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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Introduction:
Reassessing Multilingualism
in Medieval Britain

Bringing the word *multilingualism* to the forefront of the scholarly discussion about the linguistic ecosystem of medieval Britain presents an important challenge: it can wrongly suggest that multilingualism was a historically exceptional phenomenon, a fundamentally inaccurate assertion, as it would have been had this special issue dealt with modern societies.[1] In fact, a more nuanced understanding of multilingualism can enable us to establish some connections between what could seem the remote past and the most immediate present.[2] An initial pressing question is terminological in nature: what does *multilingualism* entail beyond its primary meaning, that is, the use of multiple languages? What level of linguistic competence (if any) is required for a language user, community or even textual object to be considered *multilingual*? Pairing the use of languages with proficiency, a modern construct, proves to be particularly problematic.[3] It overlooks other kinds of engagements with languages and tantalising evidence for understanding the mechanisms underlying the process of language learning.[4] That is why *multilingualism* will be herein understood in the broadest possible sense, referring to the use of languages with different status, functions and contexts of use, within individuals of varying linguistic skills and repertoires and across communities. In parallel to the languages that were brought with the major historical invasions and conquests of Britain, the contention and guiding principle of this special issue is that we must also account for the use of other languages relating to knowledge transmission (among others, Arabic and Greek) and migrant communities (e.g. Dutch or Italian) in medieval Britain.

Starting from the Brittonic language spoken before—and during—the Roman settlement, Britain was home to a multilingual environment prior to the shaping of what would be known as *Englisc*, (Old) English, after the arrival of the Germanic settlers.[5] In Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (731), the Anglo-Saxon

historian Bede listed the five languages of the four nations of early eighth-century Britain:

> Haec in praesenti, iuxta numerum librorum, quibus lex diuina scripta est, quinque gentium linguis, unam eandemque summae ueritatis et uerae sublimitatis scientiam scrutatur, et confitetur, Anglorum uidelicet, Brettonum, Scottorum, Pictorum et Latinorum, quae meditatione scripturarum ceteris omnibus est facta communis. (*Liber Primus*)

> There are in the island at present, following the number of the books in which the Divine Law was written, five languages of different nations employed in the study and confession of the one self-same knowledge, which is of highest truth and true sublimity, to wit, English, British, Scottish, Pictish, and Latin, the last having become common to all by the study of the Scriptures. (Sellar's translation 1907, 7)

While Latin was—and continued to be in the later centuries—common to all the nations, as it functioned as a *lingua franca* for religious communication and the transmission of knowledge, in his *Historia ecclesiastica*, Bede established a clear correlation between each nation and a specific language. This idea had currency after the Middle Ages and powerfully resonates in the modern configuration of national identities in the shape of the one nation-one language ideological equation (on this policy in modern states, see Thiesse 2021, 40–60). However, Bede's linguistic overview, given from the English perspective, may represent just one side of the coin. A more complete linguistic picture of Britain—not just from the early eighth century but, I would add, beyond that period as well—emerges in view of textual and linguistic evidence produced by other ethnic identities besides the Anglophone population.[6]

The early history of Britain at large was marked by conquests and settlements—by the Celts, Romans, Anglo-Saxons (Angles, Saxons, Jutes and Frisians), Scandinavians and finally the Normans—, which shaped and greatly diversified the linguistic panorama of the island.[7] Throughout these different phases, a common denominator was the country's connections with the Continent, which remained relatively constant in varying degrees: Britannia had been a province of the Roman Empire, and under Cnut (King of England 1016–1035), England became part of a powerful Scandinavian empire at its zenith. While the Norman conquest of 1066 disrupted this *status quo*, it generated a new flux between England and France. Not only did the Norman Conquest initiate a process of migration from France but also from Flanders, as will be discussed later in this Introduction.

