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SYNONYMS FOR 'MAN, WARRIOR' IN LAƷAMON'S BRUT AND OLD ENGLISH ALLITERATIVE POETRY

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Laȝamon's *Brut* is well-known for being a transitional stage between Old English and Middle English alliterative poetry. On the one hand, it preserves some traces of the Old English poetic tradition, such as, for instance, certain poetic words. On the other hand, even those traces that seem to be similar to Old English undergo significant, though subtle, changes. To trace these changes, this paper explores Middle English predominantly poetic lexemes for 'man, warrior' in the Caligula manuscript of the *Brut*, namely, Middle English simplexes *hæleð*, *kempe*, *scalk*, *seg*, *rink*, as well as their Old English counterparts *hæleð*, *cempa*, *scealc*, *secg*, *rinc* in the verse section of the DOE Corpus.

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Introduction

The origins of Early Middle English alliterative poetry are still under debate. One of the most puzzling questions is the relation of the works "composed in the loose alliterative style" (Turville-Petre 11), such as *The Departing Soul's Address to the Body* or *The First Worcester Fragment*, to Old English tradition. While earlier researchers believed in a continuum of oral alliterative verse surviving "through nine generations, appearing in writing very rarely, and then usually in a corrupt form" (Chambers lxvii), recent scholarship focuses more on written transmission (for instance, see Pearsall or Frankis), though substantial disagreement still exists on whether early Middle English alliterative verse was "certainly a descendant of Anglo-Saxon *prose* usage [emphasis mine here and elsewhere (*M. V.*)]" (Hanna 492), or "directly related to Old English and to Middle English *alliterative meter*, and distinct from Ælfric of Eynsham's 'rhythmical alliteration' [that is, prose usage (*M. V.*)]" (Weiskott 71-2).

In particular, Laȝamon's *Brut* – a poem of over 16000 long lines, written around the beginning of the 13ᵗʰ century and preserved in two copies (British Library MSS Cotton Caligula A.ix and Cotton Otho C.xiii) dated to the second half of the same century – is well-known for being a transitional stage between Old English and Middle English alliterative poetry (the attitude is embodied in Weiskott's chapter 3 titled "Lawman, the last Old English poet and the first Middle English poet"). Laȝamon's diction has earned a number of especially symptomatic comments, which started with Sir Frederic Madden stating in his preface to the first edition of the poem: "It is a remarkable circumstance, that we find preserved in many passages of Laȝamon's poem the spirit and style of the earlier Anglo-Saxon writers… Very many phrases are purely Anglo-Saxon, and with slight change, might well have been used in Cædmon or Ælfric" (xxiii). Henry Cecil Wyld goes as far as to claim that "Laȝamon's language is not merely the ancient speech of Englishmen, almost free… from foreign elements, *it is the language of their old poetry*… Laȝamon is thus in the true line of succession to the old poets of his land" (2). On the other hand, as Dorothy Everett notes, "while all authorities are agreed on the specifically 'English' atmosphere of the work, it is now felt that too close connections have been made between it and Old English poetry" (37); thus, even those traces in the *Brut* that seem to be similar to Old English, may undergo significant, though subtle, changes.

It is generally believed that the poem preserves some traits of the Old English poetic tradition, such as, for instance, individual words and collocations. A recent study by Christine Elsweiler, which is dedicated to a thorough examination of the lexical fields 'hero', 'warrior,'

and 'knight' in Laȝamon's poem, illustrates the case in point. In her study, Elsweiler focuses on three main features

> of Old English literature that are still prevalent in Laȝamon's chronicle, albeit to a lesser extent than in the representatives of Anglo-Saxon poetry. These features contribute to the Anglo-Saxon character in particular of MS Cotton Caligula. Firstly, the poem has a high percentage of *Anglo-Saxon poetic lexemes*. Secondly, it has a comparatively high percentage of *nominal compounds*, many of which are typical of Old English poetry. Thirdly, the poem still features a widespread use of *alliteration – the verse form of Germanic poetry*. (16)

