katerine, Sawles Warde* and the *Ancrene Wisse*. He observed that in early Middle English, the lexical field of “mind” was already strongly on its way towards restructuring: ‘heart’ and ‘thought’ gained in importance at the expense of Old English ‘mod’ and ‘hyge’, but ‘mind’ had not yet developed into the Modern English lexeme in use today. Most importantly, he observed that the *Ancrene Wisse* was the only text that presented a French lexical component in the use thrice of the loanword ‘entente’. However, he favoured the later date of composition of the Guide as

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5 The AB Language texts are considered to have continuity from Old English and to represent a standardised language of early Middle English. The consistency of the AB language has led several scholars to interpret it as an early attempt to establish a local standard (Tolkien 1929, Zettersten 1965). However, more recent research warns against the overrating of the AB language as an institutional attempt towards connecting Old and Middle English prose traditions and insists on the isolation of this group of texts in the history of Middle English (Schaefer 2012: 523-524).
a possible explanation for that innovation whereas we would attribute it to the subject matter: in contrast to ‘heart’ and ‘thought’ which, in spite of being related to the individual, are rather general terms, entente, used for such denotations as ‘determination’ or ‘intention’, reflects a thoroughly personal state of mind. In addition, the use of entente in a passage related to confession is described as “highly emotive” by Toeda (2008: 78-79). Furthermore, in our excerpt, French loans also appear when a relation of intimacy with God is evoked: familiarite ‘intimacy’, privement ‘alone, in solitude’, prive with ure Laverd ‘alone with our Lord’. Being intimate with God is considered as the ideal of contemplative life, and social life must thus be avoided: the words prive with ure Laverd are followed by for me is lath preasse\textsuperscript{6} ‘for I hate the crowd’.

As a new concept foreign to the Anglo-Saxon culture, the personal relationship with God is likely to be expressed with the support of French loanwords, and our excerpt seems to confirm this assumption. Eventually, the first target audience of the Ancrene Wisse also emphasises the importance of the personal level: the fact that the author chose to address directly three sisters throughout his text allows a more intimate tone, even though the author constantly acknowledges a wider audience and chose illustrations that could be applied more generally to laymen and not only to anchoresses (Gunn 2008: 158). Although the author seems to favour concrete images at the expense of emotions and subjective reflections, the personal level gains in importance in the Ancrene Wisse: the use of entente lays the stress on a wilful act; French loanwords are used to express the personal relationship with God, and the choice of addressing a restricted audience allows the reader to feel more directly involved and personally touched.

As could be expected, the Cloud of Unknowing goes markedly further in that process, and the lexical evolution is in line with the content of the work. This time, the author addresses one (young) person and speaks in ‘thou’ throughout the text. Through this use of the second pronoun singular, the reader feels even more personally involved. The recipient is then addressed as goostly freende in God ‘my spiritual friend in God’ as opposed to wordily freendes, indicating that author and reader are connected at a higher level, i.e. in spirit. Finally, the author adopts a more emotional approach, since the scenery of the treatise is the mind of his interlocutor, which is made clear in several passages of the excerpts (3.28-3.32)\textsuperscript{7}.

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\textsuperscript{6} Preasse is a French loanword and coexists with thrang within the text.
\textsuperscript{7} The translation used is the literary translation from Bangley (2007).
(3.28) Consider you own life. Notice God’s love drawing you carefully to the unique third degree of the Christian life. (Chap. 1)

(3.29) Take a good look at yourself. Who are you? (Chap. 2)

(3.30) Suppose a thought nags your mind. [...] With experience, you will learn to let distracting thoughts rest under a cloud of forgetting and attempt to penetrate the cloud of unknowing separating you from God. (Chap. 7)

(3.31) Resist intense mental activity when seeking this dark contemplation. (Chap. 9)

(3.32) I want you to evaluate carefully each thought that stir in your mind when you contemplate God. (Chap. 11)

Consequently, contrary to the Guide for Anchoresses, images are expressed in terms of emotions and abstract concepts (time, dart of longing love, cloud of unknowing, etc.) rather than with the help of concrete imagery. The only concrete image from our excerpt is when the author contrasts the concept of Cloud of Unknowing with a cloud in the sky in chapter 4 (3.33).

(3.33) ‘And wene not that it be any cloude congelid of the humours that fleen in the ayre, yet any derknes soche as is in thin house on nights, when thi candel is oute.’ [and do not compare it with a cloud that is composed of water vapor or with the darkness in your house when the candle burns out.]

Table 2 of section 3.2. showed that the excerpt from the Cloud only displayed 10% of strictly religious words, compared to 20% in the Ancrene Wisse and 25% in the homily. Contrary to those two texts and other works of pastoral literature, the Cloud’s main concern was not to introduce new religious terms to his audience. As has been previously argued, the new religious terminology was relatively well-established by the end of the Middle English period, and the vocabulary used by the author of the Cloud is in keeping with those findings: charité, mercy, grace, etc. had become common religious terms by then. Additionally, the author refers to fewer authoritative figures from the Bible, except in general to seintes and aungelles, whereas the author of the Ancrene Wisse used prophete, patriarche, Ewangeliste, Baptiste, apostles, etc. Instead, more French loanwords entered the lexicon of Middle English to describe the ideal of the ascetic, contemplative life (singuler and solitary, ‘solitary’, appear alongside privé), but also to enlarge the semantic field of contemplation (devocion, meditacion). A restructuration of the semantic field of religion is thus noticeable in the Cloud of Unknowing.
Two additional lexical innovations of the *Cloud of Unknowing* are worth emphasising. Contrary to the two other texts, the *Cloud* author makes use of the words *preier* ‘prayer’ and *spirite* ‘spirit’. The former replaced the Old English word *bone* and is in line with the evolution towards a more personal relationship with God: while in the *Ancrene Wisse*, prayer (*bone*) was seen as a tool to help or save others (3.34), in the *Cloud* it becomes a tool to enter in direct contact with God and help oneself (3.35). It would be interesting, though, to confirm this hypothesis by examining if there was an effective evolution in the connotations associated with *prayer* and *bode*. The personal level is also discernible in the replacement of native *stevene* by the French loanword *voise*. In the *Cloud*, the *voise* of God is an invitation, a call to follow His path (3.36), whereas *stevene* is used in a more impersonal way, depicting God as a figure of authority (3.37).

(3.34) ‘The eadmode cwen Hester bitacneth ancre, ant thurh hire bone arudde of death al hire folc, the wes to death i-demet.’

[the humble queen Hester represents the anchoress, and through her prayer saved the lives of all her people who were condemned to death.]

(3.35) ‘Thee thar bot meekly put apon Him with *preier*, and sone wil He help thee.’

[you need only to lay hold upon God humbly in prayer, and he will soon help you.]

(3.36) ‘The *voise* of this cleping’. [the voice of this call]

(3.37) ‘Ther the Hali Trinite schawde hire al to him: the Feader in his *stevene*, the Hali Gast i culvre heow, the Sune in his honden.’

[There the Holy Trinity revealed itself completely to him: the Father in his voice, the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove, the Son under his hands.]

Remarkably, the word *spirite* competes with the native *gast, goost*, for the first time in our corpus. The very first words of the *Cloud*, the initial address – *goostly freende in God* – indicates that what is at stake happens at another, higher level and gives the ensuing tone of the text. In this way, the introduction of the new French loan seems to reinforce and reflect the elevation that needs to be achieved. Another very important concept in the *Cloud* is that of (religious) desire understood as a longing for God, which is the main drive of contemplation: God is the *soverein desirable and the heighest wilnable thing*, and therefore one should direct a *naked entent* ‘naked desire’ towards him (Chap. 7).
Finally, it is in the field of emotions that the Cloud shows a lot of innovations. As in the Ancrene Wisse, the importance of intention is highlighted by the use of the words entente, purpose and disposid. The state of mind with which you approach God, sin or the exercise of contemplation is paramount. The author therefore goes on to give a series of emotions that are the attributes of the true contemplatives (3.38), and the states of mind that should conversely be utterly avoided (3.39).

(3.38) ‘joie, counforte, affecion, pité, compassion (n.); honeste (adj.)’
(3.39) ‘fantasie, frenesies, passion, vanité, dedein (n.); fals, dispitous, foles (adj.)’

Contemplation, however, does not mean experiencing visions or reaching an ecstatic state. On the contrary, the authors of both the Guide and the Cloud warn against visions, which can be but a trickery of the devil (Gunn 2008: 162). Interestingly, the lexical field of “deceit” appears very early to be loaded with French loanwords: false, ypocrite, cointe ‘cunning’ cover ‘treacherous’. In the Ancrene Wisse, those words are used in such a way that there is an overlap between physical and mental processes: the ‘false anchoress’ is compared to a fox, considered as a deceitful animal (3.40). In the Cloud, this semantic field is still very present but has evolved: the pair disseites/deceyven has come in to replace gile/gilin, but fals and queynte (< cointe) have remained practically unchanged. The stress is in this case laid on the deceitfulness of the imagination, which is the opposite of contemplation (3.41).

(3.40) Habbeth efter the vox a simple semblant sum-chearre, ant beoth thah ful of gile. [Like the fox, they look guileless sometimes, and yet are full of guile]
(3.41) ‘And here mowe men schortly conceyve the maner of this worching, and cleerly knowe that it is fer fro any fantasie, or any fals ymaginacion, or queynte opinion.’ [This then, in brief, is how it (= contemplation) works. It is obviously not make-believe, nor wrong thinking, nor fanciful opinion.]

Conversely, the Northern Homily Cycle has nothing to do with contemplation, although its 20th homily is definitely concerned with pastoral care, the importance of confession and the new treatment of the sins. The personal level is does not seem to be the main concern of the author: the rhetorical technique used is that of the preacher addressing a crowd and the emphasis is laid on groups rather than individuals: the Jews, the clergy, the laymen, etc. Emotions do not appear to be the main focus of the author either, who seems to be more concerned with sinful behaviour, giving as examples the slandering, pride, lack of faith, envy and malice of the Jews; and the laziness, love of comfort, avarice, lust and gluttony of the bad clergy, which their
parishioners imitate if they are not properly taught. However, the homily and the two other texts agree on one crucial point: the importance of the *entente*, i.e. of the state of mind with which one does his job, rather than the efficacy or results thereof (3.42). The importance of preaching God’s word with ‘a good intention’ thus stresses the individual responsibility of every Christian, allowing the personal level to briefly shine through.

(3.42) ‘And thof the prechoure may no man drawe,
Fra synfull will to Cristen lawe,
Tyne he ne maie his travaile,
For mede of God maye he noght faile;
For God that his *entente* wele knawes,
Es full wele paied of all his sawes.’
[And although the preaching can draw no man
From sinful will to Christ’s law,
His effort will not be in vain
He will not fail to receive a reward from God;
Because God who knew well his *intention*
Is fully satisfied of all his words.]

The semantic field of religion seems to have been restructured as a result of the religious reforms of the 13th century. This new religious terminology was mainly rooted in the French tradition, which was reinforced by the peculiar bilingual situation in England at that time. The tension between old and new terms, conservative and innovative tendencies, is to be found throughout the Middle English period, but seems to have settle by its end. This tension is probably best represented in the *Ancrene Wisse*, where old and new are almost on a par. In this section, we have also addressed the sharp increase in the number of loanwords related to “mental & psychological actions, states and processes” in the *Cloud of Unknowing* (16,8%), and tried to provide some elements of explanation that could possibly account for it, such as the new spirituality centred on contemplation and the subsequent rise in the presence of emotions in the religious context. Our hypothesis is that the shift towards a more personal spirituality favoured the introduction of French words since it was an imported concept, the Anglo-Saxon culture being more oriented towards the group. The genre also has an impact and a shift could be observed from homilies destined to instruction of the mass to more personal devotional treatises. A new terminology developed to account for those changes in the religious domain, and additional French-derived words were introduced overtime to enrich it.
3.4.2. Changes in secular government

The very first French loanwords to enter the English language have been adopted in the field of “secular government & the public domain” as early as in the Peterborough Chronicle (Lerer 2007), which explains why the Ancrene Wisse already features so many of them. Those words typically reflect the new social organisation that arose in the aftermath of the Conquest and brought about changes at several levels: William the Conqueror was the first king in Britain to build castles on the Continental model, to command a written inventory of the holdings of the country and to close off public lands for private use (Lerer 2007: 41). As such, he left “an indelible mark on the English landscape”, but also on its lexicon. The entry of the Peterborough Chronicle for 1087 records the first instance of castel, the one dated 1123 exhibits prisun whereas the entry for the year 1137 contains the word tresor (Lerer 2007: 46), that is, three instances of the new administrative language, or in other words, the language of power (Lerer 2007: 48). Rather than prestige, social and political dominance accounts for the influx of so many French words in the administrative domain, thereby expressing the changing social order.

Considering the early appearance of some French loanwords in the history of English, one should not be surprised by the fact that legal and administrative vocabulary is recurrent and very well integrated in our corpus, from an early stage (see table 6 below). Prisun and tresor are both found in Part Three of the Ancrene Wisse, which gives a clue as to the presence of more loanwords denoting respectively legal and financial matters. As a matter of fact, the new legal and financial system was likely to affect virtually anybody under Norman rule. Since they had entered the lexis of English at a very early date, some words were rapidly used in other contexts than the initial domain in which they were borrowed. In the Ancrene Wisse, the loanwords juggi, servise and preove are not used in a legal context. The former is used more generally as a process of evaluation (3.43), the second has already become unmarked while the last one is used by the author to give credit to what he says (3.44). Interestingly, the importance of demonstrating or putting to test what one is saying will prove a constant theme in all three texts, as in the Northern Homily Cycle where the word prove recurs thrice (3.45).

(3.43) ‘Na-mon ne mei juggi wel blod ear hit beo i-colet.’
[One cannot properly judge blood before it has cooled.]
(3.44) ‘Nu the preove her-of:’ [Now the proof thereof;]
(3.45) ‘Yit proved Criste with mo resounes’; ‘Yit proves Criste with resoune hende’;
‘Thus provid Criste with resoune right’.
Loanwords related to “government & the public domain” (Modern English)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Loanwords</th>
<th>Ancrene Wisse</th>
<th>Northern Homily Cycle</th>
<th>Cloud of Unknowing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proof</td>
<td>prufunge, preove, pruvieth</td>
<td>proves, proved, provid</td>
<td>proef, prove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To serve</td>
<td>servise, servin</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>servise, servaunt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To deserve</td>
<td>ofservet</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>deserved</td>
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<td>Spouse</td>
<td>spuse</td>
<td>spouse</td>
<td>spouse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Master</td>
<td>meistrin (v.)</td>
<td>maistire (n.)</td>
<td>maystres (n.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crown</td>
<td>crune</td>
<td>crownes</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Richesses</td>
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<td>Rent</td>
<td>rentes</td>
<td>rentes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>povre</td>
<td>pure</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To pay</td>
<td>paien, i-paiet</td>
<td>paied</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To acquit</td>
<td>cwitin, cwitance</td>
<td>qwite</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>catele</td>
<td>catel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trouble</td>
<td>sturbunge, desturbin</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>troublid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason</td>
<td>reisun</td>
<td>resoune</td>
<td>reson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: early French loanwords recurring in all three texts.

