

La letteratura d'istruzione intesa nella sua accezione più ampia costituisce uno dei campi d'indagine più fecondi della cultura medievale d'area germanica, sia perché consente di seguire la nascita e lo sviluppo di diverse forme letterarie in società nelle quali a lungo la trasmissione della conoscenza era stata orale, sia perché aiuta a comprendere le dinamiche di adattamento di quelle popolazioni al mondo classico e cristiano col quale esse vennero in contatto, gradualmente, nei secoli compresi tra la Tarda Antichità e il Medioevo.

Ma già prima dell'incontro con la superiore cultura latina le popolazioni germaniche dovettero essere ben consapevoli "dell'utilità di quella socializzazione del sapere che è alla base di ogni attività formativa", dandone evidenza anche nei primissimi documenti scritti, perfino quelli runici.

L'istruzione, che è primariamente condivisione del sapere, diventa così il "pretesto" per la traduzione, l'adattamento e l'originale redazione di opere di grande profondità. Opere dai contenuti più diversi: saggi grammaticali, riflessioni sulla lingua, testi filosofici, storici, pedagogici.

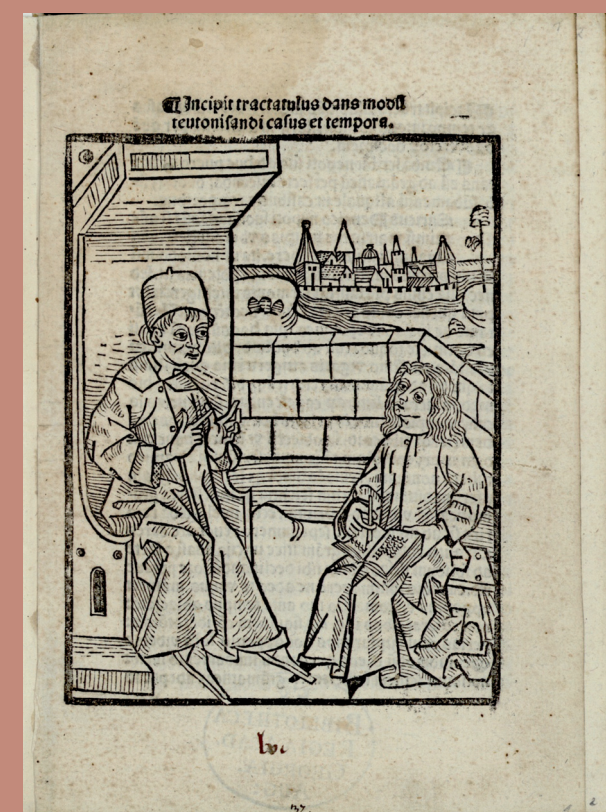
I saggi contenuti nel volume danno un quadro variegato del fermento d'interessi, curiosità, riflessioni che le popolazioni germaniche, non solo nei primi secoli della loro storia, hanno dedicato a un tema centrale per lo sviluppo di qualunque comunità culturalmente evoluta, come è la condivisione del sapere e la formazione delle generazioni future, e costituiscono l'omaggio e il saluto della comunità accademica, non solo italiana, a Fabrizio D. Raschellà, a conclusione della sua carriera.

Illustrazione di copertina: Göttingen, Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, 8 LING IV, 441 INC, Bl. a1^a



LA LETTERATURA DI ISTRUZIONE NEL MEDIOEVO GERMANICO

STUDI IN ONORE DI
FABRIZIO D. RASCHELLÀ



A cura di
Marialuisa Caparrini, Maria Rita Digilio, Fulvio Ferrari

Barcelona - Roma
2017

Fédération Internationale des Instituts d'Études Médiévales
TEXTES ET ÉTUDES DU MOYEN ÂGE, 87

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Stampato con il contributo del Dipartimento di Filologia e Critica delle
Letterature antiche e moderne – Università degli Studi di Siena

Il volume è stato sottoposto a doppia revisione anonima

ISBN: 978-2-503-57927-6

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Largo Giorgio Manganelli, 3
00142 Roma (Italia)

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MARINA BUZZONI*

THE *ORRMULUM*: ENGLISH OR ANGLICIZED NORSE?

In effetti, dell'*Ormulum* non si può dire con sicurezza molto di più che in esso abbondano parole e forme di chiara matrice scandinava, mentre sono rari i francesismi.
[RASCELLÀ, *Ormulum*, p. 15]

1. Aim of the paper

Despite a generalized discredit of its literary value¹, the early Middle English exegetical verse text known as *Ormulum* presents many peculiarities that demand and deserve the attention of the scholars. To mention just a few of the still open issues that this text arises, one could list: the peculiarity of the orthographic system (probably the best-known and most extensively studied feature of the *Ormulum*); the origin and provenance of the twelfth-century manuscript which transmits most part of the text that has come down to us; Jan van Vliet's seventeenth-century transcription which contains lost portions in the original manuscript; the identity of the author; the genre to which the text can be attributed; and – last but not least – the language in which it is written.

