

## Astrology

although referred to in the *Canterbury Tales* as *Astronomye*, it is what we today call astrology, viz. reading the stars, calculating which celestial bodies are rising (ascendant) or falling (descendent) in order to determine what influence this has on a person. In the *Canterbury Tales* (Prologue, ll. 416f) there is mention of *hours*. This means the observation of the time of one's birth for astrological purposes to determine what planet or star was *Ascendent*. English has borrowed from the ideas of astrology in such phrases as *to thank your lucky stars* or to be *mercurial*, *jovial*, *martial*, or whatever depending on what planet was ascendant at your time of birth.

**Black Death, The** (see Chapter 4, *Post-Conquest England*)

**The Brus** (see Early history of Scotland)

**Canterbury Tales, The.** William Chaucer (see Chapter 4, *Middle English literature*)

Including: *Doctor of physick*, *Frere*, and *Good wyf*

## Caxton, William

(1414/20 (?)–1492) is responsible for the introduction of printing to England. Printing was a revolutionary development that had wide-reaching and long-lasting effects. Indeed, many people among those who had a stake in the power of their own literacy were suspicious of the social unrest that could result from increased access to knowledge and enlightenment on the part of the lower orders. This was similar to the fears Church and State had had a hundred years before in connection with the vernacular translation of the Bible in the framework of the *Wycliffe* movement and the *Peasants' Revolt*. The consequences of printing were, as we meanwhile know, unbelievably enormous though generally peaceable.

Caxton's enterprise depended on securing a reading public that would buy his books. The most promising buyers were the rising Middle Class, which did not necessarily have Latin. This insured that Caxton would publish chiefly English-language works and that these books would draw on the emerging *Chancery Standard*. His concern about variation in English is expressed in text 5.9 (§5.4.2).



## Copyright law

is one of the consequences of the individualization of authorship. In the OE and into the ME period authorship was frequently – but by no means always – anonymous. Writing, including translating and copying, was carried out chiefly at the monasteries. In the ME period more and more writing was centered around the nobility, who patronized individual poets and who, in return, had the works dedicated to them. With the advent of printing, mass circulation of literature became a reality, and authors took an interest – though still a distant vision – in being able to make a living from their writing. At the same time governments and the Church developed an interest in gaining control over what was published. By granting licenses to printers to publish particular books the authorities were following their own interests, but also limiting the pirating of books and in this way establishing the groundwork for future copyright.

“Illegal” publishing actually flourished despite moves to establish controls. This could be dramatically seen in the smuggling of *Tyndale’s* Bible into England and Scotland in the early sixteenth century. Although Richard Pynson, a younger contemporary of Caxton, was granted very limited rights in 1518, nothing systematic was established until 200 years later. It was then that the first general legal measure resembling later copyright law was enacted: “An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by vesting the Copies of Printed Books in the Authors or purchasers of such Copies, during the Times therein mentioned,” known as the Statute of Anne (1709/10). This was, however, as likely to be a benefit to printers as to authors. Pirated books continued to be produced outside England, viz. on the Continent, in Scotland, Ireland, or the North American colonies. As Parliamentary jurisdiction extended first to Scotland and then to Ireland, pirating there became illegal, but the United States continued to ignore British copyright. Although the US established its own copyright law in 1790 (the first of several laws), it did not join in international conventions until the late twentieth century (Universal Copyright Convention, 1954; Berne Convention, 1988). Continental publishers continued to profit from restrictive laws in Britain and the US as most dramatically seen in the publication of Joyce’s *Ulysses*, which was initially banned in the US and Britain.

Present-day practice still has to observe differing copyright laws in the UK and the US, but the globalization of writing and publishing in English is a fact, and the English language is, as a result, no longer the sole preserve of England or the United States.