According to her findings, the *Brut* (at least, in its Caligula version) is "firmly rooted in the Anglo-Saxon tradition as regards his linguistic and poetic means" (371). However, while one cannot argue with the above-mentioned facts (the preservation of certain lexemes, nominal compounds, and alliteration), Elsweiler's overall interpretation leaves much to be desired: all these traits *per se* do not necessarily point to any direct continuity or connection to Old English tradition[3]. Therefore, in my research, I turn to Middle English predominantly poetic lexemes for 'man, warrior' in the Caligula *Brut* (namely, Middle English simplexes *hæleð*, *kempe*, *scalk*, *seg*, *rink*, corresponding to Old English *hæleð*, *cempa*, *scealc*, *secg*[4], *rinc*), but start with a different question: what is Old English alliterative verse as "the verse form of Germanic poetry" and how do individual lexemes fit in its larger frame? Only after this preliminary stage my investigation will focus on how these synonyms function in Laȝamon's *Brut*.

Synonyms for 'man, warrior' in Old English alliterative poetry

The main theoretical premise for my research into Old English synonyms, which distinguishes it from Elsweiler's study, is that Old English poetry is not merely characterized by the use of alliteration; first and foremost, it is traditional formulaic[5] poetry (Shippey 89-98). Old English alliterative meter grew up together with its diction ("a learnt technique amounting almost to a separate poetic language" (Shippey 14)); it has long been recognized that the two, as opposed to modern poetry, are inseparable ("[m]odern poets follow rules; old poets recreated internalized patterns" (Liberman 93)).

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[3] To add a more modern example, J.R.R. Tolkien's use of Old English poetic synonym *beorn* as a personal name *Beorn* in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, though meaningful and motivated, is a sign of his personal philological interests only.
[4] Here and elsewhere the spelling conventions for Old English and the short titles of Old English works follow those used in *The Dictionary of Old English* (DOE) and the *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus* (DOE Corpus).
[5] Which implies "a freedom to vary words according to particular contexts under fixed metrical conditions" (Fakundiny 133).

The study of synonyms allows one to glimpse how Old English verse "works", that is, how its verbal content is organized according to rhythmical and semantic patterns. The synonyms that Old English poets had at their disposal are large groups of words both of poetic and non-poetic origin for commonly occurring most important concepts and objects of the heroic world (such as 'man, warrior', 'sword', 'shield', 'horse', 'sea', 'earth', 'battle' etc.[6]). There are no referential differences between these words in verse, as they represent the range of choices available to a skilled poet:

> They are important not singly, but through their involvement in shared patterns… Words commonly used become imprecise; but that imprecision is the result of tension between occurrence on a particular occasion and on all other, half-remembered occasions, a tension which leads to considerable force and resonance. Words gain a traditional, emotional aura for the poet to exploit. (Shippey 100)

However, the choice between different synonyms is not automatic, as the lexemes are organized by alliterative verse itself. When used in verse, both poetic and non-poetic words become part and parcel of a complex system of ranks, which, according to Tom Shippey, are "connected with the growth of formulaic technique and the need for synonyms to fit different places in the line" (103). That means that the words in this system are not interchangeable, but have their metrical preferences: "if the *Beowulf*-poet wanted to introduce the idea 'lord' towards the end of a line, or in any non-alliterating position, he decided, or found himself condemned, to use *cyning* or *dryhten* as a rule, *frea* much more rarely, but *hlaford* never" (Shippey 102-3)[7]. This idea was further developed by Olga Smirnitskaya, who defined metrical ranks as "the word's permanent accentual characteristics which… depend on the context in a minimal way" (Smirnitskaya 115 transl. by Liberman 97). These ranks, in other words, metrical inclinations of the synonyms, the predictable positions of the words within a long line, "show a marked preference for various syntactic (rhythmical) and semantic types of formulas" (Smirnitskaya 244 transl. by Liberman 102; see also Solopova and Lee 256-7). In the subsequent analysis I follow Smirnitskaya's approach to Old English poetic synonyms and metrical ranks, as it allows for a multifaceted examination of both a synonym's alliterative patterns and its preferred metrical position(s) or lack of one(s).

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[6] For a list, see Cronan (156-8).

[7] Cf. a similar claim made by Mark Griffith: "Although certain poetic words are free to appear in all the alliterating positions, others are tied to specific positions in the alliterative line, and this situation probably came about because Old English poets felt that a particular word properly belonged to a particular position in the line because it commonly appeared in formulae which placed it in such a set position" (*Poetic Language* 175).