After briefly sketching the documentary history of the *Ormulum*, this paper will focus on one of the most debated linguistic problems posed by the text, i.e. the dialectal variety to which it belongs. The issue will be addressed from the new perspective opened up by Emonds and Faarlund's recent hypothesis that the late 12th-century exegetical text is the first known work to employ a form of Anglicized Norse from which Middle and Modern English developed. A crucial question

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¹ See, among others, the blunt statement by Richard M. Wilson on the «deadly monotony of the rhythm» (R.M. WILSON, *Early Middle English Literature*, Methuen & Co, London 1939, p. 174), and his final judgement of the whole work as «an intolerably diffuse and tedious work» (Ivi, p. 176).

will be posed, whether the textual data can actually support this claim or not.

2. Documentary history

The extant over 20,000 verses (roughly 125,000 words) that make up what remains of the text named by its author *Orrmulum*² are transmitted in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 1; these verses are only about an eighth of the originally planned work³. According to Malcom Parkes, the manuscript was presumably produced at the Arroaisian House of SS. Peter and Paul in Bourne in southern Lincolnshire in the late twelfth century. His evidence about the provenance comes from the list of *capitula*, which indicates that the latter stages of the work pivoted upon the deeds of SS. Peter and Paul, to whom the Augustinian abbey in Bourne was dedicated. Parkes' assumption on the date of the *Orrmulum*, which represents the modern consensus view, is based on the scrutiny of the characteristics of the writing of the so-called "Hand C", responsible for inserting the Latin incipits of the Gospel texts. These initial parts are not likely to have been written later than 1180, and since they were added after Orm had finished writing and revising the English text of his homilies, it seems reasonable to assume that this work was carried out between ca. 1160 and 1180⁴.

² Unless otherwise stated, the original text is quoted from R. HOLT (ed.), *The Ormulum*, with the Notes and Glossary of Dr. R.M. WHITE, 2 vols., At the Clarendon Press, Oxford 1878. Preface 1-2: «Þiss boc iss nemmedd Ormulum / Forþi þatt Orm itt wrohhte» 'This book is called Ormulum, / because Orm composed it'. A second passage in the Dedication, ll. 323-324, reads: «Icc wass þær þær I crisstnedd wass Orrmin bi name nemmedd» 'Where I became a Christian, I was given the name of Orrmin'. The name of the author seems thus to be Orm or Orrmin (the latter is probably derived from the former with the addition of a derivational suffix of unclear and disputed origin). The title *Orrmulum* has been interpreted as either *Orrm* followed by the Latin diminutive suffix *-ulum* (a form of *captatio benevolentiae*), or as a calque on the technical term *speculum*.

³ In the table of contents 242 homilies are mentioned, of which only 32 remain.

⁴ M.B. PARKES, «On the Presumed Date and Possible Origin of the Manuscript of the 'Ormulum': Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Junius 1», in E.G. STANLEY – D. GRAY (eds.), *Five Hundred Years of Words and Sounds: A Festschrift for Eric Dobson*, Brewer, Cambridge, pp. 115-127.

Further hypotheses have been put forth as regards the provenance of the manuscript, as well as of the author himself. Some scholars, especially in the 19th century, have strongly made the point that the North-Western territories of Cumberland and Lancashire are quite realistic alternatives to Lincolnshire⁵.

Very little is known of the fate of the manuscript before the seventeenth century, when it fell into possession of Sir Thomas Aylesbury (1579/80–1658), who eventually brought it to the Low Countries where he was exiled after the execution of King Charles I in 1649. The manuscript was then purchased for 18 florins by Jan van Vliet, town clerk of Breda and antiquarian, who made a note of the price on folio 2r in the manuscript along with his signature, «Jani Vlisij», and the place and date of purchase «Bredae 1659, 6 Febr.». It is exactly in this period that the folios carrying columns 13-28, 45-52, 69-76, 97-104, 137-144, 157-160, 181-204, 221-224, 237-244, 257-260, 277-280, 297-300, and 399-406, altogether 27 folios with 108 columns of text, were missed from MS Junius 1; luckily enough, van Vliet had recorded material from them – in some cases single verses or groups of verses, in other cases individual words – on old note paper from his student days; van Vliet's notebook is now London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 783. This very rich material was unknown to the nineteenth-century *Ormmulum* editors, Dr. Robert Meadows White in 1852, and Rev. Robert Holt in 1878⁶; the text passages from folios 51r-72v in MS 783 (now lost in Junius 1) were published by Neil Ker in a diplomatic edition in 1940⁷, and a survey of single words written down by van Vliet from missing folios was published by Robert W. Burchfield

⁵ See, among others, R.G. LATHAM, «Upon the Orms of Lancashire in the Twelfth Century, and Orm the writer of the *Ormulum*», *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, third series – V (1876-77) 91-104.

⁶ R.M. WHITE (ed.), *The Ormmulum*, 2 vols., Oxford University Press, Oxford 1852; HOLT (ed.), *The Ormmulum*. The latter is available in .pdf format at <https://archive.org/details/ormulumwithnotes01whituoft> (last accessed 2016-10-28). A searchable online version which allows also lexical queries is included in the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse*, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/cme/> (last accessed 2016-10-28). The text is also part of the Penn-Helsinki-Parsed Corpus of Middle English (PPCME2) which is available at <http://www.ling.upenn.edu/mideng> (last accessed 2016-10-28).

