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Wårvik, Brita

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Brita Wårvik
Åbo Akademi University

The demise of ambiguous adverb/conjunctions and manuscript variation
A case study of *tho, then,* and *when* in the *'Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester'*

In memory of Matti Rissanen (1937-2018)[1]

Abstract: One interesting case of the general trend in the development of English adverbial connectives towards less polyfunctionality is the replacement of the Old English ambiguous adverb/conjunctions *þa* and *þonne* by the adverb *then* and the conjunction *when* during the Middle English period (1100-1500). Though the rise of *when* as a subordinator has been studied quite a lot, the details of the changes leading to the redistribution of the syntactic and discourse-pragmatic functions of the Old English items are still unclear. The aim of this study is to shed light on the changes by investigating variation in the use of the items in different manuscript versions of one popular Middle English text, known as the *Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester*. The findings show that one of the manuscripts, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 205, is more advanced in the use of *then* and *when* in all discourse contexts as well as in the occurrence of other progressive features, which tallies with earlier studies identifying that version as different also in other respects. To answer the intriguing question to what extent the various changes in Middle English are parts of some major typological change in the language would require many more studies of individual texts, but this is a small contribution towards that goal.

Keywords: temporal connectives, Middle English, decrease of polyfunctionality, discourse-pragmatic functions, syntactic functions, 'Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester'

1. Introduction

Summarising the findings of studies of adverbial subordinators in 49 European languages, Kortmann notes "a clear tendency of **a decrease in polyfunctionality over time, be it semantic or syntactic**" (1998: 216; original emphasis), which is amply evidenced in the drastic changes in the repertoire of adverbial connectives in English (Rissanen 2012). Among the many changes taking place during the Middle English period, the Old English ambiguous adverb/conjunctions *þa* and *þonne,* with distinct discourse-pragmatic functions*,* and the interrogative *hwonne* develop into the Present-Day English adverb *then*, which has retained some of the earlier discourse-pragmatic functions, and the interrogative/conjunction *when*. Earlier research (Kivimaa 1966; Mitchell 1965; Wårvik 1995; Yamakawa 1969) has found that *when* first replaces the conjunction *þonne* starting from South, South-West and West Midlands, and it may even occur in the same texts as the conjunction *tho*, keeping their old

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discourse-pragmatic distinctions in narrative structuring.[2] Example (1) from the late thirteenth century *South English Legendary* illustrates this distinction. *Þo* 'when' (l. 139) refers to a unique event, while *when* (l. 141) refers to a repeated event.

(1)   *Þo hi come hom to his In : he made hom faire chere*
        & cortesliche serueþe hom : quinte man as he were.
        ac euer whan he from hom turneþe : þe teres ourne of his eie;
                (Horstmann (ed.) 1887: 396-397)
        '**When** they came home to his inn : he made them a nice feast
        and kindly served them : the courteous man that he was.
        but **when**ever (lit. always **when)** he turned from them : tears ran from his eyes;'

The adverbs merge into *then*, though they maintain their formal and functional distinction longer than the conjunctions, and *tho* in the sense 'at that time' still occurs dialectally in the South-West (OED s.v. *tho*). In example (2) from the *Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester* (Wright (ed.) 1887; henceforth *RobGlo*), *þo* 'then' (l. 8896) refers to a turn in a dialogue, i.e. a unique event following a previous event in temporal succession, whereas *þanne* 'then' (l. 8898) accompanies a question, referring to a future, and hypothetical, situation.

(2)   *Sire quaþ þis maide þo . þat is a vair name .*
        As wo seiþ al is lif. & of grete fame .
        Ac wat ssolde is sone hote þanne . & oþere þat of him come
                (RobGlo 8896-8898) [3]
        'Sir, said this maiden **then** . that is a fair name .
        As they say all his life . and of great fame .
        But what should his son be called **then** . & others that of him come'

The aim of this paper is to study what different versions of the same text can reveal about the uses of these changing items in the same textual context. The paper reports a case study on manuscript variation in the uses of *tho, then*, and *when* in the text known as the *Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester*. The text is a long verse narrative in the West-Midland dialect, the area where the temporal conjunction use of *when* emerged early and *tho* as an adverb and conjunction survived longest. The manuscripts in Wright's edition (1887) are from early fourteenth to mid-fifteenth century, the period when the latest instances of *tho* can be found in the *Helsinki Corpus* data (Wårvik, forthcoming).

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[2] The regular development of Old English *þa* gives us *þo, tho*, while the longer Old English item appeared as *þonne, þanne, þenne*, eventually merging on *then* (OED, s.v. *then*, s.v. *tho*; MED, s.v. *thanne* (adv.), s.v. *tho* (adv.)). *When* arises through multiple variant forms from Old English *hwonne, hwanne, hwenne* (OED, s.v. *when;* MED, s.v. *whanne* (adv. & conj.)). The variants found in the sample are *þo, tho, than, thanne, thenne, þan, þanne, þen, wan, wanne, when, whenne, whan,* and *whanne*. The choice of the forms *tho* and *then* for the adverbs and *when* for the conjunction to refer to Middle English data is motivated by convenience of reference rather than frequency.
[3] Line numbers follow Wright's edition (1887).

2. Background

While the main lines of development of the Present-Day English temporal connective *when* are fairly straightforward, the detailed steps are still unclear. In Old English, its etymological ancestor *hwonne* was an interrogative introducing direct and indirect questions, while the most common temporal connectives corresponding to Present-Day English *when* were *þa* and *þonne*, aptly called ambiguous adverb/conjunctions by Mitchell (1985: §2444, §2536). These two items were not distinguished by their syntactic function, corresponding to both Present-Day English *when* and *then*, but they had different discourse-pragmatic functions: *þa* occurred in narrative texts marking the foregrounded main line and *þonne* occurred in all kinds of texts referring to hypothetical and habitual situations, as well as backgrounded material in narratives (Mitchell 1985: §2562; Ogura 1984; Wårvik 2011a; cf. Bosworth – Toller, s.v. *þanne*; on grounding see Wårvik 2011b). Mitchell notes that *þa* and *þonne* kept their complementary distribution all through the Old English period (1985: §1116-1117) and *hwonne* was not yet used to introduce temporal clauses, though it had already started to acquire that function, as evidenced by borderline cases between interrogatives and adverbial and relative clauses (1965, 1985: §2779).