## Early history of Scotland, The

can begin for our purposes in the thirteenth century, when the Kingdom of Scotland came to occupy its present territory. The country was largely Gaelic speaking, but contained Norse territories around Caithness as well as on the Orkneys and Shetlands; English dominated in the southeast. After the death of Alexander III in 1286 dynastic conflict, in which the Edward II of England was involved, led to a long-standing alliance with France known as the Auld Alliance (1295–1560) and to the Wars of Scottish Independence (1296–1338), initially successful in the Battle of Stirling Bridge (1297) under William *Wallace* and later in the Battle of Bannockburn under Robert Bruce (see *Brus*). The two countries remained at a kind of stand-off with occasional hostilities until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when they grew dynastically nearer and *James VI* of Scotland eventually became the successor to Elizabeth I of England.



### *The Brus*, John Barbour

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(c. 1320–1395). *The Brus*, written in the 1370s, is the main work of the Scottish poet John Barbour, one of the earliest poets writing in Scots. Although Barbour briefly held the churchly office of an archdeacon, the poem itself is a secular verse romance glorifying the dynasty of his patron Robert II of Scotland. The protagonists of the poem are James Douglas and Robert the Brus (Robert I of Scotland). The principal episode of the first part of the poem is the Battle of Bannockburn (1314) in which the Scottish forces defeated those of Edward II of England. The well-known line “A! fredome is a noble thing” comes from *The Brus* (see Texts 5.8a and b).

### *The Wallace*, Blin Hary

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(c. 1440–1493). *The Wallace* is a long historical narrative in poetic form, written about 1477 by the Scottish minstrel Blin(d) Har(r)y. It is a tale about William Wallace, an extremely popular Scottish military leader and its full title is *The Actes and Deidis of the Illustre and Vallyeant Campioun Schir William Wallace*. Blin Hary’s poem grew out of the anti-English feelings of the time of its composition in Scotland. The deeds recorded in the poem, which would have transpired at the end of the thirteenth century such as leading an army to the outskirts of London, are probably largely or wholly fictive (Text 5.11).

### William Dunbar

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(c. 1460–1520) was a priest and writer. He is best known for his poem *Lament for the Makars* about the poets, or *makars*, who preceded him, most of whom were Scottish. The poem is in the tradition of the *danse macabre* and the fourth line of every stanza is the identical Latin phrase *timor mortis conturbat* “The fear of death disturbs me” (Text 6.26).

### James VI

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(1566–1625) was king of Scotland from 1567 on and king of England (as James I) from 1603–1625 in the union of crowns. He supported Scottish music and literature and wrote *Reulis and Cautelis* (text 6.10) in 1584 as instructions for writing poetry and a history of poetic writing in Scots.

## Enclosures, The

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along with urbanization were already two processes of central importance for the demographic development of England in the late ME periode. The first of these had to do with

- the privatization of commons;
- the paradigmatic of change from subsistence to market agriculture (first wool, later modern agriculture).

The enclosures, which benefitted the well-off land owners most of all, were carried through over the centuries, but it was especially the Tudor enclosures that resulted in farmland becoming grazing land (for sheep and wool production). Furthermore, the rate of enclosure increased in the seventeenth century leading to social unrest (depopulation of villages, increase in vagrancy (note the Newton Rebellion of 1607)).



The people from the depopulated countryside had little choice about where they could go. As has repeatedly been pointed out, many of them went to London or to the colonies (§§5.2.3–4; 6.1.1; 6.2.1–3; 7.1.2). London was the epitome of urbanization, but modern society everywhere is characterized by the growth of cities and mega-cities. As pointed out in §§5.2.3; 6.2.2; 7.2.1; 7.1.2; 7.2.3; 7.3.3; 7.4.2; 8.1; 8.2; 8.3.2; 8.4; 8.5.2; and 11.5.2, *koinéization* is one of the most likely linguistic consequences of population movement and contact in new, especially urban, situations.