⁷ N.R. KER, «Unpublished parts of the *Ormulum* printed from MS. Lambeth 783», *Medium Ævum*, 9 (1940) 1-22.

in 1961⁸. A new edition of the text by the Swedish scholar Nils-Lennart Johannesson is presently in progress (*The Ormmulum Project*)⁹. Van Vliet owned the manuscript from 1659 to his death in 1666, after which it was acquired by Franciscus Junius (1589-1678); finally, it entered the Bodleian Library with Junius' collection in 1678.

The manuscript, whose parchment – presumably sheepskin of irregular shape – seems to be rather poor, is considered a holograph¹⁰. Ormm himself performed a large amount of editing over time, with the help of (at least) two collaborators known as «Hand B» and «Hand C». This has led Johannesson to claim that «[t]he manuscript can be seen as one huge illustration of writing as process rather than product»¹¹ (see Fig. 1).

⁸ R.W. BURCHFIELD, «Ormulum: Words copied by Jan van Vliet from parts now lost», in N. DAVIS – C.L. WRENN (eds.), *English and Medieval studies presented to J.R.R. Tolkien on the occasion of his seventieth birthday*, Allen & Unwin, London 1961, pp. 94-111. On Jan van Vliet see also: K. DEKKER, *The origins of Old Germanic studies in the Low Countries*, Brill, Leiden 1999.

⁹ N.-L. JOHANNESSON, *The Ormmulum Project*, http://www.orrmulum.net/orrmulum_site.html (last accessed 2016-10-28).

¹⁰ It consists of 119 fols, 90 of which are original and 29 later additions containing revisions by Ormm. The original leaves are generally in two columns (one column where the leaves were too small). J. TURVILLE-PETRE, «Studies in the Ormmulum MS», *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 46 (1947) 1-27.

¹¹ N.-L. JOHANNESSON, «*Ormmulum*: Genre membership and text organization», in N.-L. JOHANNESSON – G. MELCHERS – B. BJÖRKMAN (eds.), *Of butterflies and birds, of dialects and genres: Essays in honour of Philip Shaw*, Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, Stockholm 2013, pp. 77-89.

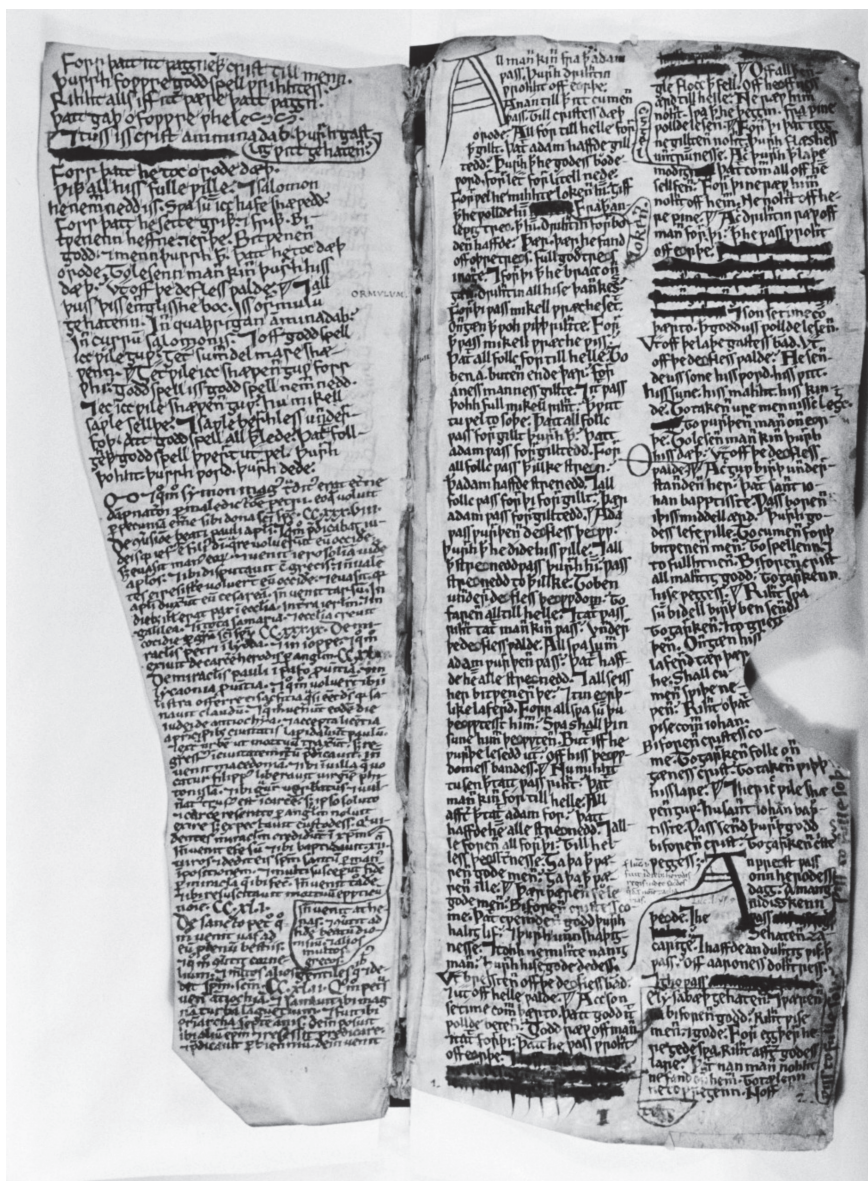


Fig. 1. MS Junius 1, ff. 9v-10r, showing the irregular shape of the parchment, and writing as process.