In order to trace these preferences, I have examined all the occurrences of the words *hæleð*, *cempa*, *scealc*, *secg*, *rinc*, their inflected forms and spelling variants (excluding homonyms) from the verse section of the DOE Corpus. I have also checked the prose and gloss sections to see whether the synonyms were used exclusively in poetry. Three occurrences out of 67 for *secg* and one out of 29 for *scealc*, the scansion of which is problematic (either because the text is damaged, or incomplete, or because it deviates from recognized structural norms, like the following line: Him þa **secg** hraðe / gewat siðian (GenA,B 2018), with no alliteration whatsoever) are not included in the table. The rest of the contexts did not pose any problems for scansion and analysis (see Table 1).

Table 1. Synonyms for 'man, warrior' in Old English alliterative poetry

	1st half-line				2nd half-line		No. of occurrences
Lifts	**1**		**2**		**3**	**4**	
	A	**nA**	**A**	**nA**	**A**	**nA**	
hæleð	33%	-	9%	5%	47%	6%	249
cempa	13%	-	13%	17%	11%	46%	46
scealc	7%	-	32%	22%	25%	14%	28
secg	42%	-	17%	-	38%	3%	64
rinc	23.6%	-	20%	3.6%	41.8%	11%	55

The data indicate that *cempa* is the only lexeme which frequently occurs in non-alliterating positions in the second and final lifts (such examples constitute almost two thirds, or 63%, of the total), gravitating towards the latter (46%). In fact, non-alliterating preferences of this synonym become quite prominent if certain poems are examined independently (for instance, in *Beowulf* it alliterates only once (10%) out of 10 occurrences).This can be easily explained by the fact that this synonym is colloquial. *Cempa* is widespread in Old English texts: it is attested in 46 verse contexts, while the total is ca. 400 occurrences (DOE), including a heavy presence in glosses where it is applied to a number of Latin terms (*agonista*, *athleta*, *bellator*, *gladiator*, *miles* etc.; see DOE). However, *cempa* is not wholly confined to non-alliterating positions, as its use in the alliterating positions (accounting for 37% of the total) clearly indicates[8].

The non-alliterating preferences of *cempa* manifest its formulaic constraints, as in the majority of all the occurrences (85%) this synonym is used as the head noun with a descriptive

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[8] Further patterns seem to emerge here: for instance, in five occurrences (11%), *cempa* is found in the 3rd position (key alliteration). However, all these contexts come from two poems – *Guthlac A* (lines 180, 438, 580) and *Juliana* (lines 290, 395) – preserved in one single manuscript, the Exeter Book.

modifier – adjectival epithet[9] (44%) or genitive (41%). While occasionally both the synonym and its modifier alliterate, creating an *aa/ax* pattern: **c**yninges **cempan**, / **c**ele wið hæto (Met 20.73), typically it is the modifier that alliterates, the synonym thus being sidelined functionally and semantically (61% of the total occurrences): Swa **h**leoðrode / **h**alig **cempa** (And 461). These are the internalized patterns that lie behind the non-alliterating inclinations of *cempa*.

As far as the genitive noun phrases are concerned, two further subtypes may be singled out:

a. N$_{\text{Gen. pl.}}$ + *cempa*, used with ethnonyms (the Geats and the Franks) exclusively in *Beowulf*:

under gynne grund, / <u>Geata</u> **cempa** (Beo 1551);
to handbonan, / <u>Huga</u> **cempan** (Beo 2502).

b. N$_{\text{Gen. sg.}}$ + *cempa*, which is a much more common type found in a wide range of poems (*Andreas*, *Guthlac*, *Juliana*, *Phoenix* etc.) excluding *Beowulf*. Various synonyms of 'God' act as N$_{\text{Gen. sg.}}$ in such occurrences:

dragan domeadig / <u>dryhtnes</u> **cempa** (GuthA,B 727);
æt þam <u>godes</u> **cempan** / gearwe fundon (GuthA,B 889);
<u>Cristes</u> **cempa**, / carcerne neh (And 991);
gemete modigne / <u>metodes</u> **cempan** (Jul 383).