The early Middle English developments of temporal conjunctions are charted by Kivimaa (1966) in her study of *þe* and *þat* as connectives in twelfth and thirteenth century texts. She observes that the Old English uses of the conjunctions continue in early Middle English, but *when* appears in the contexts of *þonne* in the twelfth century and there are also occasional instances of *þonne* and *hwanne* in the contexts where one would expect *þa*. In the thirteenth century, *when* gets more frequent, replacing mainly the conjunction *þonne*. Changes in the uses of tenses reflect changes in the discourse functions of the items: "with *þa/þo* (and *ase*) the tenses of the past are used, with *þonne* those of the present and the future, but with their retreat, any tense may occur with them; in texts in which *hwanne* is infrequent, the tense is generally the present or the future, but if *hwanne* is common, the tense of the verb is the one required by the context" (Kivimaa 1966: 246).

Yamakawa, studying the development of conjunctions meaning 'when' until the end of the Middle English period, sees a slightly different beginning in the changes and notes "that first *þanne* advanced into the domain of *þo* where a preterite verb is appropriate, and then or rather at the same time *hwanne* began to supplant *þanne* in the new domain, while retaining the old one, originally occupied by *þanne*, where a verb denoting the present or future is appropriate" (Yamakawa 1969: 21). However the majority of Yamakawa's examples show the conjunctions in their original contexts and the rare instances illustrating the advance of *þonne* can hardly be seen as representing a general trend.[4]

Wårvik's (1995) study of samples of saints' lives from Old to late Middle English revealed similar trends for the conjunctions, but suggested a stronger role for discourse factors. While in the Old English saints' lives by Ælfric the temporal conjunctions *þa* and *þonne* are used, the longer item does not appear as a conjunction in the Middle English data. In the late thirteenth-century *South English Legendary*, both *tho* and *when* appear as conjunctions,

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[4] Of the two cases of *þonne* referring to singular events in the past, one is a variant in one of two manuscripts (Yamakawa 1969: 23, examples 13 and 13a, *Lawman's Brut*) and the other occurs in a text with a majority of *then*-forms (Yamakawa 1969: 23, example 11, *Havelock the Dane*). The single exceptional *þa* in the context of *þonne* involves *þa gyt* and may rather be an adverbial use 'still then' (Yamakawa 1969: 24, note 56; *Lambeth Homilies*).

tho in the discourse contexts of Old English *þa,* and *when* in those occupied earlier by *þonne*. In Wårvik's later samples, Mirk's *Festial* and Caxton's *Golden Legend*, from the late fifteenth century, *when* has taken over. Wårvik suggests that the discourse-structuring function as a signal of the main line of narrative may be a motivation for the survival of the conjunction *tho* alongside *when* in Middle English, while *then* only continued in use as an adverb.

Both Kivimaa's and Yamakawa's studies reveal dialectal differences in the developments of these conjunctions. *When* as a temporal conjunction emerges first in texts ascribed to the Southern and West-Midland dialects (Kivimaa 1966; Yamakawa 1969), and uses of *tho* can still be found in texts from the South and South-West in the fourteenth century (Yamakawa 1969). The use of *tho* alongside *when* in the *South-English Legendary*, mentioned earlier, tallies with this distribution (Wårvik 1995). In the *Helsinki Corpus,* the latest cases of *tho* as adverb and conjunction are in the West and East Midlands texts in the period after 1350 (Wårvik, forthcoming).

3. Data

The data for this study consist of a sample of 1,687 lines from the Middle English text called the *Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester*. So far fourteen different manuscripts have been identified of this text, the earliest dated to the early fourteenth and the latest to the sixteenth century (Hudson 1966; Pickering 2001; Shaw 2011; *eLALME*).[5]

Despite the traditional title given to the text in many sources, the identification of the author dates from the sixteenth century antiquaries, and the Robert referred to in the text (ll. 11748-11749) may have been only the scribe of two of the manuscripts and even his connection with Gloucester is uncertain (Hudson 1969; Shaw 2011). Though the text has undoubtedly been popular, as shown by the number of manuscripts and later interest by antiquaries and anthologists (Edwards — Gillespie 2003; Hudson 1969; Shaw 2012), its textual history has not yet been fully explored and the best edition available is still Wright's edition from 1887.

Wright's edition includes eight of the fourteen manuscripts, dating from the early fourteenth to the mid-fifteenth century (Table 1). Three of them belong to the so-called first recension, or longer version, and five to the second recension, or shorter version (cf. Hudson 1966, 1969; Shaw 2012; Wright (ed.) 1887: xl-xlvi). The sample used in this study consists of the 1,687 lines shared by all these eight manuscripts: lines 4684-4931; 4936-5547; 5550-5739; 5742-5811; 8557-8626; 8628-8897; 8902-8898; 8902-8908; 8912-8931; 8934-9092; 9094-9135.

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[5] The OED gives the manuscript dates as c1325-c1425, but the dates of the quotations vary from 1297 to 1325 (>1300).