Source: LUNA, <http://bodley30.bodley.ox.ac.uk:8180/luna/servlet>
(last accessed 2016-10-28)

3. Structure of the work and genre issue

The work is usually described as a homily collection, but a closer analysis carried out by N.-L. Johannesson has shown that the *Orrmulum* is a hybrid, in that it combines properties of (at least) two contemporary text genres¹². On the one hand it exhibits some typical features of a homiliary, such as a verse-by-verse exegesis of the gospel texts; and yet, differently from homiliaries, the *lectiones* do not follow the same arrangement as in the Missal, i.e. they do not follow the liturgical year. The gospel lections are rather presented in chronological sequence, since they report events which have taken place before, during and after the lives of John the Baptist and Christ. This chronological arrangement makes the text closer to a gospel harmony, in which the narratives of the four gospels are combined into one coherent story.

The prefatory part of the *Orrmulum* can similarly be shown to be a hybrid. It displays all the properties of a Ciceronian *praefatio*, in that it comments on the relationship between the author and various other people, such as his patron, his readers, his copyist, and his detractors; and yet it also shows the typical features of the prologue of a twelfth-century exegetical work, since it contains the name of the author and of the work, it states its purpose, etc.

As for the structure, the work is composed of an apparently extremely articulated prefatory part followed by the real textual body, namely the homilies.

On the basis of Holt's 1878 edition, the prefatory matter of *Orrmulum* is made up of four sections: *Dedication*, *Preface*, *Texts* (i.e. a numbered list of Latin incipits to the homiletic texts) and *Introduction*. Burchfield, however, pointed out that this assumption is based on a misunderstanding. In fact, the text contained in folio 9 recto, as well as the first 25 lines of folio 9 verso (Holt's *Preface*) are in the wrong place, since they were marked by Orm to be inserted after verse 156 of Holt's *Dedication*, immediately before Orm's explanation of what «goddspell» means.¹³ Therefore:

¹² N.-L. JOHANNESSON, «*Orrmulum*: Genre membership and text organization», in N.-L. JOHANNESSON – G. MELCHERS – B. BJÖRKMAN (eds.), *Of butterflies and birds, of dialects and genres: Essays in honour of Philip Shaw*, Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, Stockholm 2013, pp. 77-89; N.-L. JOHANNESSON, «Orm's relationship to his Latin sources», in G. MAZZON (ed.), *Studies in Middle English Forms and Meanings*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main 2007, pp. 133-143.

¹³ R.W. BURCHFIELD «The language and orthography of the Ormulum MS», *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 55 (1956) 56-87, at p. 72. See also

Once Holt's *Preface* is inserted in its proper place (where it fits seamlessly) and his *Introduction* is allocated to Homily i/ii (for the Introduction to a homily, see section 3.3 below), the prefatory matter of *Orrmulum* is reduced to one running text (Holt's *Dedication* + *Preface*) and one numbered list of Latin incipits of the gospel lections (Holt's *Texts*)¹⁴.

In this prefatory part, Orm first addresses his patron and threefold brother Walter (in the flesh, in the faith, and in the order¹⁵), who commissioned the work, and then declares (with conventional expressions of modesty) that he has completed the task assigned to him. The *prefatio* in the proper sense contains some reworking of exegetical works, as well as the motivations for having carried out the work, namely in order that the souls of English people may be saved; as a reward from God for his labour Orm expects his own salvation. The list of Latin incipits provides some background for the following homilies. These may show a very complex structure, whose obligatory elements are (i) the homiletic text (ii) its exegesis¹⁶.

The homilies, as well as the prefatory material, are written in verse, in a metre in which an octosyllabic verse¹⁷ is followed by a heptasyllabic one (septenarius). Therefore, each (long) line has fifteen syllables divided into seven feet, without rhyme or alliteration. There is a caesura after the eighth syllable (fourth foot), and the rhythm is iambic¹⁸. To sum up,

H.C. MATTHES, *Die Einheitlichkeit des Orrmulum: Studien zur Text-kritik, zu den Quellen und zur sprachlichen Form von Orrmins Evangelienbuch*, C. Winter, Heidelberg 1933, in particular pp. 36-37.

¹⁴ JOHANNESSEN, «*Orrmulum: Genre membership*», p. 82.

¹⁵ Ll. 1-5: «NU, broþerr Wallterr, broþerr min / Affterr þe flæsshess kinde; / & broþerr min i Crisstenndom / Purrh fulluhht & þurh throwwþe; / & broþerr min i Godess hus, [...]».

¹⁶ According to Johannesson, the sections that can make up a homily are the following (mandatory sections are marked with an asterisk): Introduction / (Text heading) / *Text A / (Text heading) / Text B / Transition / *Exposition A / Exposition B / Coda / Prayer (JOHANNESSEN, «*Orrmulum: Genre membership*», p. 85).