**Great Famine, The** (see Chapter 4, *Post-Conquest England*)

**Hundred Years' War, The** (see Chapter 4, *Post-Conquest England*)

**Introduction to Middle English at:** <https://www.routledgetextbooks.com/textbooks/9781138501096/learning-resources.php>

## Lollards, The

were a religious movement trying to change what they saw as corrupt practices in the medieval Church. Among other things the Lollards challenged the use of Latin, which was seen as a means of control over the people. The movement does not seem to have had any unifying central theological beliefs or doctrine. Rather, it seems to have found its strength in its anti-clerical stance, consequently calling many of the priestly aspects of the Church into question. This also shows up very clearly in the debate from 1401 on about the suitability of English for a *translation of the Bible*. The Church felt it was not suitable, which was clearly a political decision. This led to the law *de hæretico comburendo*, which linked popular literacy to sedition: “heretics were accused of making unlawful conventicles and confederations, setting up schools, writing books and wickedly instructing and informing the people” (Knowles 1997: 64). Open discussions of heresy were legal – in Latin; Latin remained language of conservative scholarship. Lollard work put the Bible above the Church; scholarly study of it (the written text) challenged the oral tradition of the Church (ibid.: 64–71) and its authority. This was a struggle to extend English to the domain of religion and to replace Latin with it. The success of the Lollard translation of the Bible (*Wycliffe*) indicated a growing reading public. Lollard English as one of the strands of the incipient written standard. Lollardy was also an element in the *Peasants' Revolt* of 1381, and this association contributed to measures against the Lollards in the years after the Revolt. See 5.1.1; 5.3.2; 6.2.4; 6.4.1.

Knowles, G.O. (1997) *A Cultural History of the English Language*. London: Edward Arnold.

**ME literature** (see Chapter 4)

**Models of change** (see Chapter 1)

## Paston letters, The

are letters written by and to members of the Norfolk Paston family between 1422 and 1509. They reveal very much about the turbulent times in which they were written, which included the Wars of the Roses. More important for the history of English, they are important documentation of the more informal language in this period and are a significant part of the Corpus of Early English Correspondence.

**Peasants' Revolt, The** (see Chapter 4, *Post-Conquest England*)

**Piers Plowman** (see Chapter 4, Middle English literature)



## Pilgrimages

were common practice in the pre-Modern period. In the Middle Ages people visited places of religious significance, hoping for the blessings of God or relief from physical or spiritual suffering. Jerusalem, Rome, and Santiago de Compostela were often the goal. *The Canterbury Tales* were conceived around a group of pilgrims going from London (actually Southwark) to Canterbury to the grave of the *hooly blisful martir* (l. 17), Thomas Becket, murdered at Canterbury Cathedral in 1170. Also mentioned are the *Palmeres* (l. 13), i.e. those who had made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and wore two crossed palms as a sign of this (ME text with accompanying ModE translation from Coghill):

<i>hanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,</i>	12
Then people long to go on pilgrimages	
<i>And Palmeres for to seken straunge strondes,</i>	
And palmers long to seek the stranger strands	
<i>To ferne halwes kowthe in sondry londes.</i>	14
Of far-off saints, hallowed in sundry lands,	
<i>And specially fram euery shires ende</i>	
And specially, from every shire's end	
<i>Of Englelond to Caunterbury they wende,</i>	16
In England, down to Canterbury they wend	
<i>The hooly blisful martir for to seke,</i>	
To seek the holy blissful martyr, quick	
<i>That dem hath holpen whan þat they were seeke.</i>	18
In giving help to them when they were sick.	

Other important goals of medieval pilgrimages mentioned in the Prologue were Santiago de Compostela in Spain (The Way of St. James), Rome, Jerusalem, Bologna (really more the university than a religious goal), and Cologne (because of the relics of the Three Wise Men given by Cologne Archbishop Rainald of Dassel to the cathedral in 1164, cf.