Table 1. *Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester*: Manuscripts in Wright's edition

Manuscript	Wright's/ Hudson's sigla	Date (LALME/MED/ Hudson)	LALME linguistic profile (county)
London, British Library, Cotton Caligula A. xi.	A / C	c1325/ c1325(c1300)/ s. xiv in.	7100 (Gloucestershire)
London, British Library Add. MS. 19677	C / A	c1400/ c1400/ s. xiv/xv.	5300 (Wiltshire)
London, British Library, Harley 201	B / H	c1400/ c1425/ s. xv[i]	7500 (lines 1-3177 Hand A Herefordshire) 7080 (lines 3178- Hands B, C and D Gloucestershire)
Cambridge, Trinity College, R.4.26	α / T	Last quarter of 14th century/ c1400(c1325)/ c1400	7070 (Gloucestershire)
Oxford, Bodleian Library Digby 205	β / D	Early 15th century/ ?c1425/ s. xv in.	8110 (Warwickshire)
Cambridge, Magdalene College, Pepys 2014	ε / M	First quarter of 15th century/ c1425/ s. xv in.	4710 (Northamptonshire)
London University Library 278	δ / L	-/ c1450/ s. xv in.	-
Cambridge University Library Ee.4.31	γ / U	-/ c1450/ s. xv mid.	-

Even if Wright notes that "[to] the student of the earlier forms of English the language of the Chronicle is of the greatest value" (1887: lx), the text has rarely been used as data for the history of language and many questions are still open or unexplored in its textual history. Shaw's (2012) overview of earlier studies shows that the text has typically served as material for studying history, real, legendary or literary, while literary scholars seem to have adopted Wright's view that "[as] literature, it is as worthless as twelve thousand lines of verse without any spark of poetry can be" (1887: lx). Apart from the linguistic profiles of six of the manuscripts in eLALME, the linguistic properties of the various versions have attracted little attention.

A remarkable exception is Hudson's edition of part of the chronicle (1964) and her study (1966) of the distribution of a number of traditional and innovative forms in the different manuscripts, including forms of third person pronouns and verbal inflections. Comparing the

choices of forms, Hudson characterizes "the good manuscripts", i.e. A, B and C of the first recension and α, δ and Q (Huntington Library, San Marino, California, HM 126) of the second recension, as "present[ing] orthographically, in varying degrees according to their dates, a remarkable state of conservatism" (1964: 311). In contrast to them, "both D [Wright's β] and U [Wright's γ] stand at the furthest remove from the original in the second recension" (1964: 80). These two manuscripts appear to stand apart from the rest also dialectally, displaying traces of eastern features (1964: 307-308). Hudson's findings of scribal practices lead her to conclude that the scribes were consistent in their choices: "except in those cases where misunderstanding can reasonably be postulated [..], a scribe will only copy the linguistic forms of his exemplar when they form part of his orthographic 'vocabulary'." (1966: 371-372). However, she (1966: 368-369) observes that scribes treat rhyming positions differently in that they, particularly the scribe of β (1964: 309), may there preserve deviant forms which they elsewhere in the text change to forms more consistent with their idiolect.

Another aspect of scribal practices is investigated by Kooper (2013), who examines 'content markers', i.e. devices signalling the organization of the text, in twelve manuscripts of *RobGlo*, including one prose version. He finds that the use of large capitals to indicate beginnings of sections in the narrative is fairly consistent and may even go back to the earliest manuscript (i.e. A), but there is great variation in where headers and marginal comments occur, which suggests that they are later additions. Comparing the manuscripts, Kooper singles out β as the manuscript with all the three types of markers. Though some of them are later additions, their use by the original scribe suggests a consciousness of text structure and a desire to indicate textual organization clearly.

In his study of the development of *when*, Yamakawa (1969) comments on the use of *tho* and *when* in a sample from the *Chronicle* comprising 622 lines from the Caligula manuscript (A in Wright, C in Hudson) included in Skeat's collection *Specimens of Early English* (1922). The contextual distribution of the items in this manuscript follows their original division of labour: there are 25 cases of *þo* in clauses with past or past perfect verbs and seven cases of *when* in clauses with past habitual or repeated events, of which one is a past subjunctive.

The Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English includes descriptions of the language of six of the eight manuscripts in Wright's edition (*eLALME*). The linguistic profiles include variants of *then* as item 30 and those of *when* as item 56, as presented in Table 2. According to the profiles, A and C use the *wh-* and *þ-*forms of the conjunction equally, while B and α prefer *þ-*forms and β and ε the *wh-*form. The dates of the manuscripts thus do not seem to go hand in hand with an increase in the newer *wh-*form of the conjunction (cf. Table 1).

Table 2: Variants of THEN and WHEN in *eLALME*.

Manuscript Date	A c1325	B c1400	C c1400	α last quarter of 14th century	β early 15th century	ε first quarter of 15th century
LP	7100	7500/7080	5300	7070	8110	4710
30: THEN	þo (þanne)	þo (þenne) ((þanne))/ þo ((þanne, þo-þat, þanne))	þo (þanne, þan)	þo (þanne)	þan, þanne (þenne)	tho, þo, þan, than (þen, then)
56: WHEN	wanne, þo, ȝwanne (wan)	þo (wan, wen) ((þe, when, whan))/ þo ((wan, wanne, wanne, þo-þᵗ))	whanne, þo, whenne	þo (whanne, whan)	when, whenne, whan, whanne ((tho))	whan (when, tho) ((whan))

The main forms appear without parentheses. Single parentheses indicate a frequency of occurrence one to two thirds of the main form, and double parentheses a frequency lower than one third of the main form (*eLALME*, "Introductions", Vol. 3 "Linguistic Profiles", section 13).