After the loss of Normandy in 1204, however, England is conventionally depicted in relative isolation from continental Europe, London being the major exception. Fourteenth- and fifteenth-century England, as Ormrod, Lambert, and Mackman stress (2019, 2), was seen as "a 'closed' society whose contacts with

the outside world were founded not on the presence of immigrants but on passing acquaintance with foreign envoys, merchants and pilgrims". The extant records, particularly abundant from the thirteenth century onwards, prove otherwise (Ormrod, Lambert, and Mackman 2019, 6).[8] In particular, the alien subsidies in combination with other primary sources (governmental documents, literary texts or evidence from the visual arts) provide revealing data for Ormrod, Lambert, and Mackman's (2019) quantitative and qualitative examination of the significant presence of immigrants between the expulsion of the Jews in the 1290s and the arrival of the Huguenots and the Dutch protestants in the 1560s. The focus of this special issue is precisely on the role of "foreign" languages.[9] After all, internationally mobile and migrant communities were—as they are nowadays—part and parcel of what constitutes the multilingual and multicultural fabric of society.

Recent and forthcoming publications in the field attest to these new and more diverse directions. A case in point is *Medieval English in a Multilingual Context: Current Methodologies and Approaches* (edited by Pons-Sanz and Sylvester (forthcoming)), which, apart from the "big" three languages—English, Latin and French—encompasses contributions on Dutch, Norn, Welsh and Old Norse. From a broader historical, economic, cultural and textual perspective, crucial volumes on multilingualism in medieval Britain include Trotter's (2000) *Multilingualism in Later Medieval Britain*, Tyler's (2011) *Conceptualizing Multilingualism in Medieval England, c. 800–c.1250* and Jefferson and Putter's (2013) *Multilingualism in Medieval Britain (c. 1066–1520): Sources and Analysis*.[10] Although England tends to be the focal point of discussion, some contributions also concentrate on Wales (e.g. see Smith (2000) on Welsh and English; Richter (2000) on the Anglo-Welsh border; Fulton (2011) on the historical relationships between British, English, Welsh and French; Sharpe (2013, 9–13) on eleventh- and twelfth-century charters in Wales and Cornwall), Scotland (e.g. Sharpe 2013, 16–23) and Ireland (e.g. Crick 2011; Sharpe 2013, 13–16).[11] In the context of both England and Ireland, Crick attempts to reconstruct the activities and concomitant linguistic exchanges of the English and the Irish from the eleventh to the thirteenth century, and she points out how "Irish towns were scarcely more monolingual, with English-, Welsh-, and French-speakers occasionally represented among a permanent Hiberno-Norse presence before the Norman invasion" (2011, 237). What is characteristic about these works is their interdisciplinarity: they bring together specialists from different areas of expertise (among others, linguistics, history, literature and manuscript studies) to tackle a great diversity of contexts, languages and periods.

Another fruitful line of enquiry represented in the aforementioned volumes (see, e.g., Rothwell 2000; Wright 2000; Wright 2013; and the references therein) tackles the study of the so-called *mixed-language texts* classified according to Myers-Scotton's Matrix Language Framework (1993; 1997; 2001).[12] Such textual witnesses, using Medieval Latin as a base language (the *matrix language*), contain a significant number of morphemes coming from the vernaculars (acting as the

embedded languages), which, in late Medieval England, are Anglo-Norman and Middle English.[13] The lexical material in those texts—including abbreviations, suspension marks or taxonomically ambiguous morphemes—often cannot be easily ascribed as being part of just one language but as belonging to several languages simultaneously. In the context of late medieval England, it has been argued that the lexical boundaries between Anglo-Norman and Middle English blurred, being in a relationship of "merger" rather than borrowing (Rothwell 1991, 174), a picture to which one must add Medieval Latin, with its great capacity of accommodating lexical material from the vernaculars.[14] Underlying the vernacular etyma there may be other languages (e.g. Old Norse and Middle Dutch), which evidence the untapped potential of such texts for the study of multilingualism, or perhaps more accurately, *translanguaging*.[15] On a more basic level, this stresses the need for research collaboration across languages despite the somewhat artificial language-based division which has characterised modern academic disciplines (Trotter 2000, 1).