<i>A good Wyf was ther of bisyde Bathe,</i>	445
A worthy woman from beside Bath city	
...	
<i>And thryes hadde she been at <b>Jerusalem</b>;</i>	463
And she had thrice been to Jerusalem,	
<i>She hadde passed many a straunge streem;</i>	
Seen many strange rivers and passed over them;	
<i>At <b>Rome</b> she hadde been, and at <b>Boloigne</b>,</i>	465
She'd been to Rome and also to Boulogne,	
<i>In <b>Galice</b> at seint Jame, and at <b>Coloigne</b>.</i>	
St James of Compostella and Cologne,	
<i>She coude muche of wandring by the weye:</i>	467
And she was skilled in wandering by the way	



The Wife of Bath is characterized by Chaucer tongue-in-cheek in l. 467, where he alludes to her wandering of a different and more carnal nature (§5.4.2).

Coghill, N. (translator) (1952) G. Chaucer. *The Canterbury Tales*. Baltimore: Penguin.

Skeat, W.W. (ed.) (1912) *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*. London: OUP.

## Second person pronoun usage

has, with the loss of the *thou*-forms merged singular and plural in **StE**. In the early ME period the use of singular *you* began to be established if not under the direct influence of the use of singular *vous* in French at least at about the same time French singular *vous* was coming into use. The first documented case of singular *you* dates from 1250, but documentary evidence of this form is rare until well into the following century (Finkenstaedt 1963: 50f). By Chaucer's time singular *ye-you* (the Y-form) was common and can be seen in the words inviting the prioress to tell her story: "*My lady Prioress, by **your** leve, / So that I wiste I shoulde **you** nat greve, / I wolde demen that **ye** tellen shoulde / A tale next, if so were that **ye** wolde. / Now wol **ye** vouche-sauf, my lady dere?" / "Gladly," quod she, and seyde as **ye** shal here."* (Chaucer. *Canterbury Tales*, "The Prioresses Prologue," late fourteenth century, ll. 1637–1642). T-forms were for people who were not present including those asleep, dead, or mad (Mazzon 2000: 138).

"The addressing of women by men (husband-wife and other family relationship excepted) is almost invariably with Y (20 cases vs. only one T), regardless of whether the woman has a status that is superior, inferior, or roughly equivalent to that of the male character addressing her" (ibid.: 140).

"At Chaucer's time, Y-forms are well established as forms of deference and of respect, and are used rather regularly with one's superiors, and increasingly with strangers..." (ibid.: 144, cf. Strang 1970: 139). In the period of the Wars of the Roses (1455–1485) the ranks of the aristocracy were thinned considerably thus strengthening the position of the well-to-do middle classes who began increasingly to adopt the new forms of address of the nobility (whose ranks they began to replenish). By Shakespeare's time use of *thou-thee* (the T-form) vs. the Y-form had spread into the higher bourgeois circles, as seen by its use in the Paston letters. T-forms are reserved for anger, contempt, or hostility. Hence singular *you* was determined not just by social standing, but also by emotional state. Bruti has two main criteria: (1) social distance and (2) emotional attitude (2000: 35):

### Social distance

Inferiors	Address to Equals	Superiors
<i>Thou</i> <-----	(Y/T) ----->	<i>You</i>

### Emotional attitude

anger/contempt	indifference/neutrality	familiarity/intimacy
<i>Thou</i> -----	<i>You</i> ----->	<i>Thou</i>

In the seventeenth century we still find Oliver Cromwell's wife addressing him with Y-forms but receiving T-forms in return (Finkenstaedt 1963: 111). Furthermore, throughout this time the use of the T-forms was reinforced by Puritan usage that emphasized the religious use of the *thou*-forms (ibid.: 130). As the Puritans lost in influence when the Restoration (1660) came about, a more recent movement, that of the Quakers (the Society of Friends), seemed all the more visible; and one of its features was its insistence on using the T-forms. This was a conscious rejection of societal inequality including the vanity of titles and the Y-forms,



which the higher standing demanded be used in addressing them. The persistent use of *thou* and *thee* did not meet with widespread approval as the following autobiographical passage by Thomas Ellwood indicates. In it he describes a repeated encounter with his non-Quaker father, who demanded that he remove his hat in his presence and address him with *ye* or *you*:

As soon as he saw me standing with my hat on, his passion transporting him, he fell upon me with both his fists; and having by that means somewhat vented his anger, he plucked of [off] my hat and threw it away. ...