This subtype is further supported by similar cases in prose, such as, for instance, the following examples from homilies:

Ðisum <u>godes</u> **cempan** geþwærlæcð þæt twelffealde getel cristes apostola... (ÆCHom I, 36 488.55);
... and <u>drihtnes</u> **cempan** beoð wuldriende and deofla beoð hreowsiende... (HomS 12 26).

Other synonyms under examination are predominantly poetic words, that is, lexemes almost always found in verse (*rinc* occurs 7 times in glosses, *scealc* and *hæleð* are used twice and once[10] in prose respectively (DOE Corpus)). Of these poetic synonyms, *scealc* clearly prefers the 2$^{\text{nd}}$ and 3$^{\text{rd}}$ lifts (54% and 25% of all the occurrences). Its distribution in alliteration is reverse to that of *cempa*: *scealc* is found in alliterating positions in roughly two thirds of all the

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[9] Quantifiers are rare and, as non-epithets, not included in my count.
[10] As pointed by the DOE, in its only non-poetic instance, *hæleð* is used as an epithet for St. Michael in a highly alliterative context: ðis is se halga heahengel, Sanctus Michael se is **hæleda** healdend and dryhtne fultummendum (LS 24 (MichaelTristr) 29).

occurrences (64%). However, though belonging to the poetic stock, it shows few apparent regularities, as it is rarely found with descriptive modifiers (14% of all the occurrences) and has no easily identifiable formulaic alliterative patterns. Only the most general observations about the syntactic preferences of *scealc* can be made; namely, it is often the subject of a clause or, when used in the 2nd position, part of various prepositional phrases. Its metrical rank, therefore, is relatively low (only slightly higher than that of *cempa* due to its higher alliteration rate); still, low-rank synonyms are as important for formulaic verse as high-rank ones. *Cempa* is frequently ousted from alliteration, but serves as the head noun for various constructions with descriptive modifiers. *Scealc*, on the other hand, alliterates more often than not and is treated by Old English poets as a flexible and neutral synonym included in the lines which leave no place for prolonged descriptions:

> **Scealcas** wæron scearpe, / scyl wæs hearpe (Rim 27);
> scipum under **scealcum**, / þonne sceor cymeð (And 512);
> scuccum ond scinnum. / Nu **scealc** hafað (Beo 939);
> bliðemode, / burnon **scealcas** (Dan 252).

The lexemes *rinc*, *hæleð*, and *secg*, are found in non-alliterating positions in 14.6%, 11%, and 3% of all the occurrences, which points to their being marked for predominant use in alliterating positions (85.4%, 89%, and 97% of the total occurrences respectively). They also have clear metrical preferences: *rinc* and *hæleð* gravitate towards the 3rd position (41.8% and 47%, though the latter is also frequently found in the 1st position – 33%), while *secg* prefers the 1st (42%) and the 3rd (38%) positions. This predilection towards key alliteration on the 3rd lift (head-stave) clearly shows that these synonyms are of a higher metrical rank than those examined previously.

Several formulaic patterns of different kinds are easily identifiable in the corpus material. On the one hand, there are flexible patterns regularly occupying one half-line with a varying alliterating element and limited variation of the non-alliterating element, such as <'man, warrior'Gen. pl. + *hwilc*> (cf. Acker 39 ff.), operating in the second half-line and thus placing the synonym in the 3rd position marked by key alliteration, for instance:

> Huru, ðæs behofað / **hæleða** æghwylc (Soul I 1);
> hwit ond hiwbeorht / **hæleða** nathwylc (Ele 73);
> reced selesta, / **rinca** gehwylcum (Beo 412);
> þæt is riht gebede / **rinca** gewylce (Instr 94).

Another metrical-syntactic pattern which can be observed for *hæleð* is the use of the plural genitive in various poetic denominations of God ("the ruler of men", "the creator of men") and people ("the children of men", "the kin of men, mankind"):

Ic þe gehate, / **hæleða** waldend (GenA,B 2139);

Him of \<helman\> oncwæð / **hæleða** scyppend (And 396);

heofona heahcyning, / **hæleða** bearnum (Dan 625);

ahafen healice / ofer **hæleða** bearn (PPs 107.4);

þone heahestan / **hæleða** cynnes (PPs 91.1).