¹⁷ Here 'verse' is synonymous with 'half-line'.

¹⁸ On the metre of the *Orrmulum* the bibliography is rather extensive, both within a descriptive and within a formal framework. See: M. KALUZA, *A short history of English versification*, transl. by A.C. Dunstan, Allen, London 1911; I. HALL, *Selections from Early Middle English*, Clarendon, Oxford 1920; F. MOSSÉ, *A Handbook of Middle English*, transl. by J.A. Walker, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1952; E.G.

the metre of the *Ormulum* shows the following dominant feet pattern, in which || represents the caesura, <w> stands for weak position, and <s> for strong position:

[w s | w s | w s | w s || w s | w s | w s | w]

Martin J. Duffell has recently claimed that «[i]n terms of parametric theory, *Ormulum*'s prominent type is strength: only the weak syllables of polysyllabic words are constrained from appearing in strong positions»¹⁹.

An analysis of the extensively studied innovative spelling system introduced by Orm goes beyond the scope of this essay. To our purposes, it suffices to say that it is remarkable for its innovations and inventiveness, and departs strikingly from Old English spelling. In a nutshell: most scholars are inclined to think that Orm generally doubled the consonants of closed syllables in which the vowel is etymologically short (e.g. *Orrlmulum*; *wrohhlte*; *brolþerr*; *Walllterr*), leaving long vowels unmarked by spelling (e.g. *boc*)²⁰. In all probability the practical aim of the phoneticism of his

STANLEY, «Rhymes in Early Medieval Verse: from Old English to Middle English», in E.D. KENNEDY – R. WALDRON – J.C. WITTIG (eds.), *Medieval English Studies presented to George Kane*, D.S. Brewer, Cambridge 1988, pp. 19-54; D. MINKOVA, «Non-primary Stress in Early Middle English accentual-syllabic verse», in C.B. McCULLY – J.J. ANDERSON (eds.), *English Historical Metrics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1996, pp. 95-120; E. SOLOPOVA, «The metre of the *Ormulum*», in M.J. TOSWELL – E.M. TYLER (eds.), *Studies in English Language and Literature. 'Doubt wisely'. Papers in Honour of E.G. Stanley*, Routledge, London – New York 1996, pp. 423-439; W. ZONNEVELD, «The 'Ormulum' and the 'Lutgart': Early Germanic iambs in context - Medieval English measures: Studies in metre and versification», *Parergon*, 18.1 (2000) 27-52; C. TRIPS, *From OV to VO in Early Middle English*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam 2002 (in particular, section 7.4.2.1: *The metre of the Ormulum*); F.D. RASCHELLÀ, «La flessibilità del 'rigido' verso ormiano: regolarità e variazione metrica nell'*Ormulum*», in P. LENDINARA (a cura di), «... un tuo serto di fiori in man recando». *Scritti in onore di Maria Amalia D'Aronco*, vol. II, Forum – Editrice Universitaria Udinese, Udine 2008, pp. 347-357; M.J. DUFFELL, *A New History of English Metre*, Modern Humanities Association and Money Publishing, London 2008 (in particular, Chap. 4); R.D. FULK, *A History of Old English Meter*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2015 (in particular, Chap. 10: *Later Developments*).

¹⁹ DUFFELL, *A New History of English Metre*, p. 78.

²⁰ Cf. H. SWEET, *A History of English Sounds from the Earliest Period, with Full Word List*, 2nd ed., At the Clarendon Press, Oxford 1888, pp. 165-66. It has also been proposed that the doubled consonants should be considered as

script was to regulate pronunciation in subsequent oral delivery of the text²¹. An evaluation of this system in terms of a new linguistic theory will be given in the following section.

4. The language

Though various hypotheses have been put forth, the dialectal features of the *Orrmulum* are far from fixed²². The ambiguity is due to both paucity of information about the exact configuration of Middle English dialectal varieties, as well as some uncertainty about authorship and provenance which still remains albeit Malcom Parkes' widely accepted view of the Lincolnshire origin of the manuscript²³.

On the basis of the numerous Old Norse phrases²⁴, and the very few Old French influences²⁵, it seems undeniable that the Early Middle English dialectal variety of the *Orrmulum* can be taken as robustly "Danelaw". The *Orrmulum* would therefore show both the poor productivity of the Norman influence in the formerly Danish areas of England, as well as the assimilation of Old Norse features into Early Middle English.

real geminate sounds, independently of the preceding vowel (in the wake of M. TRAUTMANN, «Orms Doppelkonsonanten», *Anglia Anzeiger*, 7 (1885) 94-99; 208-210.

²¹ See K. SISAM, «MSS. Bodley 340 and 342: Aelfric's Catholic Homilies», *The Review of English Studies*, 9 (1933) 1-12; M. MARKUS, «The Spelling Peculiarities in the *Ormulum* from an Interdisciplinary Point of View: A Reappraisal», in U. BÖKER – M. MARKUS – R. SCHÖWERLING (eds.), *The Living Middle Ages: Studies in Mediaeval English Literature and Its Tradition: A Festschrift for Karl Heinz Göller*, Belser, Stuttgart 1989, pp. 69-86.