But whenever I had occasion to speak to my father, though I had no hat to offend him [he had taken to wearing a cap], yet my language did as much; for a durst not say you to him; but thou, or thee, as the occasion required, and then would he be sure to fall on me with his fist.

(Ellwood 1848: 359, 365)

The direction of change in general has, of course, been to adopt singular *you*. For a basic history of T and Y forms, see Brown and Gilman 1972, where the abbreviations used are T and V (for *vous/vos*).

Some traditional dialects continue to use the second person singular *thou*. This shows up in the Shetlands, where the initial consonant is /d/ instead of /ð/ and the vowel is unshifted /u/ giving us *du*, which is incidentally the same as the German second person nom. sg. pronoun (Melchers 1985: 93). In Yorkshire the consonant is /ð/ but the vowel is /a/, giving *tha* as in “*Just asked where **tha wa**’ that’s all. What **did tha** run away for when **tha** saw him?*” (Text 10.2, Hines. *Kes*, 1969).

Brown, R. and A. Gilman (1972) “The Pronouns of Power and Solidarity,” in: P.P. Giglioli (ed.) *Language and Social Context*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 252–282.

Bruti, S. (2000) “Address Pronouns in Shakespeare’s English: A Re-appraisal in Terms of Markedness,” in: D. Kastovsky and A. Mettinger (eds.) *The History of English in a Social Context. A Contribution to Historical Sociolinguistics*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 25–51.

Ellwood, T. (1843) *The History of the Life of Th. Ellwood Written by himself*. Philadelphia: Friends’ Library.

Finkensaedt, T. (1963) *You und Thou. Studien zur Anrede im Englischen*. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Mazzon, Gabriella (2000) “Social Relations and Forms of Address in the *Canterbury Tales*,” in: D. Kastovsky and A. Mettinger (eds.) *The History of English in a Social Context. A Contribution to Historical Sociolinguistics*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 135–168.

Melchers, G. (1985) “Knappin’, ‘proper English’, ‘modified Scottish’: Some Language Attitudes in the Shetland Islands,” in: M. Görlach (ed.) *Focus on: Scotland*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 87–100.

Strang, B.M.H. (1970) *A History of English*. London: Methuen.

**Sir Gawain (see Chapter 4, *Middle English literature*)**

## Theory of the humors

The word *humor* referred in Latin to moisture, wetness, liquid, as we still see in the related word *humid*. In Medieval thought the body was conceived of as containing four liquids or humors whose balance



(temperament, complexion) were essential for good health (good humor/temper vs. bad humor/temper). Each of the four were also associated with one of the four elements:

- black choler or bile: associated with the element earth;
- phlegm: the element water;
- blood: the element air;
- choler or yellow bile: the element fire.

Furthermore, they were also associated among other things with the properties hot, cold, dry, and wet. In the Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* mention is made in l. 420 of *hoot, coold, moyste, drye*. Each of these could be combined with any other one except its opposite and was then associated with the seasons. This gave the following groupings:

humor	season	feature	element
black bile	Autumn	cold-dry	earth
phlegm	Winter	cold-moist	water
blood	spring	hot-moist	air
choler	summer	hot-dry	fire

Any imbalance (bad temper) could be remedied by removing some of the liquid that was present in superfluity, hence bleeding, vomiting, and sweating. Much of the terminology used today to describe people's temperaments derives from this theory, even though the theory of the humors is completely outdated. Too much black bile made you melancholic; too much blood, sanguine; too much phlegm, phlegmatic; and too much yellow bile, choleric or bilious.