It is worth noting that, while post-classical Latin has been largely researched in both medieval and early modern Britain—and Europe more broadly—, the other two languages with which Latin is typically associated, particularly in the context of religion as the triad of sacred languages, Hebrew and Greek, have received less attention.[16] Moran's research deserves special mention for having tackled the Irish dimension of manuscripts and texts containing these three languages (Greek, Latin and Hebrew) as well as Old Irish in different combinations.[17]

After the expulsion of the Jews from England, a significant body of Anglo-Hebrew writing was unfortunately lost, a circumstance which is typically neglected in the scholarly surveys of the multilingual and multicultural milieu of authors such as Geoffrey Chaucer (Nisse 2020, 166).[18] Nisse (2020) discusses how most Christian authors preceding Chaucer in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were interested in attempting to recover the literal sense of the Old Testament and to access rabbinic writing, which would become the epicentre of anti-Jewish polemics not only in England but also in France. The stark contrast between an interest in the Hebrew Bible and its exegesis and a lack of a philological appreciation of the language in the pre-expulsion period would have been remedied by Jewish teachers, who would have helped Christian scholars to approach the Hebrew texts by means of French, that is, by using French as vehicular language.[19] As Olszowy-Schlanger highlights (2001, 108), in the thirteenth century, the situation changed, and knowledge of Hebrew among Christian scholars seemed to have significantly increased to the extent that it can be suggested that Christian scholars did not exclusively rely on external tutoring help but studied it independently. We now have a better understanding of the materials for learning Hebrew (lexicographical resources, textbooks and manuals) that were developed by Christian scholars with the assistance of Jewish teachers. Olszowy-Schlanger (2023) examines and contextualises these pedagogical tools and provides a description and an edition of the only extant copy of a thirteenth-century grammar written in Hebrew, Latin and Anglo-Norman (also

given in facsimile). Another important collaboration between Christian and Jewish scribes was the production of interlinear psalters written in Hebrew and Latin (in the 1230s and 1240s), prepared for scholars associated with Robert Grosseteste, the theologian and scientist which also features prominently in the discussions of the thirteenth-century interest in Greek. However, by the late fourteenth century, most traces of Hebrew manuscripts in England were lost, excepting pedagogical texts (Nisse 2020, 166; Olszowy-Schlanger 2023).[20]

As for Greek, it was argued that the language was mostly unknown during the Middle Ages and that its learning was "little more than a trivial curiosity" (Kaczynski 1988, 115). Barranu's (2021) study reassesses our understanding of the knowledge and use of Greek in late medieval England by drawing on evidence from the books of religious houses dated from the late twelfth to the early fourteenth centuries (see Ponirakis in the present issue for an overview of the pre-Conquest period). Barranu underscores how scholars must transcend the evidence for Greek knowledge that only proficient readers in learned circles afford and instead consider the many other ways of engaging with Greek (e.g. transliteration, transcription and lexical understanding), hence creating a much more dynamic concept of *literacy* than our present-day definition. "Philohellenism" is the label that she uses to describe such multi-layered interest in incorporating Greek—sometimes just words or alphabets—into Latin texts before the advent of the English humanist tradition during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[21] The attitudes towards Greek and the Greeks in early medieval England have also been approached from a linguistic angle in Timofeeva's (2016) lexical and syntactic research, which is based on a corpus of texts in Latin and Old English, complemented by the *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus, Brepolis Library of Latin Texts – Series A*, *monumenta.ch* and *Medieval Latin from Anglo-Saxon Source*.

My attention will now turn to other traditionally peripheric and, hence, less researched languages in the context of medieval Britain. The original conception of this project also covered the knowledge and/or use of Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Dutch, German and Arabic in medieval Britain, but for reasons beyond the editor's control, only a smaller proportion of such languages is here represented. Despite the present narrower scope, this introduction attempts to showcase the importance of recent research into some of these languages, which have significantly gained ground in scholarship on historical multilingualism. In *Trading Tongues*, Hsy (2013) examines how multilingualism and trade inform the production of literary texts in "contact zones"—i.e. areas facilitating interactions between languages and people—, cities like London (see also Hsy 2020). The discussion primarily revolves around the use of French and Latin in professional settings although there are some references to other languages (e.g. Dutch and Italian) and the contact that such writers as Chaucer or John Gower had with them, often through literary texts.[22] The scope of Hsy's book conditions the somewhat tangential treatment of these "foreign" languages, but they have become central to the discussion of

multilingualism beyond the "big" languages.[23] In particular, studies on Italian, Arabic and Dutch—moving away from the recorded use of those languages *per se* and capturing their functions and the knowledge conveyed *through* those languages—have sustainedly come to light.