On the other hand, groups of 'collocations', that is, alliterative preferences of synonyms – "a force which in many lines bound together… words… not just because they alliterated conveniently, but because, we must assume, they were felt to have a real connection" (Shippey 103) – emerge in the Old English poetic corpus. Some of them are predictable, while others are highly associative. Several examples of such patterns will suffice:

a. *secg – sorh(*)* 'sorrow, grief, trouble':

Sæt **secg** monig / sorgum gebunden (Deor 24);

ond þe sorgleasra, / **secga** aldor (El 97);

sorhleas swefan / mid þinra **secga** gedryht (Beo 1672).

b. *rinc – riht(*)* 'right; just' – *ræd(*)* 'advice, counsel' – *reced* 'building, hall' – *ræst(*)* 'rest' – *rof* 'valiant, strong':

rofe **rincas**; / mid swilcum mæg man ræd geþencean (GenA,B 286);

Geseah he in recede / **rinca** manige (Beo 728);

rincas æt þære rode, / secgað þonne ryhta fela (JDay I 105);

rincas rædfæste; / cuþon ryht sprecan (OrW 13);

Þæt wæs rihtwis **rinc**, / næs mid Romwarum (Met 1.49);

[rad] byþ on recyde / **rinca** gehwylcum (MRune 13);

rinc on ræste, / ræhte ongean (Beo 747);

rofe **rincas**, / þonne rond ond hand (And 9);

Rincas mine, / restað incit (GenA,B 2881).

All in all, the formulaic, syntactic, and semantic patterns of Old English synonyms for 'man, warrior', which can be observed through careful examination of their typical metrical and alliterative preferences, reveal the underlying complex system of metrical-grammatical norms of

syntax and stress reflecting the traditional formulas and associative emotional values of epic poetry, "the unalterable *valeurs* of words in traditional poetical language" (Smirnitskaya 126 transl. by Liberman 97).

Synonyms for 'man, warrior' in Laȝamon's *Brut*

Tom Shippey, Olga Smirnitskaya, and Mark Griffith, albeit not bridging the gap between Old English and Middle English poetry in their own research works, agree that Old English poetic tradition gradually came into decline, which started to manifest itself around the year 1000. Though both the external (social – the Norman Conquest) and the internal (linguistic – the reduction of inflectional endings and the subsequent growth of functional words in discourse) explanations have frequently been suggested, these scholars concur that it were the profound changes in the concepts of literacy, memorization, and poetic transmission that led to such dramatic and far-reaching consequences, as the breakdown of traditional poetry. In the words of Tom Shippey, a traditional Old English poet

> followed the patterns of his verse – which do genuinely exist – out of a combination of instinct and experience, a guiding force with many advantages. But if anything happened to upset that perfect balance of imitation and re-creation, there could in the nature of things be no external check, no appeal to rules and reasons. Like a boy riding a bicycle, once the traditional poet or singer began to think about what he was doing, he was liable to fall off. (176)

In his subsequent analysis, Shippey focuses mostly on the disintegration of the rhythm and meter in a number of late Old English poetic texts (177-90). However, as formulaic language, with synonyms being its part and parcel, and alliterative meter were two sides of the same coin, it would only be logical to assume that the patterns, based on inherited models and formulas and evident in Old English poetry, disappear as well. To this I may add an important, though brief, observation made by Mark Griffith who notices that the ranks of synonyms change over time: as formulaic language disappears, "the correlation of poetic nouns and alliterative positions… strengthens" (13). Bearing all these observations in mind, I turn to Laȝamon's oeuvre.

While the scansion of the Old English poetic corpus was in large part unproblematic, it becomes less so when one has to deal with the *Brut*, "a text that is *basically* strong stress but sometimes regularly alternating, or apparently so; *basically* alliterative (irregularly alliterative),

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but sometimes rhyming; *basically* in lines of four stresses, but sometimes possibly in lines of five, six, or seven stresses…" (Cable 58; cf. Le Saux 192-4). The quotation indicates, however, that despite these difficulties, there still exist in the *Brut* certain *basic* tendencies towards regularity. One generally acknowledged consistency is the half-line structure of Laȝamon's verse, which is supported by punctuation[11] and allows for a consistent scansion suitable for the needs of my research. In the analysis that follows, I focus on the distribution of the synonyms in the long line, using – for the sake of my research only – the term "lifts." The 1st and 4th "lifts" designate all the occurrences of the given lexeme in the first and last stressed positions within the long line respectively, while the 2nd and 3rd "lifts" refer to the uses in the stressed positions immediately before and after the caesura (see Table 2).