²² See F.D. RASCHELLÀ, «*Ormulum*: una singolare testimonianza letteraria e linguistica del primo inglese medio», in V. DOLCETTI CORAZZA – R. GENDRE (a cura di), *Lettura di Beowulf*, Edizioni dell'Orso, Alessandria 2005, pp. 3-27, at p. 15.

²³ Orm identifies himself as an Augustinian canon; yet, one shouldn't forget that judging from the numerous Augustinian monasteries at that time, more than one place can be compatible with the working retreat of the *Orrmulum*'s author, e.g. Elsham or Bourne in Lincolnshire (East Midlands), but also Carlisle in Cumberland (North-West area).

²⁴ Particularly doublets, where an Old Norse word is accompanied by an English one.

²⁵ J.A.W. BENNETT, *Middle English Literature*, ed. and completed by D. GRAY, Clarendon, Oxford 1986, p. 33.

More precisely, the hypothesis that the *Ormmulum* was written in the East Midland dialect of Middle English is coherent with the assumption that Ormm composed his work at the Abbey of Bourne in southern Lincolnshire²⁶. A further hypothesis according to which the text would be written in a North-Western dialect of Middle English is instead grounded on Ormm's provenance from either Cumberland or Lancashire²⁷.

The overall picture becomes even more complicated if one checks the linguistic data taken from the *Ormmulum* against a fairly recent (revolutionary) theory on the nature of Middle English. It is no news that, about a century after the Conquest, English began again to be written with a morphosyntax remarkably different from the previous period. The sharp grammatical discrepancies between Old and Middle English seem to be the motivation for the title of John McWhorter's 2004 article, *What happened to English?* The triggers for what seem to be abrupt changes have been so far accounted for within different theoretical frameworks, ranging from purely descriptive to more formal ones. The common ground of all these studies is the underlying idea of a continuity between the periods in which the history of English can be subdivided. However, in 2012 the linguist Jan Terje Faarlund, interviewed by the University of Oslo research magazine *Apollon*, gives notice to the wide public of the hypothesis that Modern English is not a descendant of Old English, but rather – on syntactic grounds – it should be grouped with North Germanic. According to this view Old English, i.e. West Germanic English, died out in England in the late Middle Ages and was replaced by a variety of Norse that underwent an “anglicization” process. This theory was subsequently formalized in a publication authored by Faarlund together with the English scholar Joseph E. Emonds which appeared at the end of 2014, *English: The Language of the Vikings*, published as the third volume in the series *Olomouc Modern Language Monographs* at Palacký University, Olomouc, Czech Republic.

What is most interesting for us here, is that the authors consider the *Ormmulum* as (probably) the first book in that form of Anglicized Norse

²⁶ See above, section 2. As already said, this claim was strongly made by M. Parkes on palaeographic grounds, and then embraced by other scholars, among whom the latest editor of the *Ormmulum*, N.-L. Johannesson.

²⁷ See, for example, H. BRADLEY – J. WILSON, «Where was the *Ormmulum* written?», *The Athenæum*, 4099 (1906) 609; 4108 (1906) 73-74.

which they take to be at the basis of Middle English²⁸. Orrm's work, therefore, would be written in a language totally different from Old English, i.e. in a variety of Norse. The assumption is not surprising in itself: the claim that Middle English is in fact a creole was put forth by Charles-James N. Bailey and Karl Maroldt in 1977 (who considered it as deriving from admixture of Old English and Norman French) and Patricia Poussa in 1982 (who argued for combination of Old English and Old Norse rather than French)²⁹. Emonds and Faarlund are however the first to propose that Middle English descended directly from Old Norse, and that Old English simply died out (with the exception of some lexical borrowings). They are also the first to consider the *Orrmulum* as written in Norse – albeit anglicized.

In the light of this view, the two scholars speculate that the unorthodox spelling system in the 12th-century *Orrmulum* is an invention of the Scandinavian author Orrm who «felt that he was inventing *ab initio* a writing system for the previously unwritten Anglicized Norse, and so he conscientiously introduced (enduring) graphic mechanisms such as double consonants after short vowels.³⁰» This assumption is no further developed, and no mention is made of the fact that the orthography of the *Orrmulum* remains a *unicum* in the history of English.

Of the (syntactic) evidence considered by Emonds and Faarlund to support their hypothesis, two features in particular will be discussed in this section, namely those which in their book are exemplified specifically through the *Orrmulum*: the complementizer *þat* (*Orrm. þatt*), and the periphrastic future construction with *shall*.

²⁸ This claim is made on various occasions throughout the book, e.g. pp. 28, 63, 79, 111.

²⁹ Ch.-J. N. BAILEY – K. MAROLDT, «The French lineage of English», in J.M. MEISEL (éd.), *Langues en contact – Pidgins – Creoles*, Narr, Tübingen 1977, pp. 21-53. P. POUSSA, «The Evolution of Early Standard English: The Creolization Hypothesis», *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia*, 14 (1982), 69-85. See also M. GÖRLACH, «Middle English – a creole?», in D. KASTOVSKY – A. SZWEDEK (eds.), *Linguistics Across Historical and Geographical Boundaries*, de Gruyter Mouton, Berlin 1986, pp. 329-344.