By contrast, the word denoting ‘power’ is a different loanword in each text: meistrie is used in the Ancrene Wisse; either pousté or vertues in the Northern Homily Cycle and finally power in the Cloud. Whether this can be explained in terms of regional or dialectal variation cannot be established in this study considering the limitations of our corpus. It would nevertheless be interesting to examine to what extent lexical borrowing from French was subject to regional differentiation.

3.4.2.1. Changing social order

In Part Three of the Ancrene Wisse, the more densely French passages are often related with secular government. Two of them present a very high number of French loanwords; the former is concerned with financial and legal matters (see example (3.52) in section 3.4.2.3. below), whereas the latter has to do with rank and nobility (3.46). It is traditionally agreed that the author of the Ancrene Wisse drew on an existing Anglo-Saxon prose tradition (Smith 2012: 437), but the text could nevertheless not resist some lexical changes. This is the case of the terminology related with nobility, which completely changed from the Old to the Middle English period. Timofeeva (2018a: 12) relates in some cases the eventual demise of some native words with their lack of semantic connection to the secular feudal world and its hierarchy, and the hierarchy of the English society underwent profound changes in the aftermath of the
Conquest. Example (3.46) is a good illustration of the restructuring that took place at the level of rank and secular hierarchy – the words in italics are French loans; the underlined words are related to nobility.

(3.46) ‘The feorthe *resiun* is *preove* of *noblesce* ant of *largesce*. *Noble* men ant *gentile* ne beoreth nane packes, ne ne feareth *i-trusset* with *trussews*, ne with *purses*. Hit is beggilde riht to beore bagge on bac, *burgeise* to beore *purse* - nawt Godes *spuse*, the is leafdi of heovene. *Trussen ant purses*, baggen ant packes beoth wortlische thinges: alle eorthliche weolen ant wortlische *rentes*.

The fifte *resiun* is, *noble* men ant wummen makieth *large* *relef*, ah hwa mei makie *largere* then the other theo the seith with Seinte Peter, "Laverd, for-te folhi the, we habbeth al forleavet." Nis this *large* *relef*? Nis this muche lave? Mine leove sustren, *kinge[s]* ant *keisers* habbeth hare liveneth of ower *large* *relef* thet ye i-leavet habbeth. "Laverd, for-te folhi the," seith Seinte Peter, "we habbeth al forleavet," as thah he seide, "we wullich folhi the i the muchele *genterise* of thi *largesce*. Thu leafdest to othre men alle *richesces* ant makedest of al *relef* ant lave se *large*.

[The fourth reason is proof of nobility and of generosity. Noble and well-bred people do not carry packs or go around loaded with bundles or purses; it is proper for a beggar-woman to carry a bag on her back, for a *tournswoman* to carry a purse, not for God’s spouse, who is the lady of heaven. Bundles and purses, bags and packs are worldly things – all earthly riches and worldly income.

The fifth reason is: *noble* men and women make generous legacies; but who can make a more generous one than the man or woman who says with Saint Peter: ‘Lord, in order to follow you we have left everything’? Isn’t this a generous legacy? Isn’t this a massive bequest? My dear sisters, kings and emperors depend for their livelihood on the generous legacy that you have left behind. ‘Lord, says Saint Peter, we have left everything to follow you’; as if he were saying: ‘we want to follow you in the great nobility of your generosity. You left all kinds of riches to other people and made a most generous legacy and bequest of everything.’]

Although the word *king* was maintained since the political system of post-Conquest England remained a monarchy, the Anglo-Saxon nobility was wiped out by the Norman aristocracy, hence the substitution of *noble* for *æthel* in the Ancrene Wisse, and of *prince* for *earl* in the Northern Homily Cycle. New words related to social status made their way into the English
lexicon: dignete was introduced alongside native ‘worth’, while the adjective gentile ‘of noble birth’ and the noun genterise ‘nobility’ still find an echo in present-day English in the expressions ‘gentlemen’ and ‘gentry’, emphasising the long-lasting influence of that social change. The word burgeise reflects another kind of development, that of the growth of towns and cities throughout Europe in the 13th century. A new, wealthy bourgeois class arose in the growing towns, and the economy became dependent as much on trade as on agriculture (Gunn 2008: 20-21). Finally, the German word keiser is probably used to denote a foreign political concept, since the Holy Roman Germanic Empire was likely to be the only model of empire known to England at that time. It is also interesting to note that no native synonym is used alongside French terms related to nobility.

3.4.2.2. Political change and the survival of old traditions: the military domain

Another domain in which the Norman Conquest has had a lexical impact is the military sphere. Arnovick (2012: 558) observed that the heroic lexis typical of Old English is not present anymore in the early Middle English literary style. Indeed, military words of French origin are found in the Ancrene Wisse and in the Cloud of Unknowing (approximately 3%), and they nearly amount to 11% in the Northern Homily Cycle. While the pair of antonyms peis/werre ‘peace/war’ is adopted early in Middle English and found virtually unchanged in all three excerpts, some loanwords were ultimately replaced by others: enemye (the Cloud) replaced feloune of the Cycle while distroie entered in competition with wastis. The presence of military terminology in religious texts is worth noticing though, as well as the higher rate of military terms in the Cycle.

This discrepancy between the texts could possibly be accounted for in terms of audience. The 20th homily was indeed destined to be read aloud in front of a largely uneducated crowd, who may still have been familiar with the oral tradition of epic poetry and to whom heroic motives and vivid accounts of miracles (such as Saint Bede preaching to the stones) still appealed more than strictly intellectual reasoning. It is therefore tempting to consider this military vocabulary as remnants of the heroic setting of Old English and as an attempt of the author to draw on pre-Conquest warrior imagery. Although the rhetorical conventions and stylistic devices have changed – the author does not make use of compounds or appositions anymore but favours borrowing from French instead – the imagery persists in the 20th homily of the Cycle, chiefly in the image of Christ as a warrior who is stronger than the devil. Military
terms are used throughout the demonstration of Christ’s superiority against the devil: the author seeks to convince his audience that Christ was sent by God *mankynde fro fendes to defende* ‘to defend mankind against the fiend’ and further that Christ is stronger than the fiend (3.47), putting those words in the mouth of Christ himself. This military vocabulary is also found in other contexts, for instance when Jews and bad clergy are called *Goddes felounes*, i.e. God’s enemies (3.48). – the words in italics are French loans; the underlined words are related to the military sphere, from both languages.

(3.47) ‘Thof the fende be stythe,
And *armid* hard with este and nythe,
Agaynes me *fallis* he full swithe,
If I with him mi *maistrie* kithe;
And oft sithis I *fell* him with *fight*.
For he haves to me no *myght*.’
[Although the fiend be strong
And *armed* with envy and malice,
He would soon *fall* against me,
If I make use of my *power* against him;
And often I *fight* against him and *vanquish* 
Because he has no *power* over me.]

(3.48) ‘Goddes *felounes* I thaim call,
That thus geres men in synne fall,
With ensaumpile of ylle life.’
[I call them God’s *enemies*.
Who in such a way cause people to fall in sin
With example of evil life]

We can see in our texts that the idea of fighting against the devil is still very present in the Middle English period. In the *Cloud of Unknowing*, however, the battlefield becomes the mind of the contemplative, where the *enemies assailyn* are the nagging thoughts hindering the exercise of contemplation, which should be ‘smitten down, put down, trodden upon’ (3.49). Contemplation, in turn, becomes a weapon that *distroieth the grounde and the rote of synne*, i.e. the devil.
63

(3.49) ‘Soche a proude, corious witte behoveth algates be born doun and stifly troden doun under fote. [...] Thou schalt smite doun al maner thought under the cloude of forgetting’. [All such proud imaginings must ruthlessly be stamped out. You will suppress all thought under the cloud of forgetting.]

3.4.2.3. The imagery of the Norman court of justice in religious writings

The previous sections have shown that the choice of words and especially the use of borrowed lexis reflect social changes and adapt to new realities to a large extent. The large number of words in our corpus related to the semantic field of “secular government & the public domain” bears witness to the fact that the lexicon of Old English could not appropriately reflect the new social order based on Norman customs. William the Conqueror introduced a feudal system in the wake of his invasion of England that ousted the Anglo-Saxon warrior society relying on the mutual obligation between the lord and his tenants, as well as a new legal and financial framework that would leave its mark on the vocabulary of English. However, those changes will not only affect the English lexicon, but also its literary style: the author’s choice of exempla and illustrations are in fact equally representative of the social cultural shift. Whereas religious loanwords are distributed rather homogeneously throughout the text, some specific semantic fields are called upon in some illustrations: those exempla draw upon themes and motives inspired by the new post-Conquest social order.

The first pervasive imagery is that of justice. Domesday was a common Christian motif in both Old and Middle English religious writings and frequently occurred in Anglo-Saxon homilies. However, as one of “over-used topos” (Lendinara 2002: 67), it received a very different treatment in the excerpts from our corpus. Whereas Old English homilies focused on the loneliness of the sinner in front of his judgement and on the impossibility of receiving any help from his kin – which is in keeping with the importance assigned to kinsmen in Anglo-Saxon society (Lendinara 2002: 78) – the setting of Judgement Day in our texts is the Norman court of justice (3.50-3.51).

Example from the Northern Homily Cycle:

(3.50) ‘Thaim burd think, if thai ware wise,
      How thai sall stand at Goddes assyse.
      To yelde acounte of all thaire witte,

(3.50) ‘Thaim burd think, if thai ware wise,
      How thai sall stand at Goddes assyse.
      To yelde acounte of all thaire witte,
Example from the *Cloud of Unknowing*:

(3.51) ‘Alle tyme that is goven to thee, it schal be askid of thee how thou haste *dispendid* it. And skilful thing it is that thou *geve acompte* of it […] And He [Jesus], bi His Godheed and His Manheed togeders, is the trewist domesman and the asker of acompte of *dispending of tyme*. […] And therfore take good keep into tyme, how that thou dispendist it. For nothing is more precious than tyme. In oo litel tyme, as litel as it is, may heven be wonne and lost. A token it is that time is precious: for God, That is gever of tyme, geveth never two tymes togeder, bot ichone after other. And this He doth for He wil not reverse the ordre or the ordinel cours in the cause of His creacion. For tyme is maad for man, and not man for tyme. And therfore God, That is the rewler of hy kynde, wil not in the gevynge of tyme go before the steryng of kynde in a mans soule; the whiche is even acordyng to o tyme only. So that man schal have none excusacion agens God in the Dome and at the gevynge of acompte of dispendyng of tyme, seing: "Thou gevest two tymes at ones, and I have bot o steryng at ones."’ [*my emphasis*]

The examples (3.50) and (3.51) put forward a representation of God as a secular feudal lord, from whom all riches and favours stem. The lord distributes his favours, and one should in return ultimately account for what he has been given. In our texts, those favours take the form of either knowledge, such as in the *Northern Homily Cycle* (3.50), or time, such as in the *Cloud of Unknowing* (3.51). In both illustrations, the sinner is required to give an account, i.e. to report on how he has spent the lord’s gift: in front of the Supreme Judge, men have to *yelde acounte* or *geve acompte* of how they have *spendid* or *dispendid* their lives. The words used are of
French origin and quite likely inherited from the Norman legal system. In the *Cloud of Unknowing*, God bestows time upon his subjects, who are required to spend it in a wise and good way, just as they would do with money. There is a subtle analogy between time and money, and words that are traditionally associated with money come to be applied to time (*dispendid, precious, wonne and lost*, etc.): one spends time just as one would spend money. ‘Spending time’ is furthermore an expression that will endure into Modern English.

The *Ancrene Wisse* also shows this tendency of expressing religious allegories by means of secular imagery. According to Gunn (2008: 152), the Guide for Anchoresses made an innovative use of exempla in the vernacular that work as narrative illustrations. Those exempla are not directly based on the Scriptures, but are common tales about ordinary life and situations to which their readers could relate. This suggests that the terms used were on the whole understandable for a lay audience. The content of those exempla is likewise innovative. In Part Three, the exemplum is about a man who is in prison and owes a huge ransom (3.52). The second imagery of typical Norman descent alongside justice is thus the representation of sins as debts owed to the feudal lord that should be paid back, as in the following example:

Example from the *Ancrene Wisse*:

(3.52) [...] ‘Cunneth this essample. A mon the leie i prisun other ahte muche rancun ne o nane wise ne schulde ut, bute hit were to hongin, ear he hefde his rancun fulleliche i-paiet - nalde he cuinne god thonc a mon the duste uppon him of peonehes a bigurdel for-te reimin him with ant lesen him of pine, thah he wurpe hit ful hearde ayeines his heorte? Al the hurd were foryeten for the gladnessse. O this ilke wise we beoth alle i prisun her, ant ahen Godd greate deattes of sunne; for-thi we yeiyeth to him i the Paternoster: "Laverd," we seggeth, "foryef us ure deattes, alswa as we foryeoveth ure deatturs," woh thet me deth us, other of word other of werc. Thet is ure rancun thet we schule reimin us with ant cwitin ure deattes toward ure Laverd - thet beoth ure sunnen. For withute cwitance up of this prisun nis nan i-numen thet nis anan ahonget, other i purgatoire other i the pine of helle.’

[You should study this analogy. A man who was in prison and owed a huge ransom, and had no way of getting out, unless it were to be hanged, before he had paid his ransom in full – wouldn’t he feel really grateful to someone who threw a bag of money at him to ransom him with and release him from confinement? Even if he threw it very hard against his heart, all the pain would be forgotten because of the joy. In the same way, we are all in prison here, and owe God huge debts of sin. That is why we cry to him in
the Our Father: “Lord, we say, forgive us our debts, just as we forgive our debtors”. The harm that is done to us, either through words or through actions, is our ransom, which we should redeem ourselves with, and settles our debts to our Lord, which are our sins; because without a discharge, no-one is taken up out of this prison except to be hanged immediately, either in Purgatory or in the torment of hell.] [my emphasis]

This extract is loaded with loanwords related to the lexical field of money: _deattes, rancun, reimin, i-paiet, cwitance_, etc. that would typically occur during the settlement of a financial dispute. Once more, French words reflect a new reality introduced by the Normans, namely a new way of dealing with financial matters. But most interesting is the fact that those words are found in a devotional treatise of vernacular spirituality to illustrate a religious concept or proper Christian behaviour. Furthermore, turning to etymology, we observe that the French-derived verb _reimin_ has developed in French from the Latin etymon ‘redimere’ which means ‘to ransom, to pay back’. The Modern English words _redeem_ and _redemption_, remodelled on the Latin version, have thus in fact evolved from a money-connoted word. The same is found in Modern French with the verb _racheter_ which combines a religious and financial meaning depending on the context. The same imagery is found in the _Northern Homily Cycle_, where it is confession that frees a man from his debts towards God: _the wyte whereof his schrift made him qwite_ ‘the punishment from which his confession released him’. Another money-word had a double meaning in Middle English: the verb _paien_ signified either ‘to pay’ or ‘to please, to satisfy’ in our excerpts. In the _Ancrene Wisse_, it is used in either sense (3.53) & (3.54), but the _Cycle_ used it exclusively in the sense ‘to satisfy’ (3.55) & (3.56).