Table 2. Synonyms for 'man, warrior' in Laȝamon's **Brut**

"Lifts"	1st half-line				2nd half-line				No. of occurrences
	1		2		3		4		
	A	nA	A	nA	A	nA	A	nA	
hæleð	7.7%	-	7.7%	-	77%	-	7.7%	-	13[12]
kempe	-	1.6%	23.3%	6.6%	10%	3.3%	26.6%	28.3%	60[13]
scalk	-	4.5%	18%	-	73%	-	4.5%		22
seg	12.5%	-	37.5%	-	50%	-	-	-	8
rink	-	-	-	-	(100%)	-	-	-	1

Middle English *kempe*, as well as Old English *cempa*, still gravitates towards the 4th position (54.9% in the *Brut* and 46% in Old English verse). However, an important deviation may still be observed: whereas Old English *cempa*, when used in the 4th position, is weak (it does not alliterate and usually gives way to its alliterating descriptive modifier), *kempe* is often strong in the similar position in the *Brut* – it may be emphasized by alliteration (a), rhyme (b), or both (c):

    a. þu art heðene **k**ing; we heðene **kempen**[14] (14492);

    b. Sone heom after wend**en**; iwepnede **kempen** (13226)[15];

    c. Forð þa **cn**ihtes wend**en**; godliche **kempen** (13113).

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[11] "In Caligula *punctus* and *punctus elevatus* generally mark the end of the second and first half-line respectively" (Yakovlev 274; cf. Kooper 420).

[12] My totals for *hæleð*, *kempe*, and *scalk* are slightly higher than those given in Elsweiler's study (25, 32, 54).

[13] One context for *kempe* is not included: Whar beo ȝe mine **kempen** (4125), as the line is incomplete.

[14] All quotations from the *Brut* are from George Leslie Brook and Roy Francis Leslie's edition.

[15] Rhyme is so emphatic that it can even modify the grammar of *kempe*, which originally belonged to the weak declension and had -*n* in the plural, cf.: him-seolf he nom his eorl**es**; & his aðele **kempes** (8168).

Furthermore, whereas Old English *cempa* generally avoids alliteration (63% of its occurrences are non-alliterating), its Middle English counterpart alliterates in 60.2% of the total, even in the 4th lift, which is impossible in traditional Old English poetry. Later on, *kempe* becomes quite rare, is found predominantly in alliterative poetry (MED), and almost always alliterates. Thus, the alliterative preferences of this synonym are inverted in Middle English, and a colloquial Old English lexeme becomes elevated, acquiring poetic resonance.

One more deviation from Old English patterns is the complete absence of the genitive noun phrases, which constitute 41% of the older occurrences. Overall, *kempe* is used with descriptive modifiers (45%) almost twice as rarely as in Old English (85%). However, as *kempe* now actively participates in alliteration, it becomes part of an established alliterative cliché[16] *kemp* – cniht** 'knight':

Wet speke ȝe <u>cnihtes</u>; wet speke ȝe **kempen** (459);

Whær beo ȝe mine <u>cnihtes</u>; whar beo ȝe mine **kempen** (2223);

for nauede Belin nan <u>cnihte</u>; þet he næs þere god **kimppe** (2823);

Ne wurðe nan <u>cniht</u> swa wod; ne **kempe** swa wilde (4286)

<div align="center">etc.</div>

Other synonyms in Laȝamon's *Brut* occur less often. *Rink*, for instance, is found once only, which makes it difficult to analyze. Yet, the context is worth taking a closer look:

redde blod scede; **rinkas** <u>feollen</u> (2587).

While not belonging to the traditional set of formulaic preferences attested for *rink* in Old English poetry, the phrase <'man, warrior'$_{Nom.\ pl.}$ + *feollen*> is another cliché, which frequently occurs in the *Brut* with more common lexemes:

& heo to-gadere comen; **kempen** þer <u>feollen</u>. (1082);

helmes gunnen gullen; **cnihtes** þer <u>feollen</u>. (8188);

to-somne heo leopen; **leoden** þer <u>feollen</u>. (9324);

<u>feollen</u> ærm **kempes**; æmteden sadeles. (15177).