As the spread of *when* to replace the *þ*-forms is said to have started from the South and West-Midlands, it can be useful to see where the manuscript versions are assumed to have been written, even if this study does not concern dialects. Figure 1 shows the locations on the map of the six manuscripts that are included in LALME (*eLALME*).
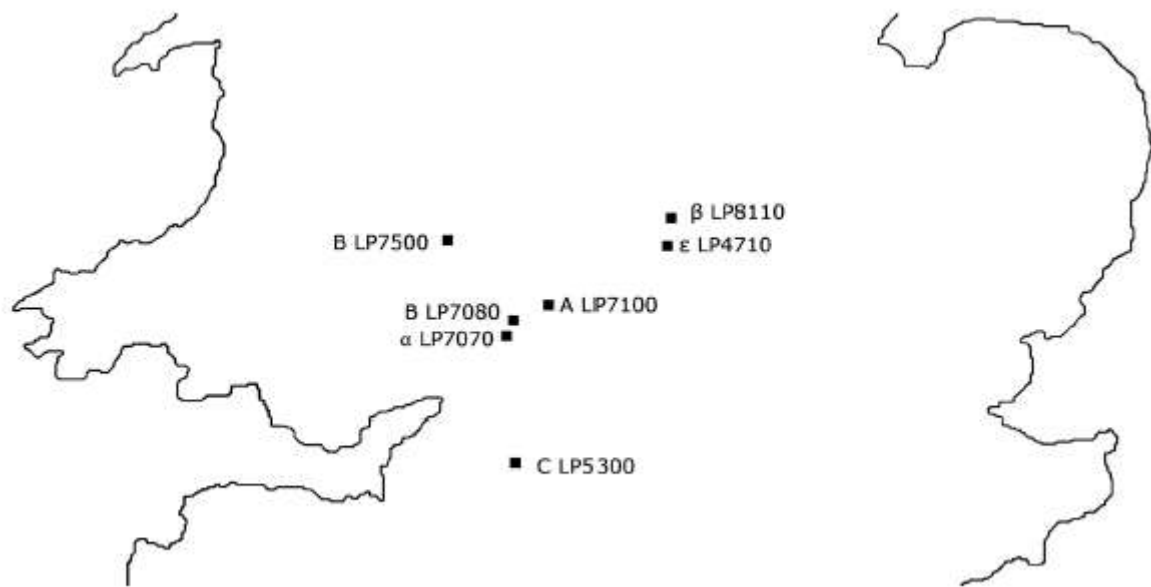
Figure 1. Location of six manuscripts of *Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester* according to LALME linguistic profiles (LP).

Quite interestingly, assuming that *wh*-forms are more common where the change from *þ*-forms started, there seems to be something of a mismatch between the locations and the preferences for *þ*- and *wh*-forms according to the linguistic profiles of the manuscripts: B and α, where the older *þ*-forms are more common, are located furthest west, while β and ε, which prefer the incoming *wh*-forms, are placed furthest east and among the northernmost ones in LALME.

4. Results

In the sample of 1,687 lines of *RobGlo*, there is a total of 243 cases where at least one of the eight manuscripts uses *tho*, *then*, or *when*. Table 3a presents the alternatives used in the 144 instances of adverbial uses and Table 3b the forms in the 99 cases of conjunctive uses. The division into adverbial and conjunctive uses is based on the first recension manuscripts, which are followed in the second recension with only four exceptions where clause status is changed (cf. notes 6 and 7).

Table 3a. Alternative forms in cases of adverbial uses in the sample of *RobGlo*.

Item/MS	**A**	**B**	**C**	**α**	**β**	**ε**	**δ**	**γ**	**all manuscripts**
tho	89	89	87	95	74	98	99	89	59
then	3	4	3	4	34[6]	5	4	5	2
0	41	41	43	33	22	31	32	39	-
other	11	10	11	12	14	10	9	11	-
TOTAL	144	144	144	144	144	144	144	144	61

For alternative forms see note 2 above. Cases with no adverbial or a gap in the text are subsumed under 0. Category "other" includes *also, and, anon, mo, siþe/siþþe/suþþe, so, tuenty ȝer, þat, þat tyme, þe, þer/þere, when.*

Table 3b. Alternative forms in the cases of conjunctive uses in the sample of *RobGlo.*

Item/MS	**A**	**B**	**C**	**α**	**β**	**ε**	**δ**	**γ**	**all manuscripts**
tho	72	73	72	75	53	74	69	69	46
when	15	17	16	16	32[7]	17	16	18	14
0	4	4	5	4	5	3	6	4	-
other	8	5	6	4	9	5	8	8	-
TOTAL	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	60

For alternative forms see note 2 above. Cases with a gap in the text are classified as 0. Category "other" includes *ar, as, sith/siþe/siþþe/suþþe, so/so that/so þat, that/þat, þen/þan, þe wule, þus*.

With one exception, the manuscripts largely agree in the proportions of the different alternatives in both adverbial and conjunction cases. Despite its potential syntactic ambiguity, the clearly preferred alternative is *tho*, which is used in 49-70 percent of adverbial cases and 55-75 percent of conjunction cases. *Then* only appears as an adverb, though much less frequently than *tho*, and the conjunction *when* is used in 15-32 percent of the cases. The only manuscript that deviates from the general trend is β, which earlier studies have shown to be different even in other ways (cf. Hudson 1966; Kooper 2013). The figures in Table 3a and 3b mark this manuscript as more advanced in the disappearance of the ambiguous adverb/conjunctions: the β scribe uses higher proportions of *then* as an adverb and *when* as a conjunction than the others. As was also noted earlier, the dates and locations of the manuscripts in LALME do not match the spread of the unambiguous forms from the South and West-Midlands, and the distribution of the items in the sample of *RobGlo* is in line with that mismatch. There is, however, a slightly puzzling disagreement between LALME's linguistic profile of β and the distributions in the sample: the linguistic profile 8110 appears to give a smaller role to *tho*, which, as a conjunction, is listed as occurring at a frequency less than one

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[6] This excludes three cases where the β scribe rewrites a subclause introduced by *tho* as a main clause with *then* (cf. Table 6b)*.* These cases are included in the category 'other' in Table 3b.

[7] This excludes one case where the β scribe rewrites a main clause with *tho* as a subclause introduced by *when*. This case is included in the category 'other' in Table 3a.

third of that of *when* and is not listed at all as an adverb. This raises the question of internal variation in this manuscript, even though it is unlikely that the samples of β in LALME would have been so different from those in this study. However, that investigation is outside the scope of the present study and we now turn to considering the contexts of manuscript variation in the use of *tho, then* and *when*.

Starting with instances of total agreement, we find that in 121, or about half of the 243 cases of *tho, then* and *when*, all the eight manuscripts agree. There is greater agreement in the use of conjunctions than adverbs: in 61 percent of the cases all manuscripts display identical uses of the conjunctions *tho* and *when*, whereas the adverbs *tho* and *then* are used similarly in only 42 percent of the cases.

In all the instances of agreement the use of the items follows the Old English division of labour. On the one hand, *tho* as an adverb in the sense of 'after that' or 'at that time' and as a conjunction is used for single events, just like Old English *þa*, as in (3) and (4).