Examples from the _Ancrene Wisse_:

(3.53) ‘ear he hefde his rancun fullelige _i-paiet_’

[before he had paid his ransom in full]

(3.54) ‘ant for-te _painen_ hire, wreatheth hire Schuppere’

[and in order to please it, she [the soul] angers her Creator]

Examples from the _Northern Homily Cycle_:

(3.55) ‘Here mai we se withouten faile,

That God was _paied_ of his travaile.’

[Here can we see without error that God was satisfied of his work]

(3.56) ‘The bettir _paied_ es Belzebub.’ [The more satisfied is Belzebuth]
The entanglement of religious and secular meanings, derived from the Norman legal and financial background, is recurrent in our corpus. Naturally, the idea of being guilty of sins was no new thing, nor was the motif of Judgement Day. However, what we want to put forward here is that the conception, which emerges from our three texts, of sins as a debt that ought to be paid back to the lord as well as of Domesday as the time for justification of our acts seem to be innovations of the Middle English period. The very conception of Domesday presupposes a judgement, which had to be explained by means of words and concepts, and both had changed from the Old to the Middle English period. Old English homilies drew heavily upon Anglo-Saxon customs to illustrate what would happen in front of the Supreme Judge: the loneliness of the sinner on Domesday was contrasted with the importance of relatives in Anglo-Saxon society, and the transitory nature of earthly wealth and glory put against the heroic background of Germanic tribes. Contrary to those two typically Germanic motifs much exploited in Old English homilies (Lendinara 2002: 76), my hypothesis is that Middle English religious texts focus on other concerns, which reflect the changes that have occurred in society by that time: the establishment of a feudal society and of a new legal system on the one hand, as well as the importance of pastoral care and of a more intimate relation to God on the other. The new social system thus also functions as a new stylistic device. Moreover, the use of such imagery might have helped English speakers relate the foreign words to concrete realities, which in turn allowed loanwords to establish themselves more firmly into the lexicon. The most densely French passages of our corpus thus allow us to catch a glimpse of what the English society had become by that time, and the changes – social as well as lexical – that could not be resisted.
3.5. Semantic evolution from the *Ancrene Wisse* to the *Cloud*

Although the 150 years or so that have elapsed between both texts are undoubtedly felt in their marked differences, the *Ancrene Wisse* and the *Cloud of Unknowing* have more in common than one might first think. Indeed, they are united by their genre (devotional treatise written in vernacular prose) and their audience (probably female, at any rate not learned in Latin, but likely to read French (Bolton-Holloway 2016: 152; Gunn 2008: 6)), as well as by their concern for pastoral care and their focus on solitary and contemplative life. In addition, both texts were written in the Midlands area. As a result, some changes initiated in the Guide for Anchoresses are brought further by the *Cloud*, and may be considered as evolutions rather than sharp differences. The transitional state of the *Ancrene Wisse*, acknowledged earlier, supports this assumption. In this section, we will address the sharp rise in the three semantic categories of “scholarship”, “mental processes” and “abstract nouns” in the *Cloud of Unknowing* that was pointed out in the section of preliminary results (3.2.).

3.5.1. From spoken to written French influence (“scholarship, science & arts”)

Evidence suggests that lexical borrowing relied more heavily on written French and Latin in the *Cloud of Unknowing* than in the *Ancrene Wisse* or the *Northern Homily Cycle*. This evidence consists on the one hand of the large influx of words related to the semantic field of “scholarship, science & arts” (10.8%), and on the other of the strong influence of Latin that can be felt in this text. The *Cloud shows* indeed the highest rate of learned words of Romance origin in our corpus, some of which stem directly from Latin rather than French. A lot of words are (re)modelled on their Latin etymon, which makes their origin difficult to establish for sure (3.57), but some words do undoubtedly come from Latin, without French acting as an intermediary. This is the case of examples (3.58-3.60) for which the MED only provides a Latin etymology, and which do not seem to have any counterpart in French with a similar meaning, at least not in the spoken language. If they do, however, they would typically be words from a written and literate register.

(3.58) ‘Comprehende’ (to contain, encompass) < L *comprehendere*
(3.59) ‘Conclude’ (to corner by arguments) < L *concludere*
(3.60) ‘Construe’ (to interpret, form an opinion) < L *construere*
The influence of written language is thus conspicuous in the spelling conventions and the use of learned terms. In addition, since Latin was not a vernacular anymore, a written medium is likely to account for the entrance of Latin in Middle English. Schaefer (2012: 529) emphasised that early loanwords needed to be distinguished from “that large number of loans which entered the linguistic system from written French or Latin in the late Middle English period”. She thus refers to several waves of lexical borrowing from French and implicitly contrasts between lexical borrowing of general character and learned borrowing.

In the *Cloud of Unknowing* indeed, the first set of early loanwords – which are also to be found in the *Ancrene Wisse* (preof, servise, spouse, richeses, esed, grace, mercy) – is completed by a series of more scholarly words. One might wonder as to the status of the set of loanwords given between brackets. They could arguably already have been considered as “native” by the time the *Cloud* was written, since they entered the lexicon at a very early date. Additionally, the overwhelming number of French words (more than 800) in the excerpt, a lot of them being repeated throughout the text without a native counterpart, should prevent us from minimising the degree of assimilation of the Romance component in the *Cloud*. The group of French loanwords is not only made of learned terms, and some are used as naturally as would be words of native origin. *Parfite* and its derivatives (34), grace (27), partie (27), cause (22) and *vertewe* (19) are the five loanwords that recur most often in our excerpt. The number of times they appear in the text is given between brackets.

As for the set of French learned loanwords, although it is of common consent that the author of the *Cloud* was a skilled Latinist (Taylor 2005: 33), it would be anachronistic to say that the author of the *Cloud* deliberately chose those words in order to elevate the English language. The practice of ‘aureation’, i.e. enriching the English tongue on purpose, only came later to the forefront in the 15th and 16th centuries (Nielsen 2005: 164-165). It therefore does not seem to be the main concern of the *Cloud* author.

The growing influence of written over spoken French can possibly better be explained in terms of historical changes and intended audience. Although the author decided to write in the vernacular, “there seems to have been a deliberate, and successful, attempt to keep the *Cloud of Unknowing* from being read by inexpert readers” (Gunn 2008: 159). In saying this, Gunn implies that the *Cloud* author expected a certain level of education from his audience. The *Cloud* could hence be regarded as a more intellectual work relying on written French and Latin and aimed at an audience unlearned in Latin but with a degree of instruction. This is in keeping with the evolution of the education system in England in the 13th and 14th centuries, where French
had become a prominent, if not exclusive language of education. A lot of French words related to scholarship were thus at that time most likely understandable by the intended audience of the *Cloud*. Style may also possibly account for that shift, in that the use of the vocabulary seems to some extent to serve stylistic purposes. In the *Cloud*, the distribution of Romance and English words is used as a stylistic device to establish a contrast between “passages of linguistic constriction” and “passages of linguistic expansion” (Taylor 2005: 40). It can be noticed that the author of the *Cloud* makes use rather consistently of Latin and French vocabulary in literary passages to expound and develop his more elaborate metaphors, whereas he mainly uses words of native or Scandinavian origin when he touches upon the core of his message. The oral component of constrictive passages is conspicuous in expressions such as ‘I telle thee’, ‘I mene’, ‘I trowe’, ‘I sey that’ as well as in the use of brief words of one or two syllables. By contrast, expansive passages rely more on written techniques of composition. It is worth noting, though, that brief words of French origin are also used in constrictive passages, chiefly early loans such as *grace*, *mercy* and *desire*, putting their foreign status in doubt. The *Cloud* thus appears to be the only text in our corpus to make a stylistic distinction in its use of vocabulary, reserving indigenous words for constrictive passages and (learned) loans for more expansive passages.

However, this increase in learned terms is rather paradoxical with respect to the author’s main aim. The *Cloud* author wants his disciple to discover a deeper spirituality through the exercise of contemplation, an exercise that is exclusively emotional, not physical, nor even intellectual (“intellectual activity will hinder you” – Chap. 9), but he nevertheless needs to resort to intellectual reasoning to explain difficult concepts. For instance, the author advocates the use of monosyllabic words in prayer, which fits into his representation of time as being “atomic”. However, he needs Latin and French words to explain the concepts of atoms (3.61). Even though learned loanwords are often connoted negatively, the author cannot help but use them (3.62). Try as he may, he will not escape the use of Romance words and the images that result from it. Quoting Englert (1990: 59), “the most naked and blind intent is always coupled to the art which surrounds it”, and “if the *Cloud* author's disciple is to rest in darkness, […] the vernacular prose of the *Cloud* is intended to immerse its reader in a sea of images which play upon the imagination” (1990: 53).
‘the whiche athomus, by the diffinicion of trewe philisophres in the sciens of astronomye, is the leest partie of tyme; and it is so litil that, for the littilnes of it, it is undepartable and neighhonde incomprehensible’.  

[An atom, as a philosopher of astronomy will tell you, is the smallest division of time. It is so small that it cannot be analysed: it is almost beyond our grasp.]

‘yif any thought prees apon thee to aske thee what thou woldest have, answere him with no mo words bot with this o worde. And yif he profre thee of his grete clergie to expoune thee that worde and to telle thee the condicions of that word, sey him that thou wilt have it al hole, and not broken ne undon.’

[If a nagging thought pesters you, strike it with this monosyllabic word. If your mind begins to analyze the intellectual ramifications of your chosen word, remember that the value of this word is its simplicity. Do not allow the word to become fragmented.]

The use that the Cloud author made of Latin and French loanwords tends to demonstrate that the influence of written French was only second in the process of lexical borrowing from French. This would in turn be in keeping with the several waves of borrowing distinguished by scholars (e.g. Dekeyser 1986; Nielsen 2005: 104-105): more French words would have entered the vocabulary of Middle English from the moment when French had become a language of written record (ca. 13th and 14th centuries), although the influence of spoken French remained important through bilingual speakers. The influence of Latin, by contrast, would not become important until the end of the 14th century, ca. 1375 (Dekeyser 1986: 264).

3.5.2. From concrete to abstract terms (“psychological & mental processes”)

According to Gunn (2008: 152) and to our previous observations, “the use of exempla as a rhetorical device was coming to the fore in the pastoral literature of the late 12th and early 13th centuries and is used to great effect in Ancrene Wisse”. The composition of its third part is indeed largely determined by patterns of imagery taken from nature. Part Three of the Ancrene Wisse, entitled “Lessons from Nature”, could be summed up by the following sentence: of dumbe beastes leorne wisdom ant lare ‘learn wisdom and knowledge from dumb animals’. Consequently, the presence of loanwords related to the semantic field of “life and living things” (4,1%) does make sense: anchoresses are compared to several birds, while sins are compared to animals. But the author also resorts to imageries linked with trade in equal measure (4,1%).
food (2.7%) and even more so with materials and substances (4.8%) to make comparisons: someone who is carrying a treasure (tresor) should travel as quietly as would a rich merchant (riche mercer); a woman who discloses her good works is compared to somebody stripping (bipilet) a fig tree (fier), after which the tree would not bear fruit (frut) anymore; and virginity is compared to a precious liquid (licur) such as a fragrant oil (basme) in a breakable (feble) vessel. The author of the Ancrene Wisse thus uses a great diversity of images and resorts to various concrete situations and objects to illustrate his point. As a result, lexical borrowing reflects to some extent this tendency, in the appearance of numerous concrete loanwords.

In the Cloud of Unknowing, by contrast, “the movement towards God is presented as a retreat from images” (Englert 1990: 52). Concrete imagery is thus frowned upon – only one concrete illustration is found in our excerpt, (cf. example (3.33) in section 3.4.1.) – and the words referring to any concrete reality are associated with intangible objects, which deprive them in a sense from their actual meaning (Taylor 2005: 48). This is typically the case of the author’s main theme, the so-called ‘cloud of unknowing’: the abstract mental process of ‘unknowing’ hinders the interpretation of the cloud as a cloude of the eire, i.e. a cloud in the sky, as the author explains it in his 4th chapter. Throughout the text, the author strives to explain this very abstract concept to his disciple. In doing so, he is confronted with a double paradox: on the one hand, he rejects intellectual activity, but he nevertheless needs to resort to learned words to explain difficult concepts, hence the rise in the number of words linked to scholarship (see previous section 3.5.1.); on the other hand, he seeks to explain an abstract concept, but in order to do so, he has to use words that have a concrete meaning.

This concrete meaning, however, is often inhibited by a series of techniques. To begin with, it is in the mind that everything is at stake. As Taylor (2005: 48) pointed out, “in the first 32 chapters of the Cloud, innovative kinaesthetic metaphors describe the work of treading, putting, beating, smiting, and bearing down, thoughts, impulses and sins, often under the cloud of forgetting, and of smiting, beating, and putting upon with love the cloud of unknowing”. One can first notice in this quote how physical and mental processes interweave: all the physical processes described by the author (‘treading’, ‘smiting’, etc.) are in fact happening in the mind of the author’s disciple. The second element that might be observed is how concrete verbs are associated with abstract concepts, thus negating or emptying their sensual content. This also occurs with borrowed lexis: French loanwords describing physical processes are either combined with abstract words (3.63) or used in a psychological context (3.64).
(3.63) Boistous beholdyng ‘limping expression’; sensible liste ‘felt longing’; peerse the derknes ‘pierce the darkness’; abilnes in grace ‘ability in grace’; soul reformid ‘soul changed for the better; naked entent ‘naked intention’, etc.

(3.64) Thei travayle in theire wittes ‘they work their minds’; preentid in thi reson ‘printed in your reason’; a thought presyng agens thi wille and wetyng ‘a thought exerting pressure on your mind and will’, etc.