³⁰ J.E. EMONDS – J.T. FAARLUND, *English: The Language of the Vikings*, Palacký University, Olomouc 2014, p. 63.

4.1. Early Middle English *þat(t)* vs *þe*

In typical relative clauses, the most common complementizer in Old English was *þe* (although other possibilities were not excluded)³¹; similarly, Norse used a different but still invariant complementizer *er*, later *sem*. In Early Middle English, Old English *þe* gradually disappeared, and was replaced by *þat* from approximately the 13th century. Since the new invariant *þat* spread from North to South, Emonds and Faarlund look upon this feature as though the Norse *er* first relexified as the Anglicized Norse *þat*, which then spread southwards³².

For the sake of brevity, I shall here omit to discuss the issue that Old English had in fact a more complex relative clause system; I shall only mention that Emonds and Faarlund's point that Old Norse, like Middle English, does not have any type of casemarked relativizers, but rather only invariant complementizers disregards that Old Norse did have a determiner which could be endowed with a relative meaning in conjunction with the invariant form *er*. An example given in a previous publication by Faarlund himself is the following³³:

- (1) í borginni var hofðingi sá, er Óðinn var kallaðr (Ynglingasaga, Chap. 2)
'in the castle was a chieftain who (lit. who that) was called Odin'

Another, even clearer, example is reported below:

- (2) Svá er friðr kvenna, þeira er flátt hyggja (Hávamál 90.1)
'this is the love of women, who (lit. those.G that) are deceitful in spirit'

In the same study, Faarlund claims that this is a common construction³⁴. In such clauses, the demonstrative bears the case of the antecedent according

³¹ B.M.H. STRANG, *A history of English*, Methuen, London 1970, p. 270; examples of gaps in positions of all four Old English cases are provided by van Kemenade (A. VAN KEMENADE, *Syntactic Case and Morphological Case in the History of English*, Foris, Dordrecht 1987, in particular section 5.1.3) and Mitchell (B. MITCHELL, *Old English Syntax*, 2 vols., Clarendon, Oxford 1985). In addition, relative clauses in Old English could be constructed with the demonstrative *se* as the relative pronoun, or with a combination of the demonstrative and the complementizer: *se þe* (a syntactic phenomenon known as the Doubly-Filled-Comp Filter (DFCF)).

³² EMONDS – FAARLUND, *English: The Language*, p. 111.

³³ J.T. FAARLUND, *The Syntax of Old Norse*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2004, p. 259.

³⁴ Ivi, p. 264.

to the well known phenomenon of *attractio relativi* (case attraction)³⁵, but there are exceptions where the demonstrative has the case of the relativized element. Terje Wagener has recently noted that the relative *sá* can form an extraposed syntactic unit with the relative clause, as in (3), where *maðr* represents the antecedent:³⁶

(3) hinn fyrsti *maðr* var skapaðr or ó-saugaðre iorðu *sa er* glataðe í dauða ser siolfum ok ollu kyni sinu.

(*Old Norwegian Homily Book*, AM 619 4to)

‘The first man was made from clean soil, he who caused death upon himself and all his kind.’

In such contexts, Old Norse *sá er* behaves very similarly to Old English *se þe*. What has been discussed so far makes the hypothesis of the relexification of Middle English *þat* on the basis of Old Norse *er* (later *sem*) less probable, and rather leads to think in terms of parallel developments starting from a similar – though not completely identical – situation.

Another point made by Emonds and Faarlund to support their view is that Middle English *þat* spread from North towards the Southern territories, where *þe* persisted longer. On p. 111 of their book, they agree with the claim by Olga Fischer – among other scholars – that «*þe* is more frequent than *þat* in south and southeast midland texts in the 12th century, while in the northeast midland texts (e.g., in the *Ormulum*) *þat* is the usual form».

This observation is undeniably true, albeit only descriptive. I made a lexical query in the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse*, item: *Ormulum*, which resulted into 3,687 occurrences of *þatt* vs 1,659 occurrences of *þe*. The elicited data is raw; yet, it is evident that the two forms are not in competition, since *þe* is normally used as a definite article (see 4a), rather than as a relativizer/complementizer (see 4b and 4c).

³⁵ For a survey on «case attraction» in medieval Germanic languages, see M. BUZZONI, «L'adozione di modelli formali nella linguistica germanica: prospettive ecdotiche ed ermeneutiche», in C. HÄNDL – C. BENATI (a cura di), *La linguistica germanica oggi: problemi e prospettive*, ECIG, Genova 2008, pp. 69-89, in particular pp. 75-85.

³⁶ T. WAGENER, *The History of Norwegian Relative Clauses*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oslo 2013, p. 135.