(3) *þe erchebissop of kanterbury . anselin þat was **þo** .*
Fleu out of engelond . vor is vnriȝt and wo .
    (RobGlo 8618-8619)
'The archbishop of Canterbury . Anselm that was **then** .
Fled out of England . for his injustice and woe .'

(4) ***þo** king egbriȝt adde ybe king . seuene & þritti ȝer .*
He deyde as a noble mon . ac is londes he delde er .
*Adelwolf is eldore sone . he ȝef **þo** al west sex .*
    (*RobGlo* 5202-5204)
'**When** king Edgbright had been king . seven and thirty years .
He died as a noble man . but his lands he divided before .
Adelwolf his elder son . he gave **then** all West Sussex .'

On the other hand, the two instances of *then* where all manuscripts agree, occur in the contexts of Old English *þonne*: once in an *if-then* construction (5) and once in a description (l. 9003).

(5) *ȝif it so is quaþ þe king . þat hii biddeþ vor vre fon .*
***þanne** viȝteþ hii aȝen vs . as moche as is hor miȝte .*
    (RobGlo 4852-4853)
'If it is so, said the king, that they pray for our foes .
Then they fight against us . as much as is their might .'

Finally, the contexts of agreement tally with earlier findings of *when* first replacing the longer item: these clauses introduced by *when* depict repeated or hypothetical situations, i.e. those belonging to the domain of Old English *þonne*, as in (6).

(6)   *Hire maidens brotte hire clene water . euere **wanne** heo hete[8] .*
            (RobGlo 8965)
        'Her maids brought her clean water . **when**ever she commanded .'

Considering variation in the three first recension manuscripts, we find, as expected, more agreement, namely in 86 per cent of all cases. Table 4 shows the distribution of the alternatives in the cases where the first recension manuscripts agree with each other and disagree with one or more of the second recension manuscripts. For the uses of *tho*, the disagreements between the manuscript groups involve about a third of the cases. For *when* and *then*, which are much less frequent, there is only one instance of each where first recension manuscripts have chosen the same item in contrast to the second recension. In addition to these, in one instance all first recension manuscripts have *there*, while one second recension manuscript has *tho* and another one has *then*.

Table 4. Agreement among first recension manuscripts in contrast to second recension
        manuscripts in the uses of *tho, then* and *when* in the sample of *RobGlo.*

Item	adverb	conjunction	total
0	38	3	41
then	1	-	1
there	1	-	1
tho	23	21	44
when	-	1	1
total	63	25	88

For alternative forms see note 2 above. Cases with a gap in the text are classified as 0.

In the second recension manuscripts there is no difference between conjunctions and adverbs in the proportions of the cases of agreement, both agreeing in 86 per cent of cases. However, if we ignore the cases where one or more second recension manuscripts add an item where there is no corresponding item in the first recension manuscripts, i.e. category 0, the proportion of agreement for adverbs decreases to 60 per cent, which is lower than for conjunctions, but still higher than the proportion of agreement in all manuscripts. We will next turn to the kinds of items that are added, but it is worth noting that it is somewhat unexpected that adverbial expressions, mostly temporal, are added so often in the second recension manuscripts, which are supposed to be later and could thus be expected to use fewer temporal expressions in the narrative (on changes in uses of narrative discourse markers, see Brinton 1993, 1996; Fludernik 2000; Wårvik 1990a, 1995) .
Looking then at the kinds of items added in the second recension manuscripts in places where the first recension manuscripts agree on having no corresponding item (Tables 5a and 5b), we find that in most cases there is equally a gap, but we also find that the added items reveal the same trend as the overall preferences in the uses of *tho, then* and *when*: all manuscripts prefer *tho* as an adverb and as a conjunction, except β, which favours *then* and *when*. A further point worth noting about the cases where an item is added to the text is that

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[8] Wright has *lete*, which is the choice in A and γ, but that hardly makes any sense in this context.

there are no cases where the second recension manuscripts agree in their choices of the added items.

Table 5a. Items in second recension manuscripts where first recension manuscripts have a gap in an adverbial position.

Item/MS	α	β	ε	δ	γ
0	25	14	22	22	33
tho	10	6	14	14	4
then	2	17	2	2	1
so	1	1	0	0	0
total	38	38	38	38	38

For alternative forms see note 2 above. Cases with a gap in the text are classified as 0.

Table 5b. Items in second recension manuscripts where first recension manuscripts have a gap instead of a conjunction.

Item/MS	α	β	ε	δ	γ
0	2	2	2	2	3
tho	1	-	1	1	-
then	-	-	-	-	-
when	-	1	-	-	-
total	3	3	3	3	3

For alternative forms see note 2 above. Cases with a gap in the text are classified as 0.

In the same way, there is no agreement in the choices of items in the second recension manuscripts in the cases where all first recension manuscripts use *tho* (Tables 6a and 6b). However, we still find the same preferences: β tends to choose *then* and *when*, while the other second recension manuscripts mostly retain *tho* both as an adverb and as a conjunction. The one instance of *when* in Table 6a and three instances of *then* in Table 6b are cases where β rewrites the text changing the clause status (cf. notes 6 and 7 above).

Table 6a. Items in second recension manuscripts where first recension manuscripts use *tho* as an adverb.

Item/MS	α	β	ε	δ	γ
0	2	2	2	4	2
tho	20	8	17	18	19
then	0	9	0	0	1
there	1	1	2	1	1
and	0	1	0	0	0
when	0	1	0	0	0
that time	0	1	1	0	0
mo	0	0	1	0	0
total	23	23	23	23	23

For alternative forms of *tho, then* and *when* see note 2 above. 0 indicates omission or rephrasing.

Table 6b. Items in second recension manuscripts where first recension manuscripts use *tho* as a conjunction.

Item/MS	α	β	ε	δ	γ
0	1	2	1	2	0
tho	18	5	17	16	19
that	1	1	0	2	1
when	0	9	2	0	1
then	0	3	0	0	0
and	1	1	0	1	0
for	0	0	1	0	0
total	21	21	21	21	21

For alternative forms of *tho* and *when* see note 2 above. 0 indicates omission or rephrasing.