Those unexpected associations allow the loanwords to get out of their restricted semantic field and be applied more generally to abstract concepts, whereas they retained more of their literal meaning in the Ancrene Wisse. In the Cloud of Unknowing, the loanwords are less specialised and less restricted to a specific semantic category, hence the rise in general in the categories of “states, actions and processes” and the decline in the categories of “living things” and “substances and materials”. The Ancrene Wisse, however, even though it makes wide use of concrete imagery in its numerous exempla, had initiated a move towards a more intimate relation to God (cf. section 3.4.1.3.). The author of the Cloud of Unknowing goes deeper in the exploration of the personal relationship with God. To do so, he shows a great ingenuity in his use of vocabulary: in trying to explain something that is very difficult to fathom, he resorts to a variety of unusual if not daring images with a less literal meaning. His endeavour is reflected in his clever use of vocabulary, which leads him in some cases to lexical innovations (see section 4.3.2. in the next chapter).
3.6. Conclusion on semantics

The first striking observations of Table 2 (see section 3.2.) are the steady increase in the use of French loanwords overtime, as well as their distribution across all the semantic categories from an early point in time, which testifies to the all-pervading influence of French in the Middle English period. Time, rather than regional provenance, seems to be the determining factor for that steady increase, which is further evidence for vertical, i.e. social and supra-dialectal borrowing. Moreover, the French loanwords do not seem to be restricted to an elevated register or to a written use, but to stem from the spoken language as well. However, a marked use of loanwords in some particular semantic fields is noticeable and points towards the importance of external factors in lexical change, in this case mainly religious reforms and changes in secular government. Lexical change resulting from the post-Conquest political upheaval was probably more predictable than lexical change linked with intellectual and religious developments. However, not all lexical borrowing can be motivated or predictable: some loanwords simply entered the lexicon as the result of linguistic coexistence. On the other hand, the survival of native words and expressions must also be accounted for.

Two main conditions for the survival or fixation of a word into the lexis of a language have been pointed out by Timofeeva (2018a: 14): its frequency and its connection to secular matters, i.e. its unmarked character. Those criteria account most certainly for the entrance and subsequent survival of most of the words of Table 6 (such as serve, prove, reason) and for the replacement of Old English æthel by French noble – since Anglo-Saxon æthelings were replaced by Norman noblemen in the wake of the Conquest – but they can also help explain the resistance of some Old and Middle English words into present-day English. This is true both for religious (3.65) and secular words (3.66). Those words proved resistant from the Ancrene Wisse up to the Cloud and their meaning remained stable throughout the Middle English period. Their frequency and general (i.e. unmarked) character ensured their survival into the lexis of Modern English.

(3.65) ‘Sin’ (sunne), ‘heaven’ (hevene), ‘holy’ (hali), etc.
(3.66) ‘Might’, ‘deem’ (deme), ‘wealth’ (welthe), ‘fight’ (fiht), etc.
Furthermore, the texts of our corpus are in keeping with the hypothesis of the intermediary stage of English religious texts between continuity and rupture. The rupture is very conspicuous in the terminology associated with some domains such as the new religious vocabulary and the terminology linked with rank and nobility. Timofeeva (2018a: 27-28) argues that innovative lexical tendencies are already observable in the West Midlands at an early stage, because the initial stages of the new social and religious developments were also more pronounced in this region, even though she also acknowledges its strong connection with the Old English religious vocabulary. This corroborates our findings about the free variation between old and new terminology and the non-establishment of a norm yet. De Caluwé-Dor (1992: 500) also emphasised the innovative aspects of AB language group: “the B-texts are innovative. Without eliminating words from the native stock, they add French words, often redundantly, and they consciously and conspicuously combine the process with one of their favourite stylistics devices”.

Arguably, the Cloud of Unknowing displays even more innovative aspects and brings the semantic evolution further. The text exhibits a significant increase in the use of French loanwords as well as a dramatic decrease in the free variation with native synonyms, as compared with the Ancrene Wisse. The Cloud gets rid of the redundancy characterising the AB language texts, which reveals a specialisation of the French loanwords and indicates that a selection has been made. The unavoidable gap between the written and the spoken language, however, has also to be reckoned with. Writing is always more conservative than speech; as a result, the conservative as well as innovative aspects of the Ancrene Wisse might reflect a state of language from the previous century. The same holds true for the Cloud: the high rate of French words that the author uses does not seem to hinder the understanding of his audience, which means that they should have been firmly established by then. Some French words must indeed have been widely known even to lay people, since the Cycle also contains a significant number of them.

In the Northern Homily Cycle, the continuity is witnessed in the recourse to what seems the remnants of an Anglo-Saxon warrior imagery, but innovations are visible in the religious terminology. Beyond the lexicon, the rupture is also discernible in the innovations in the imagery that is called upon in religious texts. The new words are part of a new perception of society, reflecting the new post-Conquest social order.
We can ultimately conclude that our texts exhibit different levels of semantic – but also morphosyntactic – integration. Some words were indeed better established than others: whereas *prisun* already referred to a very concrete reality in post-Conquest England by the time the *Ancrene Wisse* was written, *contemplatiun* was a neologism denoting a new theological concept that required proper explanation. In the *Ancrene Wisse* and the *Cycle*, words referring to concrete religious or secular realities are most common, and also most favourable to forming hybrids, while the author of the *Cloud* resorts to more abstract and general terms, states and processes, that integrated into the core of the English vocabulary. A semantic evolution thus occurred, from the recourse to specific words called upon to illustrate a particular situation to the use of more general terms that are used in new contexts and that, as we will see in the next chapter, combined more intimately with native words. In the following sections, we will thus explore how integration in meaning is followed by integration in morphology and syntax.
Lexical integration of French loanwords

The vocabulary of any language is made of several layers of vocabulary of different origins, arising from the contact of its speakers with other communities at different periods in its history. In that respect, English is no exception, and those several layers are still visible or at least discernible in the modern lexis of English. The layer of French loanwords originating from the Middle English period is in this way also distinguishable from the later loanwords of French origin that entered the English lexicon at a later date, from the 16th to the 18th century. The loanwords from that period tended to be more often unassimilated in spelling and accentuation (Nielsen 2005: 179). By contrast, the loanwords from the Middle English period showed a considerable degree of assimilation, both morphologically and phonetically, from a rather early point in time. The earlier a loanword entered the vocabulary of English, the more integrated it became to the English lexicon, insomuch that its foreign origin ultimately goes unnoticed to the modern speaker. In Modern English, it is sometimes very difficult to identify some lexical items as loanwords due to their eventual adherence to the morphological, prosodic and orthographic rules of English (Nielsen 1998: 10-11).

A closer look at the spelling, the phonology and the morphology of the loanwords of our texts could help us determine their level of integration into the lexicon already in the Middle English period, by providing an answer to the following questions: which spelling conventions were followed? Can we witness the entrance of new phonemes? Do we observe new patterns of derivation? New words can be introduced into the lexicon by borrowing from another language – this is what we are interested in in this study – but they can also be created through internal processes of derivation, out of the existing resources of the language. It would therefore be interesting to examine word formation and word borrowing in Middle English and the extent to which they intertwine, if blending of these two strategies occurs at all (Sylvester 2012: 459). Since the excerpts under examination for this paper cover a period of approximately two centuries, they might be expected to bear witness to the evolution in the integration of loanwords in Middle English texts.
4.1. A closer look at the *Ancrene Wisse*

Both Clark (1966: 120) and Trotter (2003: 90) emphasised the “intimate penetration of the text of the *Ancrene Wisse* by French words and forms”, both from a formal and a semantic perspective. Arnovick (2012: 558) added that French words were used with familiarity in this text. Even though the *Ancrene Wisse* is the text that shows the lowest percentage of French loanwords (cf. Table 2), they present a surprisingly high level of integration, by accommodating to the phonological and morphological system of the borrowing language, i.e. the Middle English dialect of the West Midlands in this case (Burrow & Turville-Petre 1999: 7). This adaptation is to be seen in the addition of basic inflectional suffixes such as the regular plural in -s (4.1); infinitives ending in -in or -en (4.2); the third person singular ending in -th (4.3) and the formation of past and present participles according to native rules (4.4).

(4.4) ‘I-cuplet’, ‘i-paiet’, ‘i-hurt’, ‘i-preiset’ (past ptc.); ‘reginde’ (pres. ptc.), etc.

In addition, two puzzling cases of morphological assimilation can be pointed out. In the West Midland dialect of the *Ancrene Wisse*, the present participle is formed by adding the suffix -inde instead of -ing or -ung. As a result, the suffix -unge in *Ancrene Wisse* is a deverbal suffix used to build nouns from verbs. Nielsen (1998: 137) distinguishes between the suffix -ing which has a meaning of ‘derived from’, and -unge which is a typical Old English suffix used to create nouns. In this respect, some word formations can thus be designated as derivation rather than inflection or assimilation and created hybrids (4.5). The second case is a case of assimilation to irregular categories following the principle of morphological analogy (Nielsen 1998: 11): the French loan i-caht in *Ancrene Wisse* has been modelled on the Middle English strong verbs lacchen-li-laht ‘seize’ and tchen-li-that ‘teach’ (4.6). Finally, in line with our earlier observation (see section 3.2.) that some early loanwords had already integrated enough in the vocabulary to appear in close connection with native words in alliterative phrases (4.7), the text of *Ancrene Wisse* also presents a certain number of hybrids or loan blends that will be discussed later in this chapter (see section 4.3.2.).
Those early cases of integration point towards a very early and profound penetration of French vocabulary into Middle English. This idea is reinforced by Arnovick’s observation (2012: 558) that the borrowed vocabulary in the *Ancrene Wisse* is used with familiarity: integration in meaning thus seems to underlie integration into the lexicon. One has to bear in mind, though, the important role played by idiosyncrasy and the own – often multilingual – background of the author in the number and nature of words from Old French that he used (Durkin 2009: 153). However, such a systematic assimilation to the morphological rules of Middle English and the morphological analogy at play make it hard to attribute all the choices of words to the particular author of the *Ancrene Wisse*, no matter how clever he may have been.

**4.2. Phonology and spelling**

The spelling conventions used by the anonymous author of the *Ancrene Wisse* draw heavily on ancient Old English (if not West-Saxon) traditions. Sounds in French loanwords that were similar to native phonemes were adapted to native spelling and transcribed in the way native words would be. On the whole, the spelling conventions of the *Ancrene Wisse* seem to be more English in nature, even though some loanwords retained a foreign orthography that makes their foreign origin unmistakable (e.g. *continulement*). First of all, there is no instance of the spelling <aun> nor <oun> which is typical of Anglo-French (4.8). Secondly, the spelling of some diphthongs inherited from Old English such as <ea> and <eo> have been extended to loanwords, as can be seen in (4.9) and (4.10). As a result, some loanwords such as *beast* match native words such as *feast*. The <ea> spelling is applied systematically in loanwords where it replaces the phoneme /ɛ:/: French ‘beste’ becomes *beast*, ‘merci’ becomes *mearci*, ‘dette’ becomes *deatte*, etc. The phoneme that this spelling represents when it is applied to loanwords is always /ɛ:/ /æː/. One possible explanation to account for the extension of that spelling to French loanwords is that Middle-English /æː/ was sometimes the reflex of the Old English long diphthong /æːə/, which was typically spelled *<ea>* (Bergs & Brinton 2012: 399). Finally, <cw> is still widely used and has not yet been replaced by the Romance spelling <qu> (4.11), while the spelling <u> still resists its French counterpart <ou> (4.12). The use of a typical English
spelling also makes it more difficult to spot some words of foreign origin in the text: native acwikien ‘revive’ and French-derived acwiten ‘acquit’ look very similar. Likewise, feaste stands for ‘fast’, and not for ‘feast’. Feast means ‘fat’, not ‘feat’. Finally, reste is ‘resting-place’, not ‘remain’ (‘rester’ in French). All those observations point towards some degree of structural similarity and contradicts Lerer’s statement (2007: 55) that French words were “easily recognisable” as they were “polysyllabic, with distinguishing sounds and spellings”.

(4.8) Absence of <aun> or <oun>: ‘semblant, essample; persone, reisun, cunfort’.
(4.9) <ea>: ‘beast, chearite, beaki, beast, deatte, mearci, preachur, preasse, spealeth’.
(4.10) <eo>: ‘preove, meoseise, creoiz’.
(4.11) <cw> instead of <qu>: ‘cwitin, acwiti’.
(4.12) <u> instead of <ou>: ‘spuse, reisun, ures, crune, preacher, cunfort’.

On the other hand, typical French spellings began to make their way into the West Midland dialect, especially when it concerned new phonemes introduced in English by French. This is the case of the very early borrowing of two distinctly non-Germanic diphthongs, /oi/ (4.13) and /ui/ (4.14), and of nasalisation (4.15). According to Görlach (1986: 337), those diphthongs filled gaps in the series of i-diphthongs that had developed in Middle English from the vocalisation of the consonant /g/. It is interesting to note, though, that the /oi/ diphthong will not survive in the words listed under (4.13) – where they will overtime be replaced by -ory – but will in other words. Moreover, the diphthong /oi/ is typical of Central French and its appearance in the Ancrene Wisse thus points towards some early continental influence, although Trotter (2003: 83) insisted that Anglo-French was the background against which the anonymous author wrote. The other French-inspired spelling conventions are <ch> (4.16), <ai> (4.17) and <z> for the plural in /ts/ (4.18).

(4.13) ‘creoiz, purgatoire, estoires, Gregoire’
(4.14) ‘despuilet’
(4.15) ‘semblant, Juhan, penitence, contemplatiun, liun’
(4.16) ‘chearite, preachur, chere, change, charge, chaste, riche’
(4.17) ‘paien, versaili, baraigne’
(4.18) ‘presenz, estaz, aromaz’ (sg. ‘present, estat, aromat’)
The spelling conventions of the *Ancrene Wisse* argue in favour of a certain continuity of the English prose tradition, in line with the observations of Tolkien (1929) and Zettersten (1965) according to whom there was still some kind of school or authority that maintained some conventions of writing from Old English. More recent research nevertheless insisted that those conventions were maintained on a very local scale and that the alleged “authority” did not exceed the boundaries of the county or scriptorium in which the texts were copied (Schaefer 2012: 524). At any rate, scribes throughout England will become increasingly more trained in the Norman fashion and the Old English spelling conventions will gradually fall into disuse.

The *Northern Homily Cycle* might give more indications as to the level of phonetic integration of French loanwords, since it is written in verse. It can be pointed out that the unknown author succeeded in rhyming quite a large number of French loanwords with native English words (4.19 – the French loanwords are in italics). However, some loanwords can only be rhymed with one another, typically the words ending in -oun, -ues, -aile, and -ente (4.20), testifying to the introduction of new phonemes in English.