## Translations of the Bible into English

The use of the vernaculars for the Bible were prohibited by the Synod of Toulouse (1229). While this was widely ignored elsewhere, this was not the case in England because of the association of translation with the **Lollards**: "Someone reading the English translation was still given an interpretation, but by the translator rather than the priest. A further problem is that the reader could be misled by the meaning of everyday English words and fail to grasp the exact meaning of the original" (Knowles 1997: 72; on the role of Latin, cf. also §§1.4.2; 5.1.3; 5.2.; 5.3.2.2–4; 6.4.1).

Actually, translations had been and continued to be made again and again, as the following lists make clear:

- Aldhelm, Bishop of Sherborne (639–709) thought to have translated the Psalms (disputed).
- Caedmon mentioned by Bede as one who sang poems in Old English based on the Bible stories (not a translation as such).
- Bede: a translation of the Gospel of John (c. 735).
- The *Vespasian Psalter*, an interlinear gloss in a manuscript of the Psalms (c. 850; in the Mercian dialect).
- Eleven other ninth century glosses of the Psalms, including Eadwine's *Canterbury Psalter*.
- King Alfred had passages of the Bible circulated in the vernacular around AD 900, possibly including the 50 Psalms in the *Paris Psalter*; see Text 1.1.



- Between 950 and 970, a gloss in the Northumbrian dialect of Old English (the *Northumbrian Gloss on the Gospels*) added to the *Lindisfarne Gospels*.
- 1382–1395: Wycliffe’s translation; see Texts 5.3 and 6.16a.
- Tyndale – burned as heretic in 1536 – made a translation (see Text 6.3) which appeared in:
- 1537: Matthew Bible: with royal assent.
- 1535: Coverdale Bible; see Text 6.16b.
- 1540: Great Bible: nobility could read it aloud; womenfolk and merchants for themselves; common people not at all.
- 1560: The Geneva Bible (Calvinist marginal notes).
- 1568: Bishop’s Bible (authorized by Elizabeth I).
- 1582: Rheims-Douay Bible (Roman Catholic); see Text 6.16c.
- 1611: The King James (Authorized) Version (KJV); see Texts 1.1, 5.3, 6.3 and 6.16d
- 1640: The Bay Psalm Book; see Text 6.16e.
- 1881, 1885: English Revised Version (RV).
- 1901: American Standard Version (of above) (ASV).
- 1946, 1952: The Revised Standard Version (RSV) (US); see Text 6.16f.
- 1961, 1970: The New English Bible (UK).
- 1966: Good News for Modern Man (US); see Text 1.1.
- 1989: Revised English Bible (UK) (“gender accurate”).

Change in the archaic English of the translations was slow in coming. The second person singular T-form pronouns, *thou*, *thee*, *thy*, and verb forms *art*, *hast*, *hadst*, *didst*, etc. were long retained. In the KJV, RV and ASV the T-forms were used for both God and humans. In RSV they were used only for God, a fairly common practice for Bible translations until the mid-1970s, when a general switch to singular *you* became common practice.

Knowles, G.O. (1997) *A Cultural History of the English Language*. London: Edward Arnold.  
English Translations of the Bible. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old\\_English\\_Bible\\_translations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_English_Bible_translations)

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### Trevisa, John of

(1342–1402) is best known as the translator of Higden’s *Polychronicon*, to which he added comments of his own such as those we can see in Text 5.1. Trevisa, a Cornishman, probably collaborated with Wycliffe in translating the Bible into English.

**Wallace, The (see Early history of Scotland)**  
**Word order (see Chapter 1)**

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### Wycliffe, John

(1320s–1384) was an early Church dissenter and Oxford University scholar, who was a precursor of Reformation ideas in a number of areas such as predestination, the separation of temporal and ecclesiastic matters, and rejection of the papacy. Wycliffe was also the first important translator of the Bible into English after the OE period (Texts 5.3 and 6.16a). The success of the Lollard *translation of the Bible* (Wycliffe) indicated a growing reading public. Lollard English as one of the strands of the incipient written standard.