Turning finally to the least frequent items among the cases where the first recension manuscripts agree and differ from the second recension, we again detect the discourse patterns inherited from Old English. The one instance of *then* in Table 4 involves an omission in a hypothetical clause in direct speech, and in the one case of *when,* one manuscript uses *siþ* 'since' to introduce a subclause with clearly causal sense (7). Both of these belong to the discourse-functional domain of Old English *þonne*.

(7)   *þe bissopes him ansuerede . & þe abbot dinoc .*
        Al wiþ grete reysons . & wit of hor boc .
        þat **wanne** *[ε:* **siþ***] hii adde hom sulue . erchebissop & king .*
        Hii ne ssolde to englissemen . abuye riȝt no þing .
            (*RobGlo* 4817-4820)
        'The bishops answered to him . and the abbot Dinoc .
        All with great reasons . and wit from their book .
        That **when** [ε: **since**] they had themselves . archbishop and king .
        They should not to the Englishmen . bow in absolutely no thing .'

As this text is verse, one factor that is likely to affect the choice of expressions is rhyme. There are 33 cases of the items in rhyming positions. In 20 of them, *tho* is used in all manuscripts, as in example (3) above; these line-final cases account for one third of the 59 instances where *tho* appears in all of the manuscripts. In 6 line-final cases *tho* appears in 1-2 manuscripts, while the others have a gap; again β stands out as it uses *tho* in 5 of these cases, while γ uses *tho* in 3, ε in 2, A in one case, and the four other manuscripts have no corresponding item. Other line-final variants of *tho* are two cases of *mo* (in 7 and 1 manuscript), two of *also* (in 7 and 6 manuscripts), *so* (in 7 manuscripts), *twenty ȝer* (in 7 manuscripts), and one case of a gap in one manuscript and *then* in one manuscript, which unsurprisingly is β. Thus as Hudson (1966) observed, the rhyme position is fairly stable, and we can add that again β differs in its use of *then* line-finally.

Though the manuscripts show variation in the choices of items, there nevertheless appears a clear pattern in the contexts where the alternative forms are used. As in the cases of agreement between the manuscripts, *tho* appears, with few exceptions, as both adverb and conjunction, in clauses depicting single events, while *then* is used for referring to hypothetical or future events and *when* to repeated events or causes, in all manuscripts except β. Of a total of 34 instances where *then* is used by only one scribe, 29 are in β, in addition to which there are three cases where the β scribe uses *then* when rewriting a subclause as a main clause (cf. note 6). Of the 19 occurrences of *when* as variant in only one manuscript, 15 are in β, to which can be added one case of a main clause rewritten as a subclause in this manuscript (cf. note 7). In these cases both *then* and *when* are used in clauses depicting single events, thus accounting for almost all the instances in those categories in Table 7a and 7b. In contrast, as was observed earlier, the cases where all manuscripts use *when* do not depict single events, and the same preference is evident in the few cases where β agrees with some other manuscripts about the use of *when*. There are two cases where seven manuscripts have *when*; in one of them ε has selected *siþ* in a causal subclause (example 7) and in another A has opted for *þat* when depicting a repeated event. In a third case, β and ε have chosen *when* instead of *þo* in the other manuscripts to introduce a subclause depicting a single event.

Table 7a. Uses of the adverbs *tho* and *then* excluding cases of agreement in the sample of *RobGlo*.

Item	Type	A	B	C	α	β	ε	δ	γ
tho	single event	30	30	28	36	15	39	39	30
	repeated event							1	
then	single event				1	32	3		2
	hypothetical or future event	1	2	1	1			2	1

Table 7b. Uses of the conjunctions *tho* and *when* excluding cases of agreement in the sample of *RobGlo*.

Item	Type	A	B	C	α	β	ε	δ	γ
tho	single event	25	26	25	27	7	26	23	22
	comment	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1
when	single event					16	2		1
	repeated event		2	1	1	1	1	1	1
	cause	1	1	1	1	1		1	1
	comment								1

The few deviations from the traditional discourse patterns of usage in the other manuscripts are all to some extent borderline cases. The one instance of the adverb *tho* referring to a repeated event is the line-final occurrence, mentioned above, instead of *mo* in the other manuscripts (l. 5337). As to conjunction use, the exceptional commenting subclauses introduced by *tho* in fact comment on unique situations (example 8 and l. 5560: *þat* in A, B, C, and β; *tho* in α, ε, and δ; *when* in γ), and the *when*-clause depicting a single event in γ (example 9) and one of those in ε (l. 8799) provide backgrounded comments on the main line of the narrative, while the other such *when*-clause in ε is introduced by *tho when* (l. 9049).

(8)   *He let grede þoru al þe lond . þe vnri3te lawes vndo .*
        Þat is fader & is broþer helde . & prisons deliueri al so .
        Þer was loye in to al þat lond . þo [δ: *þat*] *men mi3te abbe lawe .*
                (*RobGlo* 8726-8728)
        'He let proclaim through all the land . the unjust laws to undo .
        That his father and his brother held . & prisoners delivered also .
        There was joy in all that land . **when** [δ: **that**] people could have law'

(9)   *King henry þes tueye studes . verst bulde iwis .*
        Suþþe [ε: *þan*] *he weddede anoþer wif . þo* [γ: ***when***] *ido was al þis .*
                (*RobGlo* 9048-9049)
        'King Henry these two places . first built indeed .
        After that [ε: then] he married another woman . when done was all this .'

To consider alternative choices, let us focus on the variants in other manuscripts in cases where β has *then* or *when*. Excluding the 14 cases where all manuscripts use *when*, we have 18 instances of *when* in β. In 16 of them it appears as a variant of *tho,* which is the choice in 7 cases in all the other manuscripts, the other choices varying from omission to *when*, *as* and *ere*; β is the only manuscript using *when* in 15 of these 16 cases. All these 16 depict single events, and we thus again find *when* in the traditional discourse context of *tho*. In the two remaining cases *when* is used in all but one manuscript, once in a causal clause (example (7)) and once to depict a repeated event (l. 5253), which both belong to the discourse-functional domain of Old English *þanne*. Of the 34 cases of *then* in β only two are shared by all other manuscripts, while in 29 cases only β has *then*. In 8 cases the other manuscripts have *tho* and in 5 β adds *then* where the others have no corresponding item. In total there are 30 cases where β has *then* where the others have either *tho,* a gap, or, in 3 cases, *then*. This leaves one

case of *there* and *tho* and one with *anon* and *tho* as variants in the other manuscripts where β has *then*. As already noted, all these instances of *then* are in clauses depicting single events. All this supports the conclusion that in the idiolect of the scribe of β, both the conjunction *when* and the adverb *then* had advanced quite far into the domain of *tho*.