As for the spelling conventions of the *Cycle*, they seem to be closer to Anglo-French conventions of writing (*sermoune, prechoure, penaunce, vertues, spouse, etc.*), but some sort of confusion between the old and newer tradition can sometimes be perceived. In words such as *qwite* or *qweme* (instead of *cuite* and *cume* in the *Ancrene Wisse*), there seems to be an overlap between native and foreign spelling conventions.


Finally, in the *Cloud of Unknowing*, the spelling system is thoroughly and undoubtedly of Anglo-French descent. The *Cloud* author made wide use of Anglo-French spelling conventions so that French words are easily spotted (*secound, counforte, servaunt, devinité, vanité, devocion, contricion*, etc.). Native words are sometimes even remodelled on Anglo-French conventions (Old English *engel* in *Ancrene Wisse* becomes *aungel* in the *Cloud*).
An evolution in the spelling conventions can thus be observed from the beginning of the 13th to the end of the 14th century. It seems that in all three texts, a tension is at play between internal and external forces, between native and foreign spelling conventions. It would be misleading, though, to rely only on the spelling to assess the level of integration of French loanwords, although their degree of assimilation to the spelling conventions of Old English might give a clue as to how foreign those words were considered. Additionally, since it is too early to speak of strict conventions in the Middle English period, the overview sketched in this section can only be partially reliable.

4.3. Morphology: evolution from the Ancrene Wisse to the Cloud

4.3.1. The Ancrene Wisse: laying the foundations for further integration

It has been seen above that from a rather early date (ca. 1200), French loanwords have been adapted to the basic morphological rules of Middle English such as the inflectional system. The verbs of French origin integrated rather thoroughly in the paradigm of verbs regarding the ending for the infinitive, the third person singular and the participles. Such an adaptation is already witnessed in the Ancrene Wisse and in the two later texts. However, even though lexical loans were nativised to some extent, they also retained some morphological properties of their own. Furthermore, not all French loanwords were equally nativised (Roost 2014: 19): words of more than two syllables especially retained their foreign character. It would then be interesting to go beyond inflectional assimilation and have a look at word-formation and derivational processes in Middle English, and to identify the presence of complex loanwords as well as their potential influence on the English system of derivation.

Although the Ancrene Wisse is undoubtedly the text of our corpus with the most archaic character, a transition from Old to Middle English can already be observed with respect to morphology. Compounding, which was the favoured way of forming new words in Old English texts (Nielsen 1998: 137), is on the decline in the Guide and survives only in what seems lexicalised items (eadmode, tholemode, cwalm-hus). Conversely, a sharp rise in prefixation and suffixation can be observed. Already in the Ancrene Wisse, it seems that the favoured mode for forming new words is the addition of bound morphemes that modify the stem through affixation. In Middle English, derivation by suffixing was one of the principal methods of
creating new words (Welna 2012: 431). However, the large set of prefixes inherited from Old English used in the Ancrene Wisse still attests to a very early stage of English (forschuppet, overgan, underveng, bitacneth, acwikien, misdeth, etc.). Interestingly, those typically (Old) English prefixes combine several times with foreign bases (bibarret, bipilet, unstable). In late Middle English, phrasal verbs would increasingly replace those native prefixed verbs, which would also affect English syntax overtime (Schendl 2012: 514). It is also widely recognised by contemporary scholars that Modern English inherited a double system of word-formation with two derivational strata, a native and a foreign one, from the extensive contacts with French (Kastovsky 1994; Schendl 2012: 514). Considerable attention will be devoted in the following sections to the extent of the assimilation and the degree of productivity of the foreign stratum during the Middle English period.

4.3.2. Complex loanwords and derivational processes

The Ancrene Wisse presents few instances of complex loans. It is often hard to tell whether a word has entered the English lexicon as a complex loanword, thus forming a single indivisible whole, or whether it has been subject to derivation in English and created according to internal patterns of derivation. Moreover, it is very difficult to assess the level of analysability of those complex loanwords by monolingual English speakers. Two conditions are required for the analysability of complex loanwords. For a complex loan to be considered analysable as a potential base for derivation, a related simplex form should be attested earlier than the derivative and be well-established (or even nativised) in the lexicon of the receiving language (Dalton-Puffer 1996: 210). Secondly, once the base has been recognised as such, it enables the speaker to analyse the remaining part of the word as a derivational affix. Especially in earlier texts, complex loanwords seem to have been borrowed as such and are not readily analysable. This seems to be the case of ‘continuelement’ in the Ancrene Wisse. The fact that the simple word from which the adverb ‘continuelement’ is derived from appears nowhere in the whole excerpt reinforces this idea. It must be pointed out, however, that some words, while obviously unanalysable for English speakers, might have been analysable to bilingual speakers, who were more familiar with their simplex form in French (Sylvester 2012: 462). The Ancrene Wisse does in fact contain a number of derivatives, as can be seen in Table 7 below.
Most of the complex words and their related simplex forms occur in close proximity within the text. The presence of the simplex in the surrounding context accounts for the analysability of the complex word, which most likely ensured its being correctly understood in context. If this hypothesis proves to be true, some cases such as *prive*, which occurs in three different derivative forms, might point towards a certain degree of analysability at this very early stage of Middle English. Some derivatives of Table 7, though, should probably be considered as separate loans. *Vers* and *versaili*, although ultimately related, were probably regarded as two different words, since the ending *-aili* is isolated and can hardly be considered a suffix, let alone an analysable suffix. Finally, other cases remain unclear, such as the two following pairs *noble/noblesce* and *large/largesce*. All four words occur in close proximity in the same passage. In addition, the adjective *large* also appear in the comparative form *largere*. However, it is difficult to tell whether those are sufficient criteria to account for the analysability of *-esce* as a suffix.

It is clear that our excerpt, due to its limited size, does not present enough complex words of French origin to enable us to tell if re-interpretation of foreign suffixes on a large scale was possible, let alone to determine if foreign patterns of derivation had already become productive, even though the author himself might have had some sense of the composition of those complex words due to his knowledge of Anglo-French. However, it has been pointed out by Zbierska-Sawala (1989) that virtually all the possible suffixes from Old French appear at least once in the *Ancrene Wisse*. Since those words have mostly to do with secular government, law and financial matters, they can be expected to be very early loanwords. What Table 7 demonstrates is an already profound integration of early French loanwords into the English vocabulary. If it cannot yet be called native derivation, Table 7 points to an internal tendency to assimilate the loanwords at a deeper morphological level: the same foreign base is used in several grammatical categories, which creates the necessary conditions for forthcoming reanalysis, since “a high

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Adjective/Adverb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deattes, deatturs</td>
<td>Endeattet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Largesce</td>
<td></td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meistrie</td>
<td>Meistrin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noblesce</td>
<td></td>
<td>Noble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prive</td>
<td></td>
<td>Prive/Privement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prufunge</td>
<td>Preove</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servise</td>
<td>Servin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trussews</td>
<td>I-trusset</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vers</td>
<td>Versaili</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: complex words and their related simplex form in the Ancrene Wisse
frequency of transparent (i.e. analysable) loanwords decisively contributes to the growing productivity of French suffixes” (Ciszek 2004: 116). This will in turn trigger deeper integration of derivational patterns, a process that will nevertheless only be accomplished in Early Modern English. In the *Ancrene Wisse*, derivational mechanisms based on French affixes are not yet available. However, what is observable in the *Ancrene Wisse* is a first stage, a necessary step prior to wholesale reanalysis that will enable the future integration of the foreign affixes into the set of affixes of the receiving language. The subsequent development of the language and the growing number of hybrid formations that will be found in later texts tend to prove the hypothesis of a gradual process taking root as early as 1200.

In contrast to the *Ancrene Wisse*, the number of complex loanwords is significant in the *Cloud*. The same foreign base often presents different forms from different grammatical categories, in a more extensive and systematic way than in the Guide (see Table 8 below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Adjective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acordaunce</td>
<td>Acordeth</td>
<td>Affectuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affeccion</td>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehende</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehensible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemplacion</td>
<td></td>
<td>Contemplative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Contynowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Continow, continowel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coriousté</td>
<td></td>
<td>Corious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cunforte</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cunfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covetyse</td>
<td></td>
<td>Coveiteth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creacion, creature</td>
<td></td>
<td>Create</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire</td>
<td>Desire</td>
<td>Desirable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devocion</td>
<td></td>
<td>Devoute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disseites</td>
<td></td>
<td>Deceyve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Errour</td>
<td></td>
<td>Erre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gracious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merveyle</td>
<td></td>
<td>Merveylous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocupacion</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ocupied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordre</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ordinel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfeccion</td>
<td></td>
<td>Parfite, inparfite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plesaunce</td>
<td>Plesith</td>
<td>Plesing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preier</td>
<td></td>
<td>Preie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profite</td>
<td>Profiten</td>
<td>Profitable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpos</td>
<td>Purposeth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reson</td>
<td></td>
<td>Resonable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servise, servaunt</td>
<td></td>
<td>Suffiseth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanité</td>
<td></td>
<td>Veyne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertewe</td>
<td></td>
<td>Vertewos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ymage, yimaginacion</td>
<td>Ymagin</td>
<td>Ymaginatiif</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 8: complex words and their related simplex form in the Cloud of Unknowing*
It is hard to tell if Table 8 is to be interpreted as an increase in the borrowing of complex words or if those words are the result of internal derivation. In any case, it gradually becomes possible to distinguish analyzable patterns of word formation, such as the adjectives formed by means of the French suffixes -ous (4.21) and -able (4.22). Nevertheless, a lot of other derivatives remained very irregular and suggest a lower degree of analysability, namely the patterns of alternation of word stem (4.23).


However, internal derivational processes undoubtedly occurred in the *Cloud of Unknowing*. The very title of the work hints at its potential of lexical innovation: the nominal use of *unknowing* meaning ‘ignorance’ is recorded from the mid-14th century according to the *Online Etymology Dictionary*. The Dictionary also highlights the phrase ‘cloud of unknowing’ made famous by a “medieval book of Christian mysticism”. It might be a plausible, albeit daring guess that this new type of native derivation (conversion from adjective to noun) might trigger other new derivational patterns. This assumption is nonetheless matched to some extent by a proneness of the *Cloud* to lexical innovation. Three rather clear-cut internal processes of derivation can be spotted in the text, recorded under (4.24), (4.25) and (4.26). Those derivatives have been coined into the receiving language although they were strongly influenced by foreign structures.

Examples from the *Cloud of Unknowing*:

(4.24) ‘Create’ (past ptc.)

(4.25) ‘Conceites’ (n.)

(4.26) ‘Knowable’ & ‘wilnable’ (adj.)

First of all, the past participle *create* (4.24) does not seem to have been borrowed from French, since the /t/ of the Middle English verb is absent from the French participle ‘créé’. Neither the French infinitive ‘creer’ nor the Latin infinitive ‘creare’ could be considered as the etymon for the verb *create*. The *Online Etymology Dictionary* claims it was formed from the
Latin word *creatus*, past participle of *creare*, but it dates the verb as late as the beginning of the 15\textsuperscript{th} century. Another way of accounting for the apparition of the */t/ could be to posit an endogenous process of backformation, from a noun already present in the text (e.g. *creatures*, which appears 13 times in the excerpt) or from the Latin forms ‘creationem’ or ‘creatus’. A second interesting case is the apparition of the noun *conceites* in Late Middle English (4.25) whereas the first attestation of the French noun ‘concept’ is recorded for the first time in the first years of the 15\textsuperscript{th} century, in a work of Christine de Pizan\textsuperscript{8}. The *Middle English Dictionary* presents *conceite* as a Middle English creation derived from the verb *conceiven* and based on the analogy of the pairs ‘deceit/deceive’ (ME *disseite/deceyven* present in our corpus) and ‘receipt/receive’. Its initial meaning is “something formed in the mind, concepts, thoughts”. What this case interestingly demonstrates is that foreign models had begun to become productive in the receiving language. The analogy is indeed modelled on a foreign, in this case French, pattern of alternation, contrary to what happened with *cacchen* in the *Ancrene Wisse*, where the French loanword entered the English lexicon modelled on the native pattern ‘lacchen/i-laht’ – ‘cacchen/i-caht’.

Finally, two instances of hybrids with a Romance suffix attached on a native base (4.26) are of particular relevance to illustrate mechanisms internal to the language, since this type of hybrid is the least instinctive process and presupposes an analysis of the initially foreign affix as part of the derivational system of the language. *Knowable* appears three times in the excerpt, while *wilnable* only appears once, in combination with the adjective *desirable*. These two occurrences seem to point to the fact that -*able* was one of the first Romance suffixes to become productive in English, already in the Late Middle English period. Some elements of the text thus offer some clue as to the advancement of the future productivity of foreign structures. In the next sections, it will be examined how this process is furthered with a discussion of the two hybrids already mentioned (see 4.3.3.1.) and of the syntactic developments witnessed in the *Cloud of Unknowing* (see 4.4.).

The productivity of foreign patterns implies that the loanwords have been borrowed in a significant number and integrated deep enough in order to enable reanalysis. An interesting case of reanalysis that has not yet taken place is found in the *Northern Homily Cycle*. In the *Cloud of Unknowing*, the suffix -*ous* is not yet used with native bases, but the conditions are present for it being recognised as a denominal suffix to build new adjectives (see Table 8). However,

\textsuperscript{8} Information retrieved from the TLFi (Trésor de la Langue française informatisé) and the CNRTL (Centre national de ressources textuelles et lexicales), available at https://www.cnrtl.fr/etymologie/concept/0.
this process is not yet achieved in the *Northern Homily Cycle*, in which the word *rihhtwisnes* is found with its Old English spelling, which might also be due to the conservative internal tendencies of the *Cycle*. Its reinterpretation as ‘righteousness’ in Modern English is only a later development that took place due to the analogy with the adjectives ending in *-ous*.

Turning to the last text that has not yet been discussed, one can be surprised at the striking lack of potentially analysable derivational mechanisms of foreign origin, especially considering its date of composition. In sharp contrast to the two other texts from our corpus, the 20th homily of the *Northern Homily Cycle* only presents the following instances of complex loanwords: *verraymente, prechoure, penaunce, priveté, covetise* and two instances of *coupeabil*. Except for *prechoure*, which appears alongside analogous forms such as *preching, prechid, prechis*, the other complex loans occur but once in the excerpt. Since no simplex form is available in the surrounding context as a prerequisite for their analysability, they are more likely to have been borrowed as complex loanwords rather than internally derived. The foreign patterns of derivation have therefore not yet gained currency or been nativised in this dialect of Middle English. However, the fact that no synonym is to be found in the immediate context suggests that those words should have been readily understandable on their own. The early attestation of the adjective *prive* and its numerous derivatives in the *Ancrene Wisse* might possibly already have accounted for the popularity, and hence transparency, of the complex loanword *priveté* ‘divine mystery’. The few complex loanwords thus do not have any counterpart in the text, except *forsothe* that matches *verraymente*, but they do not appear in close proximity in the text.