- (4) a. *Patt sinndenn o þe messeþoc / Inn all þe 3er att messe. / & a33 affterr þe Goddspell stannt / Patt tatt te Goddspell meneþþ, / Patt mann birrþ spellenn to þe follc /* (Dedication 31-35)
 b. *Patt broþerr þatt tiss Ennglissh writt* (Dedication 331)
 c. *All mannkinn, fra þatt Adam wass /* (Introduction 1)

Also in light of this, no strong evidence support the claim of a Norse origin of *patt*, which on the contrary probably descended directly from Old English, where it already played the role of a relativizer in appropriate contexts as the neuter nominative and accusative form of the demonstrative:

- (5) *oppæt hie comon on Eastseaxna lond easteward, on an igland þæt is ute on þære sæ, þæt is Meresig haten*
 (The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, MS A, s.a. 894)
 ‘until they came to the eastern part of East Saxony, to an island that is out in the sea, that is called Meresig’

Old English also features clauses with a double *þæt* as in (6), where the second *þæt* is clearly a relativizer.

- (6) *ne gode gelæstan þæt þæt we scoldan.*
 ‘nor to grant to God that which (= what) we should’
 (Wulfstan, *Secundum Lucam*, MS Hatton 133)

Since there is no evident discontinuity from the previous period, it could be claimed that the system changed as a result of bleaching (and eventually disappearance) of the morphological case on the noun, which caused the *se*-paradigm to be dismantled³⁷. Consequently, the *se*, as well as the *se þe* relatives became more and more unproductive. Once the definite article *þe* had arisen, the relativizing function was taken up by the most distinct form, i.e. *þat* (*Orrm. þatt*).

As a matter of fact, a closer scrutiny of the data taken from *Orrmulum* within the history of the English language seems to confirm that the change under inspection is an internal feature of English, rather than a phenomenon triggered by Old Norse.

³⁷ It is no surprise that these changes were quicker and more intense in the Northern territories, where interference with other peoples was stronger.

4.2. *The periphrastic future*

In Middle English, the present tense is still regularly used to refer to the future, although periphrastic constructions are becoming more numerous starting with early Middle English texts³⁸. Emonds and Faarlund maintain that «one of Fischer's future periphrastics is from the 12th-century *Ormulum*»³⁹. I shall report the example below for the sake of clarity:

- (7) And whase wilenn *shall* þiss boc eftt oþerr siþe writtenn, (*Orrm.* 48–49)
 'And whoever shall wish to copy this book at some other time,'

The two scholars further notice that by the 13th century, in Danish, *skulu* seems to have become the most common way to express future tense, and since at just this time the use of *shall* in English increases remarkably, the obvious conclusion within their general hypothesis is that we are in front of a Scandinavian syntactic feature borrowed by Middle English from Old Norse.

The occurrences of *shall* in the *Ormulum* amount to a total of 241, some of which endowed with a slightly more deontic meaning; however, the wide majority of them refers to future events. There are two major objections to the assumption of a Norse origin of the periphrastic *shall*, and they are, so-to-say, interwoven. Firstly, anticipatory uses of *shall* in contexts expressing futurity are detectable also in Old English, as shown in (8):

- (8) OE forðæm ge *sculon* [...] wepan
 Lat. quoniam flebitis
 'because you will weep'
 (from QUIRK – WRENN, *An Old English Grammar*, p. 78)

Randolph Quirk and C.L. Wrenn comment on these forms as follows: «although *willan* and *sculan* with the infinitive usually imply volition or obligation respectively, these constructions are found occasionally translating Latin futures»⁴⁰. The speakers of Old English were thus already on the way to use *shall* as future marker.

³⁸ O. FISCHER, «Syntax», in N. BLAKE (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the English Language*, vol. 2: 1066–1466, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1992, pp. 207–408, at p. 241.

³⁹ EMONDS – FAARLUND, *English: The Language*, p. 79.

⁴⁰ R. QUIRK – C.L. WRENN, *An Old English Grammar*, Methuen, London – New York 1957, at p. 78.

The second point that should be raised is more general, in that a development of modal verbs such as *shall* and *will* into future tense markers is a natural kind of grammaticalization, which might have taken place independently in Old English, as it in fact did not only in Norse, but also in other sister languages like German⁴¹.

5. Conclusions

Returning to the question posed in the title, namely whether the *Ormmulum* can really be considered the first example of Anglicized Norse as surmised by Emonds and Faarlund, I would favour a negative answer. On the one hand, the textual evidence is too scanty to allow for such a conclusion. On the other hand, the data collected seem to point to an English origin of the syntax of the *Ormmulum*, which is in continuity with the previous stages of the language, as the scrutiny of the two case studies in 4.1 and 4.2 has shown. A question which still remains open is the apparent quickness with which relatively new oppositions – like the one between the relativizer *þatt* and the definite article *þe* – became fully grammaticalized.

Even more surprising from the perspective of the Anglicized Norse hypothesis is the fact that, in a text that should be an early embodiment of this variety, no instance of a crucial, distinctive syntactic feature of medieval Nordic languages – i.e. the postponed definite article – is present; and neither are the typically Norse middle voice verbal endings.

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⁴¹ Though Emonds and Faarlund are perfectly aware of this possibility, they conclude by stating that «compounded with the other Norse characteristics of Middle English described in this (and the following) chapters, our hypothesis of Norse as the ancestor of Middle and Modern English is a simpler and more natural account» (EMONDS – FAARLUND, *English: The Language*, p. 81). Their argument however risks being circular.

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