One clue to the stage in the development of *when* from an interrogative to temporal adverbial conjunction is the position of the subclause: interrogative subclauses introduced by *when* follow their main clause, while adverbial clauses may be preposed, postposed and even medial. Mitchell (1965, 1985: §2779) comments that some Old English postposed *hwonne-*clauses are ambiguous between an interrogative and adverbial interpretation, suggesting a beginning of the development towards adverbial clauses. In the present sample, 53 of the 99 subclauses are preposed, while 35 are postposed and 11 medial. Of the total of 36 cases of *when* as variant conjunction, 3 are placed in the middle, 17 are postposed and 16 are preposed (The one case of a main clause rewritten as a subclause introduced by *when* is excluded). Ignoring the medial instances, we find a clear preference for *when*-clauses to be postposed and *tho*-clauses to be preposed: both in cases where all manuscripts agree on using *tho* and in those where *tho* and *when* appear as variants, two thirds of the subclauses are preposed, whereas the subclauses are postposed in three quarters of the cases where all manuscripts use *when*.

Table 8. Position of subclauses introduced by *tho* and *when*.

variants	preposed	postposed
tho in all manuscripts	28	14
tho and *when*	12	6
when in all manuscripts	3	9

Focussing on subclauses introduced by *tho* and *when* in the different manuscripts, we can detect a preference for *tho*-clauses to be preposed and *when*-clauses to be postposed, except in β, where slightly more *when*-clauses are preposed than postposed (Table 9).[9]

Table 9. Position of subclauses introduced by *tho* and *when* in the sample of *RobGlo.*

Item / Position	*tho*		*when*	
	preposed	postposed	preposed	postposed
MS				
A	44	21	4	9
B	42	22	4	11
C	43	21	4	10
α	45	21	4	10
β	32	17	16	14
ε	44	22	4	11
δ	41	19	4	10
γ	42	20	4	12

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[9] For all manuscripts except β, the Chi square test shows that the differences are significant, $p < .01$.

This further supports the conclusion that the use of *when* as an adverbial conjunction was more developed in the idiolect of the β scribe.

5. Factors

Both internal and external factors have been proposed as involved in the changes in these connective items. The general trend towards less polyfunctionality can be considered as an internal factor contributing to the development of these items, among many others. However, in this development the syntactic polyfunctionality of the ambiguous adverb/conjunctions *þa* and *þonne* was resolved at the expense of the loss of their distinct discourse-pragmatic functions. We could even say that Present-Day English *then,* and perhaps *when* as well, are discourse-pragmatically polyfunctional, at least to the extent that they need to cover for all the remaining discourse structuring functions of their predecessors. Moreover, apart from the general trend away from polyfunctionality, it can be difficult to show why syntactic ambiguity became a problem in Middle English, when it had not been one in Old English (cf. e.g. Kivimaa 1966: 257; Mitchell 1984, 1985: §1879,2536-2560). While many of the connectives appearing in Middle English are borrowed, either as loans or as calques (Kortmann 1998; Lenker 2010; Rissanen 2012), the role played by foreign influences in the demise of the ambiguous adverb/conjunctions is less obvious. Kivimaa characterizes Scandinavian influence on conjunctions in Middle English as "considerable" (1966:256), but she does not include the *when* group among those affected. However she concludes that "it seems that Latin, probably together with French, was partly responsible for the advance of *hwanne* in temporal clauses" (1966: 257), but she appears to base this conclusion mainly on the absence of other motivations for why *þonne* was so much earlier replaced by the *wh*-form than other *þ*-connectives. To return to *RobGlo*, a simple test of foreign influence is to compare the origin of the items where the manuscripts vary in their lexical choices.

RobGlo is the 93rd most quoted source in the OED, with a total of 3403 quotations, of which 315 are first quotations of current words (OED, Advanced search for "Robert of Gloucester" in First Quotation). Of these first quotation words, the OED identifies 144 as of native origin, 140 as of French, 12 of Latin and 1 of Scandinavian origin. Table 10 shows how the manuscripts vary according to the origin of variant lexical forms in the sample of the present study.

Table 10. Lexical variation in the sample of *RobGlo*.

| type/origin | manuscript | | | | | | | |
	A	B	C	α	β	ε	δ	γ
obsolete	61	62	60	60	29	35	52	38
native	13	13	13	14	17	16	14	14
Scandinavian	0	0	1	0	19	8	7	21
Romance	5	4	5	4	12	18	6	6
alternatives					1	1		
omission				1	1	1		
total items	79	79	79	79	79	79	79	79

Interestingly the same manuscripts where both *then* and *when* are used for referring to single events (cf. Table 7a and 7b) show the lowest proportions of obsolete lexical items (β, γ and ε), the highest proportions of Scandinavian loans (β and γ), and the highest proportions of words of Romance origin (β and ε). The manuscript with all these features is, unsurprisingly β. Thus there appears to be a link between the development of the three connectives and the increase of foreign elements as well as the low proportion of obsolete items in the lexis, but it is of course not possible to claim that there is any causality in that link.

As to other changes taking place during the Middle English period, let us take two at random and examine the manuscripts' use of contracted negatives and verbal prefixes in past participles.[10] Both the Old English type of negative contraction (e.g. *ne+is = nis*)[11] and the Germanic prefixes marking past participles (Old English *ge-* developing into *y-/-i*)[12] were gradually disappearing, but the old and the new types are still both found in the versions of *RobGlo*.