A possible explanation for this lack of derivatives may be the influence of the audience. It might be suggested that, because he directed his sermon to a lay audience, the author tried to avoid excessive use of complex loanwords; but that the ones he selected in his text were nevertheless loanwords that were already integrated, available and analysable by a monolingual audience of English speakers, since he made no use of synonyms nor resorted to their simplex forms. A further suggestion might be that the concern of making his sermon available to the largest lay audience possible has blocked the derivational patterns that were probably developing in speech in the course of the 14th century, since speech is often more innovative than the written language (Ciszek 2004: 116), and as the innovations present in the *Cloud* partially demonstrated. The genre might also have had some kind of influence. The homily, intended to be read aloud and to follow the rules of versification, restricted the lexical choice of its author.
4.3.3. Hybrids and loanblends

Another way to look at the level of integration of foreign words into the lexicon of the receiving language, and probably the most efficient one, is to turn to hybrid formations. Contrary to derivatives, most often borrowed as complex loanwords or formed according to foreign patterns of derivation, a hybrid is assumed to have been coined in the receiving language and hence to be the result of a pattern of derivation inherent to the language. The hypothesis pointed out by Ciszek (2004: 116) according to which hybrids might also have been coined in Anglo-French and subsequently borrowed into English will not be given credit here. In our view, both considerations of the genre and the audience argue against such an assumption, since the authors aim at being understood by a monolingual audience and pursue English strategies of communication. Considering the following hybrids as having been coined in English, it would then be interesting to observe the interaction between native and non-native elements in hybrid formations and see what conclusions might be drawn concerning the productivity of foreign structures in the Middle English period. By doing so, we hope to shed some light on the degree of assimilation of both foreign bases and foreign affixes.

4.3.3.1. Hybrids with native base

There are two manners of forming hybrids: by the addition of native affixes to a foreign base or, conversely, by the use of foreign affixes on a native base. The latter type of hybridisation is only possible in a second stage of acquisition, since the prerequisite for their formation is the availability of analysable affixes of foreign origin. The traditional point of view is that a suffix will enter a language once enough complex loanwords using that suffix have been introduced, so that a particular affix can be distinguished from the rest of the word (Roost 2014: 20). This latter type is also the theoretical framework in which the two hybrids of the Cloud of Unknowing briefly analysed above, knowable and wilnable, have been coined.

Concerning the foreign morphological element in English, there is a major controversy as to whether French suffixes were already productive in Middle English. Dalton-Puffer (1996: 220-221) argued that the productivity of Romance elements in English was a post-Middle English phenomenon: “the share of hybrid formations with Romance suffixes is so small that I would suggest it is impossible to believe that the Romance suffixes were productive in Middle English” (220). Miller (1997), on the other hand, claimed that they became productive in Late
Middle English (Welna 2012: 431). Furthermore, Ciszek (2004) analysed a broader and different corpus than Dalton-Puffer, which enabled her to come across various novel hybrid forms and hence to reach different conclusions. She argued that some French suffixes might even have become productive in the early Middle English period, as early as the 13th century (Ciszek 2004: 114). Indeed, McConchie (2006b: 214-215) pointed out that the first analysable complex French loanwords already appeared in the Peterborough Chronicle and in legal documents of the Norman settlers, which points towards an early availability of analysable foreign affixes. The two hybrids present in the excerpt from the Cloud of Unknowing suggest that -able was already analysable as an available suffix to build new adjectives from native verbs, respectively ‘knowen’ and ‘wilnen’. It would now be appropriate to examine the status of the suffix -able in Late Middle English in an attempt to explain its early rise.

Two explanations have been given to account for its early success. Firstly, the existence of the free morpheme able would have helped analyse the related suffix as a single entity, as they are both derived from Latin -abilis. The second explanation, favoured by scholars (Trips & Stein 2006), was rather that this suffix helped fill a structural gap. In Trips & Stein’s view (2006: 238), the productivity of the suffix -able in Middle English started from the period 1350 to 1420, which corresponds to the period in which the Cloud was composed, although Zbierska-Sawala (1989: 91) pointed out that the suffix -able was already documented in the period 1150-1250 and is attested in the Ancrene Wisse in the word mearciable. Trips & Stein (2006: 237) further claimed that its presence was not due only to chance but rather stemmed from the lack of Middle English suffixes to build deverbal adjectives, arisen from the loss of the native suffix -baere as well as the loss of the deverbal pattern of the suffix -lich/-ly and its specialisation for the formation of adverbs. At that time, the word-formation system of English seemed indeed to lack the possibility to build different types of adjectives. On the other hand, Trips & Stein (2006: 238) rejected the claim that the free morpheme able explains the rise of the suffix -able in Middle English. However, the presence of two words derived from the free morpheme ‘able’ in the Cloud (abilnes and unable) alongside both French and native verbs containing the suffix in the same excerpt seem to indicate that, if their presence did not explain the rise of the suffix, they can nevertheless reinforce each other.

The suffix -able was thus probably one of the earliest, if not the only Romance suffix productive already in the (Late) Middle English period. Even though Dalton-Puffer (1996: 221) stated that “productivity is not sufficiently established by the sheer fact that a new word containing a certain suffix has been encountered”, our knowledge of Modern English demonstrates that -able will overtime become a productive suffix. If knowable will prove
resistant and is still strongly anchored in the vocabulary of Modern English, *wilnable* has not survived out the Middle English period, and the MED only records one instance of this hybrid, namely the one found in the *Cloud of Unknowing*. The presence of this hapax seems to comply with stylistic requirements since it occurs in the continuation of the following associations of synonyms: *willinges or desiringes; the wille and the desire; desirable and wilnable* (see section 3.3.); but it also reinforces the hypothesis of the proneness of the *Cloud of Unknowing* to lexical innovation.

A question may arise at this stage as to the proper analysis of the word *coupeabil* in the *Northern Homily Cycle* of ca. 1350 in relation to the soon-to-be productive suffix -*able*. *Coupable* is listed by Trips & Stein (2006: 233) as a complex word containing the suffix -*able*. It is recorded as hapax in the work of Pecock (c. 1395-1460), but the MED dates its first occurrence ca. 1325. This word indeed already occurs in the *Northern Homily Cycle* in the form of *coupeabil*. However, this word can hardly be deemed transparent to English speakers, and even less considered a complex word. In fact, the non-analysability of its base accounts for its impossibility to be considered a complex word. Even though the Latin word *culpabilis* might have been recognised as a complex word, the transparent etymology was lost in the phonetic evolution of the word into French. As a result, the word *culpa* meaning ‘fault, guilt’ was not recognisable as such in the French word *coupable*, even for French speakers. Consequently, the base *coup-* could not be used to form any other derivative, neither in French nor in English. The loanword *coupeabil* should therefore be considered as a borrowed simplex. Even if the excerpts that form the basis of this study are too small to draw general conclusions, the analysis of the foreign and few native formations with the suffix -*able* has shed some light on a process that was already on its way in the Middle English period, even though -*able* would only become part of the general derivational system of the language later in Early Modern English, along with the increasing standardisation of the language.

4.3.3.2. Hybrids with a foreign base

Not surprisingly, hybrids made of the addition of a native affix to a Romance base are the norm, not only in the excerpts analysed in this paper, but also in Middle English texts in general (Dalton-Puffer 1996). 35 instances of hybrids are recorded in our corpus, in contrast to the two hybrids based on a native base encountered in the *Cloud* and discussed above. While the latter type seems to be restricted to the Late Middle English period, hybrids with a Romance base are documented from an earlier stage onwards. Part Three of the *Ancrene Wisse* exhibits some
surprisingly early and noteworthy examples of hybrid formations, which testify to a conscious process of integration of foreign words according to native patterns, or at least point towards a familiarity with foreign words resulting from their early entrance into the vocabulary of Middle English. However, it is in the *Cloud of Unknowing* that hybrid-formation acquires a more systematic character and gained currency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of word-formation</th>
<th>Ancrene Wisse</th>
<th>Northern Homily Cycle</th>
<th>The Cloud of Unknowing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prefixation</td>
<td>Unstable (adj.), Bibernet (v.), Bipilet (v.), Ofservet (v.),</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unavisid, unable, unreproved, undepartable (adj.); Overaboundaunt (adj.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffixation</td>
<td>Sturbunge (n.), Prufunge (n.), Biplunge (n.)</td>
<td>Apertelie (adv.)</td>
<td>Mercyful (adj.); Justly, letterly, cleerly, febeli, finaly, graciously, sodenly, specialy, diversly, verrely, perilously, pleinly, parfitely (adv.); Falsheed (n.); Abilnes (n.); Desiringes (n.), flateringes (n.); Passing (adj.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative</td>
<td>Largere (adj.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Parfiter (adj.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superlative</td>
<td>Falsest (adj.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Frelest (adj.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 9: Hybrid forms with a Romance base in our corpus*

We note that the comparative and superlative forms might be analysed as morphological assimilation rather than hybridisation. In this respect, one would not wonder at their early integration. Indeed, the English synthetic comparative (-er) and superlative (-est) are commonly classified as inflections. However, since the suffixation for the comparative and superlative forms is less regular as, say, the plural form (e.g. prettier vs. more abstract) and obeys to stricter rules (phonologically and lexically conditioned), it might be assumed that their morphological integration was less self-evident.

a. Early hybrids: *Ancrene Wisse*

It is widely accepted that derivation by suffixing was one of the principal methods of creating new words in Middle English (Welna 2012: 431). However, prefixation seems to have been particularly productive for the formation of hybrids in early Middle English (the excerpt from *Ancrene Wisse* shows the use of 3 prefixes against only 1 suffix in hybrid forms).
Unfortunately, few studies have focused on them to date. For instance, the studies of Zbierska-Sawala (1989), Dalton-Puffer (1996) and Ciszek (2004) are restricted to suffixes.

**Suffixation: sturbunge, prufunge, bipilunge**

In our corpus, only one suffix – *-unge* – is used to derive nouns from French-derived verbs, namely ‘desturbin’, ‘pruvien’ and ‘bipilien’. Although the MED lists some of those instances as gerunds, we will consider them as fully-fledged nouns, formed according to an internal, native pattern of derivation using the typical Old English suffix *-ung* or *-unge* to create nouns from verbs (Nielsen 1998: 137). Indeed, their dependency on their related verbs is faint and they function in the text as nouns, which is reflected in Bella Millett’s choice of words for their translation, i.e. respectively ‘disturbance’, ‘proof’, and ‘uncovering’ (2004). Although this strong native suffix was largely used in the formation of hybrids (Dalton-Puffer 1992: 478), it did not prevent it from falling into disuse. One way to account for its decline is probably the specialisation of *-ing* as the suffix forming the present participle, ousting the suffix *-inde* that was found in the West Midland dialect of the *Ancrene Wisse*.

**Prefixation: unstable; bibarret, bipilet; ofservet**

The prefixes *un-* and *bi-* both come from Old English. The former negates the meaning of the stem and remained very productive throughout the history of English, although it would progressively be challenged by prefixes of Romance origin such as *in-, dis-* and *non-*. (Welna 2012: 431; Nielsen 1998: 137). The latter was a very productive Old English prefix usually used to form verbs with the sense "around, throughout" or to make intransitive verbs transitive. Both senses were retained in early Middle English, and the *Ancrene Wisse* demonstrates that the prefix was still highly productive in that period, to the point of attaching to foreign bases. *Bibarret* and *bipilet* seem to preserve the former sense of intensifier, as their translation might be respectively, ‘enclosed securely’ and ‘stripped all around’. However, it is worth emphasising that both hybrids are the only instances recorded in the *Middle English Dictionary*.

The word *ofservet* can be more appropriately designated as a loanblend. According to Haughen (1950: 213, cited in Roost 2014: 4), “loanblends show both morphemic importation and substitution, which requires some analysis of the model by the speaker”. Loanblends thus have a model in the source language, as opposed to hybrid formations created from scratch. The model in this case is the French verb ‘deservir’. The translation of the prefix *de-*, adapted to the
English corresponding form *of-* testifies to an acute and early perception of French *de-* as a prefix, or at least as a self-contained entity. It seems a conscious attempt on the part of the author to integrate a French loanword that had long appeared in the language (instances of *serven* were already found in the *Ormulum* and the *Bodleian Homilies* ca. 1175 according to the *MED*). This idea is further reinforced by the fact that *ofservet* preserves the same meaning as its French counterpart, namely ‘deserve’. This early innovation (which will not last, but for which the *MED* records several instances in early Middle English texts) may be paralleled with the development of the *of*-genitive phrase, undoubtedly of native origin, but whose enormous increase in Middle English might have been helped along by the parallel French construction with *de* (Schendl 2012: 516).

The hybrids of our corpus appear to be surprisingly self-reliant: they do not systematically appear in close proximity to their related simplex form nor synonymous words, which was the prerequisite stated by Roost (2014: 1) for the analysability of hybrids formed on a foreign base from early Middle English texts. Those hybrids and their relative independency therefore suggest some dynamic relationship between native and foreign morphological elements.

McConchie (2006b: 215) highlighted the early coexistence of native prefixes (*bi-*, *of-*, *un-*, etc.) with foreign prefixes (*dis-*, *re-*, etc.), which could already be observed as early as in the 12th century. He argued that the very early attestation (1167 according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*) and far-reaching use (as a legal term, it could have affected virtually anybody) of the French loanword *seisin* and its derivatives *disseisin* and *reseisin* provided “the pre-conditions for speakers of Middle English to see both the prefixes of these lexemes and their base as potentially separable and available for vernacularisation, a process which the conventional accounts claim does not take place until the early 15th century”. This observation points towards an early availability in Middle English of a wide range of affixes, both native and French, potentially operable in indigenous derivational processes.

The early and autonomous hybrids identifiable in the *Ancrene Wisse* suggest that some loans were already so well integrated as to become subject to internal processes of derivation at a very early stage in Middle English. Those loans were typically those borrowed in the period immediately following the Conquest and related to the Norman settlers (*serven*, *preove*, *stable*). The resulting hybrids found in our excerpt were therefore linked with a concrete reality, whereas Roost (2014) focused exclusively on abstract noun hybrids in her thesis. Those hybrids further suggest that it was easier to coin hybrids with concrete words, that were subject to everyday use, rather to express abstract realities and that concrete hybrids were more readily
analysable than abstract nouns, which points towards a pragmatic use of foreign vocabulary. Those early processes of hybridation are evidence for the dynamism and integration of foreign elements at an earlier date than is traditionally admitted. In other cases, however, the pattern of derivation seems to have been blocked. In a passage where a French loanword and its native synonymous counterpart occur in close proximity, the latter is to be preferred for derivation. In (4.27), the author wrote *smechles* rather than *savurles*.