It is also noteworthy that the *Brut* preserves the first and only recorded attestation of this lexeme in early Middle English. This synonym reappears in fourteenth-century alliterative poems, but it is commonly spelt as *renk*, which points to the influence of the Norse *rekkr* (< **renk-*) in northern dialects (Turville-Petre 79; MED). Laȝamon, on the other hand, writing in

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[16] See Turville-Petre (83-92) on the difference between Old and Middle English collocations.

the western dialect of Worcestershire, preserves the obsolete Old English form in this isolated and highly stereotypical context.

Hæleð, scalk, and *seg* alliterate in 100%, 95.5% and 100% of all the contexts in the *Brut*; furthermore, Laȝamon clearly prefers to use *hæleð* and *scalk* in the 3rd position (77% and 73%), as the first stressed word after the caesura, while in Old English poetry these synonyms are more flexible and occur in the 3rd position in 47% and 25% of all the occurrences. The growing tendency towards being marked by alliteration is especially telling in the case of *scalk*, as in Old English poetry it only gravitates towards alliterative use in 64% of the total. Thus, *scalk*, as well as *kempe*, but more prominently so, becomes elevated for the Middle English poet. Furthermore, while there are no clearly identifiable collocations for *scealc* in Old English, in the *Brut* it is used in the above-mentioned cliché <'man, warrior'$_{Nom. pl.}$ + *feollen*> in 32% of all the contexts (7 times):

> heo scuten in; heo scuten ut. **scalkes** þer <u>feollen</u> (6275);
>
> helmes þer scenden; **scalkes** <u>feollen</u> (9757);
>
> **scalkes** <u>auælled</u>; fifti þusende (11786);
>
> sceldes scenen; **scalkes** <u>fallen</u> (13380)

<p align="center">etc.</p>

The Old English metrical-syntactic pattern which requires a noun modified by the preceding plural genitive of *hæleð* almost disappears in the early Middle English poem. The genitive form is attested twice: it is used with a noun on one occasion (**hæleðen** he wes <u>ældere</u> 'he was a leader of men' (1559), though the unity of the noun phrase is fractured because of the insertion of two unstressed words in-between the genitive and its head) and with the substantivated superlative degree of an adjective on another (<u>forcuðest</u> **hæleðe** 'the most accursed of men' (14191)).

Finally, *seg* does not preserve its earlier preferences either and is frequently used stereotypically in combination with *verba et nomina dicendi* (50% of the total):

> þer weore **segge** <u>songe</u>. þer were pipen i-magge (2548);
>
> Ful soh <u>seide</u> þe **seg** þe þeos <u>saȝe</u> <u>talde</u> (3997);
>
> Ah ȝif hit is soð þat men <u>saið</u>; also **segges** hit <u>telleð</u> (12443);
>
> heo riden <u>singinge</u>; **segges** weoren bli[ð]e (13450).

To put it briefly, none of the Old English formulaic patterns are attested in the *Brut*. Two more observations can be added to this conclusion: for Laȝamon, Old English synonyms have

become (*hæleð, scalk*, *seg*, and probably *rink*) or are turning into (*kempe*) elevated lexemes, which are almost invariably marked by alliteration. Secondly, more and more often they tend to occur in highly stereotypical, clichéd tags. My findings, therefore, seem to substantiate Mark Griffith's assumption that the properties of Middle English synonyms are different from their Old English counterparts.

Conclusion

The results demonstrate that the two poetics, namely, that of Old English alliterative verse and of the early Middle English poem, are unrelated. While in traditional alliterative poetry various inherited formulaic patterns can be observed, none of these are preserved in the *Brut*, where the governing principle of poetic diction appears to be a merely binary opposition: colloquial vs. elevated lexemes, with the latter almost always alliterating and being used in poetic clichés. Laȝamon is obviously an outsider, albeit an interested one, to traditional verse; though the reappearance of the synonyms for 'man, warrior' is an interesting trait, which still requires an explanation, tracing the lexemes to Old English poetry is definitely a dead end. There can be no continuity between the two.

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