Table 11. Variation in negative forms and uses of prefixes in the sample of *RobGlo*.

	manuscript							
	A	B	C	α	β	ε	δ	γ
contracted	75	71	73	74	13	68	48	67
non-contracted	1	5	3	2	63	8	28	9
Negatives total	76	76	76	76	76	76	76	76
prefixed	190	190	191	187	104	152	168	91
without prefix	8	8	7	11	94	46	30	107
Variant verbs total	198	198	198	198	198	198	198	198

In the choices of the negative forms, the clearly deviant manuscript is, again, β, while also δ has a somewhat higher proportion of non-contracted forms. The uses of prefixes show γ to be further advanced in the disappearance of the prefixed forms, with β close behind. These variations tally with earlier judgements of α and to some extent even δ as conservative manuscripts, and β and γ as more progressive manuscripts among the second recension (Hudson 1964; cf. above).

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[10] One reviewer suggested constituent order as a potential indicator of the progress of the development towards Present-Day English uses of *then* and *when*. However, constituent order appears to vary only rarely in this sample, thus not providing enough cases for patterns to be detected.

[11] In his study of negative contraction in Middle English, Hogg (2004) notes that the Old English type survived until mid-fifteenth century, but was then fast disappearing. He identifies Gloucestershire as a core area of this type of contractions, which motivates my choice of this feature as a comparative variable.

[12] Hiltunen (1983:65) notes that the *ge*-prefix tended to be characterized by "semantic and functional vagueness" already in Old English, but that tendency became apparent in Early Middle English. Pilch (1955) observes that the *i*-prefix of the past participle disappears beginning from the North by the end of the fourteenth century. The variant forms in Table 11 include cases where one or more scribe uses the prefix *i-/y-* and one or more a participle without the prefix. In 13 cases, some scribes use other prefixes (11 *a-*, 1 *for-* and 1 *bi-*).

6. Conclusion

To sum up, the variations between the manuscripts of *RobGlo* reveal interesting differences in the scribes' use of *tho, then* and *when*. Whereas the scribes in most cases follow the discourse-pragmatic patterns inherited from Old English, the scribe of β deviates from the traditional usage in being more advanced in the adoption of the disambiguated items. *Then* no longer appears as a conjunction in any of these manuscripts; instead the scribes use *when* and *tho*. While these conjunctions mainly keep to their traditional discourse contexts, *when* in the contexts of Old English *þonne* and *tho* in the contexts of Old English *þa*, in manuscript β, *when* also occurs in the contexts of *tho*-conjunction. The adverbs *tho* and *then* likewise follow the traditional patterns, strictly in all other manuscripts except β, where *then* is frequently selected in contexts depicting single events, thus expanding into the discourse domain of Old English *þa*.

In addition to being more progressive in the use of *then* and *when*, the β manuscript also stands apart in other respects. Hudson (1964) characterizes its orthography, and that of γ, as further away from the original and notes eastern dialectal features in these manuscripts. Kooper (2013) observes that β contains more content markers indicating textual organization. In the present study, β turned out to contain more preposed *when*-clauses, fewer obsolete lexical items, more Scandinavian (after γ) and Romance (after ε) loans, fewer contracted negatives and fewer prefixed past participles (after γ) than other manuscripts. Though these factors constitute a somewhat random selection, they nevertheless all point to β being more progressive than the other manuscripts. Considering the dates of the manuscripts, this finding is not totally surprising, but it does not fully tally with the dates, because β is not judged to be the latest of the manuscripts (Table 1). Dialectal differences might provide an explanation, but, as *when* spread starting from the South-West, its higher frequency in a manuscript with eastern features appears rather contradictory. In LALME's linguistic profile maps, β is located north-east among the manuscripts of *RobGlo*, which may be speculated to point to progressive tendencies related to northern influences.

Though β appears progressive according to all these factors, there is one feature that goes against this characterization. When the development of narrative style towards more modern form involves a decrease in the use of explicit signals of the sequential story-line, we would expect fewer instances of *tho* and *then*. What we find, however, is that the β scribe inserts *then* in places where there is a gap in other manuscripts, thus adding such signals. This may be related to the tendency observed by Kooper for the β scribe to use more content markers; both types of signals organize and structure the text. Thus it could be argued that in this scribe's production the need to mark discourse structure overrides the stylistic trend to use fewer explicit markers of story-line. And the β scribe is not alone in this, nor is *RobGlo* the only Middle English text where we find items marking the main line of the story in a similar fashion to Old English *þa* (e.g. Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* (Fludernik 2000) and saints' lives (Wårvik 1995)).

The changes in these ambiguous adverb/conjunctions coincide with a number of other developments transforming English from Old to Modern. Leaving aside the influx of loanwords and the drastic simplification of inflectional morphology, students of this period in the history of English still need to deal with changes that suggest typological shifts in syntax and discourse pragmatics. Such changes include the increasing frequencies of temporal subordinate clauses, decreasing frequencies of temporal adverbials showing the progress of the narrative story-

line, most notably *þa*, the disappearance of *weorðan* and its replacement by *be* (*beon/wesan*), the emergence of the *be+* V-*ing* (*beon/wesan+* V-*ende*) and its development to the progressive aspect, and the word order changes from V2 (or a version of it) to SVO (Brinton 1993, 1996; Fischer 1992; van Kemenade – Los 2006; Los 2009; Petré 2010; Warner 2007; Wårvik 1995; among others). Though these changes may appear unrelated, they can be seen as parts of larger developments. Los (2012) relates some of them to a typological shift of English from a bounded to an unbounded construal in narrative structuring (e.g. Carroll et al. 2004). Along similar lines, Wårvik (1990b) characterized the changes in signalling of narrative structure during the Middle English period as a typological, rather than a stylistic shift from a foreground-marking language to a background-marking or fuzzy-grounding language. Whatever the interdependences between these almost parallel developments in the Middle English period are, it is difficult to see how their coincidence could be purely accidental. The findings of this present study of manuscript variation of one text tally with the hypotheses that the parallel changes are parts of larger developments taking place during the Middle English period. Obviously, more studies, particularly of texts with multiple manuscripts, are needed to determine how exactly the different changes are related.

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