(4.27) ‘Salt bitacneth wisdom, for salt yeveth mete *smech*, ant wisdom yeveth *savur* al thet we wel wurcheth. Withute salt of wisdom thuncheth Godd *smechles* alle ure deden.’

[Salt signifies wisdom, because salt gives food flavour, and wisdom gives flavour to everything that we do well. Without the salt of wisdom, everything we do seems flavourless to God.] [my emphasis]

b. **Northern Homily Cycle**

In keeping with the findings about complex loanwords in the **Northern Homily Cycle**, only one hybrid formation has been recorded in its 20th homily: *apertelie*, an adjective turned into an adverb by suffixation of the indigenous ending -ly. Considering the late date of composition of the **Northern Homily Cycle** (ca. 1350), the surprisingly low number of complex loanwords and hybrids is rather puzzling. By contrast, the **Cloud of Unknowing**, which was composed in the late 14th century, testifies to an outburst in the use of simplex forms and their derivatives and in internal processes of derivation using native affixes on Romance bases. Even the **Ancrene Wisse** exhibits a higher number of hybrids and complex loans. Once more, the influence of the audience might be at play here. Indeed, contrary to the homilies of the **Cycle**, the **Ancrene Wisse** and the **Cloud** addressed an audience that could demonstrate, if not thorough proficiency, at least some knowledge of French as well as a certain level of education (Arnovick 2012: 557-558; Gunn 2008: 159). Considering their position as learned men, the three authors were also expected to know some French. When they resorted to complex words or hybrids, they surely did so with an acute awareness of their potential to be properly understood by their audience. In this way, the author of the **Cycle** might have deliberately avoided learned or unusual coinages of hybrids or complex words since his audience was not supposed to be as fluent in French nor Latin. However, other factors must also be taken into account, such as the Northern character of the dialect and its geographical isolation with respect to the South of the country, which might have made it less permeable to French influence.
c. The *Cloud of Unknowing*: towards regularisation

The *Cloud* presents a continuation of the changes initiated in the *Ancrene Wisse*. It contains a broad set of affixes just as in the Guide for Anchoresses, but probably not broader since Zbierska-Sawala (1989) demonstrated that virtually all the possible suffixes from Old French appeared at least once in the *Ancrene Wisse*. In the *Cloud of Unknowing*, this broad set of affixes gradually settles and is somewhat regularised. It can be observed in Table 10 below that the text of the *Cloud* presents a similar number of native and Romance affixes. Their distribution, however, can be clearly contrasted: while most of the French affixes are used exclusively in combination with a Romance base, the native suffixes are extended to an increasing number of loanwords, leading in turn to an increase in hybrid formations. The text of the *Ancrene Wisse* was very conservative but also showed undeniable innovations. Aspects of the *Ancrene Wisse* demonstrated the impact of the Anglo-Saxon prose tradition (cf. section 4.2. above), while other showed the connection of the author with issues of the 12th-century Renaissance (Smith 2012: 437-438). The *Cloud of Unknowing* brings the innovations initiated in the Guide for Anchoresses further, in a continuation of the logic found in this early text of the early 13th century.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Best-represented affixes</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Hybrids?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Native affixes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ly/-li/-lich</td>
<td>Hundreds</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ing</td>
<td>Hundreds</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-nes</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un-</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ful</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-heed</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-schip</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Romances affixes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-cion</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-té</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dis-</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-able</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ous</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>re-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-al</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-age</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 10: most frequent affixes recorded in the Cloud of Unknowing*
As regards suffixation, the native suffixes found in the *Cloud of Unknowing* are in general the same as in the Guide for Anchoresses: -*ing*, -*ly*, -*nes*, -*ful*, -*heed*, -*schip* are all documented in the latter text in a slightly different form: -*unge*, -*liche*, -*nesse*, -*fule*, -*had* and -*schipe*. However, a few innovations can be pointed out. The suffix -*yl/-lich* is still very productive and is used to form both adjectives (*goostly*, *wordely*) and adverbs, just as in the *Ancrene Wisse*. However, it tends to specialise in the formation of adverbs, which is particularly noticeable in hybrid formations: when it attaches to a Romance base, it is always to form new adverbs (see Table 10). Moreover, the suffix -*ing/-yng* is undeniably the continuation of the earlier -*unge*, since it is used to form nouns and continues to form hybrids (4.28). Dalton-Puffer (1992: 474) emphasised accordingly that -*ung* was replaced by -*ing* from 1250 onwards. New functions are nevertheless assigned to this suffix: it gradually becomes the standard way to form the present participle, which will further allow its use as an adjective (4.29). In *Ancrene Wisse*, the suffix -*unge* to form nouns seems to be one of the most productive and is the only one to combine with French bases in our excerpt. It remains very productive in the *Cloud* where it also combines freely with foreign bases. However, its frequency will lessen in Modern English where it will gradually acquire the status of inflectional suffix.

(4.28) Conservative use: *desiringes* (n.), *flateringes* (n.), *defaylyng* (n.) seem to be remnants from *Ancrene Wisse*’s -*unge*: *sturbunge* (n.), *prufunge* (n.).
(4.29) Innovative use: *assailyng*, *criing* (present ptc.) replacing the present participle in -*inde* of the *Ancrene Wisse*.

By contrast, it is with respect to prefixation that the *Cloud* is the furthest removed from the Guide and shows its most innovative aspects. A decline in prefixation along with a decline altogether of the use of native prefixes can be observed in the *Cloud*, whereas the *Ancrene Wisse* still made use of a lot of native prefixes inherited from Old English. The remaining prefixes such as -*bi-* and -*for-* became increasingly lexicalised and hardly recognised as such (4.30). Of- is not used at all as a prefix. Rather, the Romance -*de-* is maintained (4.31). One native prefix remained thoroughly productive, though; this is the case of -*un-* which, just as the *Ancrene Wisse*, is also used to form hybrids. -*over-* is another English prefix mainly attached to verbs in the *Ancrene Wisse* (see section 4.3.1.), is used to reinforce an adjective instead of a verb in the *Cloud* (4.32). Although the productivity of native prefixes dropped, Romance prefixes did not yet become productive but rather remained attached to their Romance base (4.33). The loss of native prefixes was not yet compensated by the productivity of foreign prefixes.

‘ofservet’ (Ancrene Wisse) – ‘deserved’ (the Cloud).


The prerequisite stated by Roost (2014: 17) for the analysability of a hybrid in early Middle English texts, i.e. their appearance alongside a related simplex form, is not self-evident anymore in Late Middle English. In the Cloud of Unknowing, the simplex form still often co-occurs in the text, such as in the pairs mercy/merciful and fals/falsheed, but hybrid and simplex are scattered in the text rather than appearing in close proximity. Some hybrids even have no simple counterpart in the excerpt: this is the case of undepartable, flateringes, perilously, finaly, pleinly, febeli. One way to account for those isolated hybrids is the observation that they seem to occur exclusively with the following native affixes: un-, -inges and -ly. The two former are reflexes of earlier un- and -unge found in the Ancrene Wisse and already productive in the formation of hybrids; the latter has for some time competed with French -ment (4.34) but has eventually established itself firmly as the suffix of choice to form new adverbs and has proved very productive, as can be observed in the high number of hybrids formed with -ly. The suffix -ment did not vanished altogether from the language but had rather been adopted for denominal derivation (4.35). Ultimately, -ly and -ing appear to be the most productive and versatile suffixes throughout the Middle English period: the former can build adjectives and adverbs whereas the latter forms nouns, adjectives and present participles. Moreover, they attach to both native and Romance bases.


The Cloud of Unknowing: ‘avisement’ and ‘amendement’.

(4.30)  (4.31)  (4.32)  (4.33)  (4.34)  (4.35)


4.4. Syntactic elaboration in the *Cloud of Unknowing*

Hybrids do not restrict themselves to lexical units. They can be found beyond morphological boundaries, extending to syntactic structures. Although the scope of this research is too narrow to be able to assess the syntactic impact of French on English structures – if it happened at all – our corpus enables us to point out some relevant observations. However, it is hard to assess the impact of a foreign language on the syntactic developments of another in a situation of language contact, and the extent of French influence on English syntax is furthermore a controversial matter. The major consensus among scholars is that language contact may trigger or give impulse to indigenous syntactic developments that were already present in embryo in the borrowing language (Schendl 2012: 516). In the case of English, two major indigenous syntactic developments can be pinpointed: the gradual fixation of the word order and the increasing use of periphrastic constructions, resulting from the weakening of inflectional endings in the transition from Old to Middle English because of phonological erosion (Schendl 2012: 517). Those native developments are thus the frame underlying French influence, in which French elements will insert themselves.

What is worth noting in the *Cloud of Unknowing* in contrast to the two earlier texts is an integration of French elements into (new) English syntactic structures and the emergence of new prepositions and adverbial subordinators resulting from the combination of native and borrowed elements, foreshadowing their thorough grammaticalisation in Modern English (Schaefer 2012: 530). In the excerpt, instances of new prepositions or prepositional phrases (4.36) and new conjunctions (4.37) can be observed, as well as the development of phrasal verbs (4.38) and collocations presenting a high level of internal cohesion (4.39). Those developments are in keeping with the increasing tendency of Middle English to develop analytic structures (Smith 2012: 435).

Examples from the *Cloud of Unknowing*:

(4.36) ‘It is neither lenger ne schorter, bot even *according to* one only steryng […]’

‘The soules in purgatori ben esed of theire peine *by vertewe of* this werk.’

‘Aungelles and seintes that by the grace of Jhesu kepen tyme ful justly *in vertewe of* love.’

(4.38) ‘Alle thei ben *medelid with* sum crokid entent.’;
‘Medelid with’ sum maner of fantasie.’;
‘I schuld mowe kepe or elles *make aseeth* to any mo tymes than to thoo that ben forto come.’;
‘Oure laweful amendement in contricion and in confession and in *aseeth-makyng* after the statute and the ordinaunce of alle Holy Chirche’.

‘Al-maner’ modelled on ‘al-kinnen’.

Two new prepositional phrases, *according to* and *by vertewe of* (4.36) have developed, which are very similar to their modern counterpart. Semantically, however, they still retain the meaning of the borrowed words or expressions: *acordance* ‘agreement’, hence *according to*, ‘in agreement with’, while the phrase *by vertewe of* (early 13th century) preserves for *vertewe* the alternative Middle English sense of ”efficacy” and could be translated by ‘by means of’, ‘through’, ‘by’. *By/in vertewe of* might be a loanblend of the French phrase ‘*en vertu de*’.

*Savyng that* (4.37) functions in the text as a conjunction introducing a subordinate clause and could be appropriately translated by its modern sense ‘except that’. The influence of French phrasing might also be felt here. A series of collocations presenting an increasingly high level of internal cohesion then seem to emerge. The verb *medelid* from Old French *medler, mesler* ‘mix, blend’ appear five times in the excerpt, four occurrences of which are followed by the preposition *with* (4.38). The preposition does not yet belong to the verb but already tends to become part of it and anticipates the formation of the modern phrasal verb ‘to meddle with’. It already prefigures the preference of Modern English for phrasal verbs rather than prefixation, such as was found in the *Ancrene Wisse* in the form of *entremeateth* ‘to meddle with, to involve yourself in’. A second verb can to some extent be compared to a phrasal verb: *make aseeth* ‘give satisfaction’. It seems to be a loan translation from French *assez faire*, itself adapted from the Latin *ad satis facere*. Its nominal use in *aseeth-makyng* attests that it was sufficiently established in the language to be subject to derivation.

A considerable number of loanwords do not appear in isolation anymore but occur in close relation with native prepositions. This is for instance the case with *presing agens*: this collocation occurs four times in the excerpt, always in combination with the same preposition. *With avisement* ‘deliberately’, *in (grete) partye* ‘partly, a great deal’ and *bi ensaumple* ‘for instance’ are other examples of such collocations. The two latter seem to be loan translation.
and loanblends from their French counterparts *en (grande) partie* and *par exemple*. The word *ensaumple* has acquired a more general character in the *Cloud*, as opposed to the previous texts where it was closely related to the religious *exemplum*. Finally, *al-maner* ‘any kind of’ was modelled on the native pattern *al-kinnes*, indicating that loanwords could integrate native patterns. All these examples mentioned above exhibit an increasing degree of syntactic cohesion, which remains nevertheless less strong than it will become in Modern English.

The *Cloud* is by no means the first text to display some syntactical integration of French vocabulary. Some syntactic developments can already be witnessed to some extent in the text of the *Ancrene Wisse*, where Romance loanwords have penetrated into native alliterative phrases (4.40) or into fixed idiomatic expressions (4.41). However, the extent to which this syntactical elaboration is brought forth in the *Cloud of Unknowing* is spectacular.

Examples from the *Ancrene Wisse*:

(4.40) ‘recchinde ant reginde’, ‘thurh eise ant thurh este’, etc.
(4.41) ‘make (a) semblant to’ [to pretend]; ‘trochith uvele’ [make a bad bargain]

These syntactic developments are in any case hybrid forms stretching beyond the strict lexical units, since they combine native and foreign elements. Some are the result of loanblends or loan translations (or both), others seem to be indigenous developments and anticipate the further grammaticalisation of some later forms, towards what will happen with *very* in Modern English: it can already be glanced at in the phrase *bi verrey reson* or *bi verrey proef*. Looking forward to the later adoption of new conjunctions such as ‘because’ or ‘during’, we can see that such processes of grammaticalisation were already on their way in Late Middle English. Considering those developments, the question that arises at this stage is: how foreign were these elements felt to be if they allowed such a level of integration? This question cannot yet be easily answered since “our knowledge of the syntactic elaboration of late Middle English through borrowing and calquing is only slowly unfolding” (Schaefer 2012: 530). However, these later syntactic developments demonstrate that loanwords were not properly regarded as Romance islands lost in the middle of a sea of Germanic words, at least by no means at the time of composition of the *Cloud*. By the late Middle English period, they began to take part in the fluidity of the syntactic structure of the language.
4.5. Mutual influence supports integration

It has been discussed in Chapter 1 (see section 1.1.1.) that, although borrowing is mainly triggered by external factors, internal factors within the linguistic system will have a crucial role to play in the scope of the borrowing and the extent to which the new elements will integrate and make their way into the borrowing language. Borrowing is in general easier between languages presenting some degree of mutual intelligibility (Durkin 2009: 164). While English had experienced a long-lasting influence from Latin, French had in turn been deeply influenced by Germanic languages, particularly Old Frankish. The Normans, in addition, were a people of Scandinavian descent and spoke a dialect of French that retained some of the sounds of the Germanic languages (Lerer 2007: 69). Virtually all Romance languages, at one point in their history, have been in prolonged contact with Germanic invaders who have to some extent left a trace in the language. However, it has been argued that the Germanic influence upon French had been stronger than on the other Romance languages (Van Der Auwera & Patard 2015: 3). Considering French as “the most Germanic of Romance languages”\(^9\) and Norman French consequently as the most Germanic of French dialects reinforces the idea of strong linguistic affinities conducive to mutual influence and final entanglement of vocabulary. The internal factor of morphological compatibility would therefore facilitate the subsequent adoption of a word into the lexicon and ensure its ultimate fixation into the lexis of English.

It is sometimes very hard to retrieve the correct etymology from the words of our corpus. Even the MED presents a mixed etymology for the words which etymology remains unclear, and this might skew the statistics and figures obtained in the previous chapter (Table 2, section 3.2.). This is chiefly the case of pre-Conquest Latin loanwords borrowed into Old English in the domain of Christianity. Since the same words were generally used in French, the early Latin loans were reinforced by their French counterpart or even reborrowed in Middle English (Durkin 2009: 165-166). This is typically the case of the words listed under (4.42). Other examples of conflation between English and French words are common in Middle English, either because of a common Latin origin (4.43) or because of a shared Germanic origin (4.44). The spelling tends to demonstrate that in most cases, the Old English word was remodelled on its French equivalent in Middle English.

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\(^9\) Expression used for the first time by the linguist Henriette Walter in her book *L’aventure des langues en Occident.* (1994: 225).
(4.42) ‘vers’ (OE fers); ‘sepulcre’ (OE sepulcher); ‘martirdom’ (OE martirdom);
‘apostles’ (OE apostol); ‘ymne’ (OE ymen); ‘offrin’ (OE offrian); ‘Psalm’ (OE sealm);
‘engel’/‘aungel’ (OE engel); ‘clerkes’ (OE cleric); ‘dissiples’ (OE discipul); ‘maistire’
(OE maegester); ‘scolers’ (OE scolere); ‘candel’ (OE candel).

(4.43) ‘Fals’ (OF fals, faus & OE fals < L falsum);
‘Dispendid’ (OF despender & OE spendan < L dispensere);
‘Bipilet’ (OF pillier and peler & OE pilian < L pillare and pelare).


The phonologic and semantic proximity between corresponding French and English words
sometimes generates mutual influence to the point of blurring their initial origin, which is
illustrated in the following examples. The word ‘angel’, for instance, is an early Latin loanword
that entered Old English in the form engle, engel. The Ancrene Wisse presents the spelling
engel, which is reminiscent of the Old English word, but by the end of the next century, the
typical Anglo-French spelling aungel is found in the Cloud of Unknowing. The modern spelling
angel retained the < a > of the Latin etymon. A second example is fals, a word that is shared by
all three texts and heavily used in the Ancrene Wisse. Old English fals ‘fraud, deceit’, from
Latin falsum ‘fraud’, was reinforced or re-formed in Middle English from Old French fals, faus
‘false’. Its composite etymology and its early presence in the English language might explain
why it was used in hybrid formations from an early stage (falselige, falsest in the Ancrene
Wisse; falsheed in the Cloud). Finally, the word wardi probably comes from Old English weard,
but was later reinforced by Anglo-French warder, variant of Old French garder. This
consolidation was facilitated by the presence of the [w] sound of Germanic origin in Northern
French at that time (Van Der Auwera & Patard 2015: 4).

Morphological compatibility is also conspicuous in the fact that some words are identical
but nevertheless have a different origin. Such a situation happens several times in Part Three of
the Ancrene Wisse. The word riche appears to have two different meaning, one inherited from
Old English (heove-riche ‘kingdom of Heaven’), another from French (riche mercer ‘rich
merchant’). French riche ultimately also comes from Germanic, from Old Frankish *riki,
meaning ‘powerful’10. Furthermore, two nearly identical verbs are used in Part Three, the

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10 Information retrieved from the TLFi (Trésor de la Langue française informatisé) and the CNRTL (Centre
national de ressources textuelles et lexicales), available at https://www.cnrtl.fr/etymologie/riche
former from Old English (noten ‘make use of’), the latter from French (notin ‘to note’). A series of French words of Germanic origin have also entered the lexicon of Middle English: hurte, gile, hasten. Their adoption might have been facilitated because of Germanic affinities. Finally, mis- is a prefix shared both by English and French, but is ultimately of Germanic origin. It is already widely used in the Ancrene Wisse, which shows that it was not borrowed from French (misdeth, misseith, misnotunge, etc.). This prefix had evolved into mé-/més- in French (cf. loanword meoseise in the Ancrene Wisse). Loanwords containing that prefix were later remodelled after the native form, mes- being substituted for mis- as in mischeves in the Cloud of Unknowing, which came from Old French ‘meschief’.

This mutual influence has been such that the author of the Guide even managed to devise a play on words (4.45). In Middle English, the word ancre is used to refer to an anchoress. This word comes from Old English ancor, which is itself a very early loan from Latin ancora, meaning ‘anchor’. The noun was further reinforced in the Middle English period by the identical Old French term ancre. The related verb, however, is not attested in Old English and entered Middle English via Old French ancrer ‘fix or secure in a particular place’. Because the foreign verb was matched by a native and phonetically and semantically very similar term, it was rapidly adopted.

(4.45) ‘For-thi is ancre "ancre" i-cleopet, ant under chirche i-ancret as ancre under schipes bord, for-te halden that schip, that uthen ant stormes hit ne overwarpen. Alswa al Hali Chirche, that is schip i-cleopet, schal ancrin o the ancre, that heo hit swa halde that te deofles puffles-thet boeth temptatius - ne hit overwarpen.’

[This is why the anchoress is called an ‘anchor’ and anchored under the church like an anchor under the side of a ship to hold the ship, so that waves and storms do not capsize it. Just so, all Holy Church, which is described as a ship, should anchor on the anchoress, for her to hold it so that the devil’s blasts, which are temptations, do not blow it over.]
This crossover of mutual influences between Germanic and Romance in the history of first French, then English also accounts for the eventual deep integration of French words into the English lexicon. Their relative linguistic proximity certainly played a role in the extensiveness of the influence: the coexistence of the Arabic superstratum with Romance languages in the Iberic peninsula during several centuries (ca. 711-1492) also left its mark on Spanish and Portuguese, but the creole hypothesis\textsuperscript{11} has never been raised in that case, although the political situation was to some extent similar. Perhaps the greater linguistic distance between those languages prevented them from mixing to such an extent as French and English did? This assumption is far from proven but has the merit to emphasise the profound mixture of Germanic and Romance elements that resulted from a situation of language contact between languages that already presented some degree of morphological compatibility, but also between peoples that shared a similar culture.

\textsuperscript{11} The Middle English creole hypothesis assumes that Middle English is best looked at as a creole created by intensive language contact between speakers of Anglo-Norman and Central French and speakers of English. However, this hypothesis has been dismissed by several scholars such as Manfred Görlach (1986), who gave convincing arguments in his article “Middle English – a creole?”, and more recently Richard J. Watts (2011).
4.6. Conclusion on lexical integration

A puzzling fact about the lexis of contemporary English is that while the foreign origin of some vocabulary is still very conspicuous (in words such as *etiquette*, *champagne*, *manutention*, etc.), other loanwords have become so well integrated into the English lexicon that they may end up being ‘mistaken’ for words of native origin by the majority of the speakers, due to their eventual adherence to the morphological, prosodic and orthographic rules of English (Nielsen 1998: 10-11) (e.g. *dainty*, *account*, *deserve*, *cover*, *eschew*, etc.). Durkin (2009: 178) pointed out that loanwords may in time become either less like the corresponding form in the donor language through internal evolution processes, or more like it, through remodelling after the form in the donor language (which is mostly typical of learned borrowing). Once French influence in England had ceased, the words inherited from Old French, released from the shadow of their parent language, subsequently followed their own path so that they gradually became hardly distinguishable from native vocabulary. The fact that those loanwords are not readily recognised as such provides evidence for the eventual profound integration of Old French borrowings into the English language. Some words inherited from Old French were even preserved in the English vocabulary while they disappeared from the French lexicon overtime. This is for instance the case of *dainty* (< OF *deinté*, which was later remodelled after its Latin etymon ‘dignitas’ (ModF *dignité*)) or of *quaint* and *dalliance*, which vanished altogether from French. During the Middle English period, the lexicon of the English language showed a massive growth and moved from the 30 000 words of the Old English word stock to 60 000 words in Middle English (Schendl 2012: 511).

We know with the benefit of hindsight that thorough integration of French loanwords would ultimately take place, and we saw in this chapter that the Middle English period laid the foundations for it. Even if the peak of borrowing was reached ca. 1350, patterns of assimilation and processes of integration were at play very early, paving the way for the greater integration of those loanwords. Even if no consistent pattern of derivation was yet established during the Middle English period and that the issue of the productivity of French affixes remains an open question, our analysis has shown that some innovations had already taken place and that reanalysis was made possible for English speakers by regular patterns of alternation. The process of lexical integration in Middle English was a gradual but steady one, and this observation is borne out in our texts, which show integration at different levels. Early in the
*Ancrene Wisse*, integration takes place at the level of spelling and phonology. The use of native affixes on French loanwords testifies to an attempt towards morphological integration, but we also observe a close coexistence of old and new norms and patterns. The *Cloud of Unknowing* shows a higher degree of morphosyntactic integration as well as the regularisation and more systematic use of Romance patterns over Old English ones (e.g. *-able* seems to have definitely ousted native *-baere* (Trips & Stein 2006: 237)). Finally, the mutual influence that English, French and Latin exerted on one another throughout their history as well as the extensive mixture of Romance and Germanic elements in both French and English made for the eventual enduring integration of loanwords into the English lexicon. The experiments of Middle English authors would ultimately be regulated in the Early Modern period with the eventual codification and enrichment of the language, but the innovations of the Middle English period were an entrance door for the subsequent borrowing of more words of Latin and French origin.

As to the status of the loanwords in our excerpt, this analysis has shown that they can be more appropriately regarded as lexical borrowings, rather than as isolated instances of code-switching. The endeavours of the *Ancrene Wisse* author towards morphological integration argues against the hypothesis of code-switching, which is definitely ruled out by our analysis of the *Cloud of Unknowing*. In this latter text, Romance loanwords do not appear in isolation, but combine freely with native affixes and prepositions to enrich the set of phrases of the language. Some of them even show some degree of grammaticalisation, foreshadowing the future grammaticalisation of phrasal verbs (e.g. *to meddle with*), prepositions (e.g. *according to*), conjunctions and other components of Modern English such as ‘because’ or ‘very’. The *Cloud* thus exhibits many indigenous formations that cannot be regarded as instances of code-switching. The hypothesis of code-switching is further discarded by the genre: as works of vernacular literature written purposely in English, those texts are likely to avoid terms that are not likely to be properly understood by their (lay) audience. On the contrary, the authors of religious vernacular works should make sure that their interlocutors will be able to understand what they are writing, for the sake of pastoral care.
Conclusion

The goal of this paper was to examine a set of French loanwords from religious texts ranging from the early 13th to the late 14th century both in their relation to the other internal elements of the texts and in a wider perspective, taking into account the socio-historical changes of the time to determine to what extent links could be established between a particular loanword and the external context. It was assumed for several reasons that this process would be best observed in religious texts. As written pieces intended to a largely monolingual audience, it might be expected that the author would avoid code-switching and stick to one idiom, whereas the authenticity of religious writings seems to argue in favour of a more natural recourse to French loanwords, in that the author would arguably not make a refined use of French words to enhance his style or register. Our corpus of religious texts therefore allowed us to glimpse the reality of language contact within a subsection of English society, i.e. the religious environment, but also to realise that a monolingual audience also experienced the reality of language contact to some extent.

A gradual and steady evolution in the number of French lexical items from text to text was clearly visible, and the Cloud of Unknowing was the text which exhibited by far the largest number of French loanwords as well as the highest level of semantic and morphological integration. However, we argued that the degree of nativisation of foreign lexical items reached in the Cloud was the outcome of a process that had begun as early as in the first years of the 13th century, the foundations of which were already observable in the Ancrene Wisse. Although the influence of French was dwindling by the end of the Middle English period, it is only at that point that we could eventually see the extent of the lexical borrowing. In addition, if we take into account the fact that the written language is by and large more conservative than speech, the texts under discussion might be assumed to reflect a stage of language several decades older (Lerer 2007). Moreover, the integration was by no means complete by the time the Cloud was composed. It has to be borne in mind that a standard language did not yet exist during the Middle English period, and that the systematisation of the Middle English innovations would only take place in the Early Modern period, in a conscious attempt to regularise the English language (Nielsen 2005). We want to argue that the innovations brought about by French influence – the own internal developments of the English language are not under discussion.
here – and that would be systematised in Early Modern English all began in the Middle English period, sometimes earlier than conventional accounts claim, i.e. the 15th century (McConchie 2006b: 215), paving the way for the thorough nativisation of the earliest French loanwords and for the subsequent entrance of more words of French and Latin origin.

While the limited size of our corpus enabled us to have a closer and in-depth look at specific instances of loanwords and their semantic distribution across the texts and across time, the application of our methodology to a larger corpus of loanwords from a broader body of texts could confirm some of the hypotheses raised in this paper and bring our investigation further. As the result of a corpus of limited size, tendencies rather than strict rules have emerged from our analysis. We have furthermore been confronted with methodological issues in the constitution of our corpus of loanwords, reflecting the inherent complexity of lexical borrowing. The close connections between Romance and Germanic elements in both English and French as well as the Latin component sometimes leads to confusion as to whether a loanword might truly be considered French. However, even though the labelling of a loanwords as “French” sometimes implies subjective choices, English, French and Latin worked so closely together during the Middle English period that they could hardly be considered separately.

Finally, we identified an apparent lack of studies investigating the link between the entrance of a particular words into the lexis of English and the related social and intellectual developments of the time. Timofeeva’s precious contribution in her recent studies (2018a; 2018b) have shed some light on the restructuring of the semantic field of religion in the Middle English period, but more semantic fields should likewise come under academic scrutiny. A lot of studies up to the present day have focused on the size and extent of the French element in English, or on the structural impact on the linguistic system of English with respect to phonology, morphology and syntax, but little attention has been devoted to-date to the semantic properties of the loanwords and the link between the use of a particular loanword and the reality it refers to. What we have tried to show in this paper is the limitation of the traditional treatment of French loans as necessarily political-dominance and cultural-prestige related. Instead, we highlighted the dynamic relationship between the lexicon of a language and the socio-historical context and tried to demonstrate that both elements are communicating vessels and can hardly be analysed separately from one another. More than the language of a particular people, a lexicon reflects a particular culture and mindset, both of which are far from remaining unchanged in the course of time. We may hope than in the future, other semantic analyses will be carried out on different types of texts or in connection with other socio-cultural events.
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