The significance of Chaucer's engagement with Italian literature has, naturally, been much more widely studied than the broader sociolinguistic context of use of the language in urban centres in which Englishmen like Chaucer would have first come into contact with Italians and their language.[24] Tiddeman's use of trade records (accounts, contracts, etc.) from the thirteenth century to the first half of the fifteenth century enabled her to trace the bidirectional nature of Anglo-Italian contact (Tiddeman 2012; 2017; 2020; 2022; 2023). In particular, in commerce and finance in late medieval England, the Genoese, Venetians and Tuscans stood out. This had a direct bearing on the technical nature of the Italian loanwords that were incorporated into Middle English (and vice versa), frequently via Anglo-Norman.

The Romance of Richard, famously opening with a prologue describing the linguistic situation in early fourteenth-century England, purposefully renders multiple languages in the characterisation of individual characters and communities (Summerfield 2013, 251). Apart from the use of "semi-French" (Summerfield 2013, 251), the attempt to represent Arabic in the context of Saracen soldiers shouting "in their own language" (line 6073) is noteworthy. What seems a snippet of Arabic turns out to be non-sensical, but as Summerfield (2013, 254) points out, it is nevertheless imbued with a symbolic threatening force. In the case of Arabic, the scholarly debate has centred on the presence of Arabic learning in medieval culture and literature (see classic works, e.g., Burnett 1997) rather than on language contact, which shows how the different multilingual dynamics need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis.[25] Chaucer's production also serves as a window into the Arabic learning that transpires in his works, as has been recently demonstrated (see Jagot 2014; 2022); and from a lexical viewpoint, even if there are few direct lexical borrowings from Arabic into English, the number of indirect loanwords (i.e. mediated by other languages such as French or Latin) in the Middle Ages and early modern period deserves further attention (see Smith in the context of Scots).[26]

The last language to be considered in this survey is the role of Dutch in medieval Britain, whose study has been recently invigorated thanks to initiatives such as the "North Sea Crossings" project (Putter et al.), which has increased the visibility of Anglo-Dutch relations from 1066 to 1688 among scholars and the general public.[27] It is not accidental that the starting point for their overview is the Norman Conquest since Matilda, queen of England by marriage to William the Conqueror, was of Flemish origin, and the closing date is the year 1688, the "Glorious Revolution", which prompted King James II's deposition and the subsequent crowning of William of Orange as king of England, Scotland and Ireland in 1689.[28] Already from the twelfth century, there are two royal charters from Carmarthen, Wales, including the Flemish in the opening address, and there is evidence suggesting that

Dutch was maintained long after the Flemish settlement in Wales (Putter 2010). The records associated with urban immigrant—as well as emigrant—communities are testimonies to the degree of Anglo-Dutch contact that took place both in Britain and on the Continent: concerning the immigrant communities, the ordinances of the guild of Dutch hatmakers of medieval London, produced in English and Dutch, have been recently edited (McSheffrey and Putter 2023);[29] and as for the emigrant communities, the *Book of Privileges* (c. 1485), recording the privileges and grants given to the Merchant Adventurers, the English merchants operating in the Low Countries (first in Bruges and later Antwerp), also offers insightful information about language contact and bilingualism. William Caxton, renowned for being the first English printer, was appointed governor of the aforementioned English Nation of Merchant Adventurers in 1462. As Putter (2021) argues, Caxton's translations are written in the kind of English one would expect to find in the writings of a person who has lived abroad, in the Low Countries, for around thirty years. Putter defines the kind of idiolect found in Caxton's translations as a blend of English, Franglais and Vlaams-Engels (Flemish-English) and shows the effects of linguistic interference from Dutch in Caxton's English translation of the *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, the first book printed in English.

Along these research lines, the contributions in this special issue concentrate on German, Greek, Arabic and the impact that the introduction of the printing press had on Britain's multilingual ecosystem. **Ulrich Busse's** "German Loans in Early English" firstly sets out to make a distinction between the lexical contributions of High German in contrast to Low German or Dutch. In historical texts, *Dutch* was an ambiguous term which could also refer to *German*, and in the lexical analysis of pre-sixteenth-century borrowings into English, using "German" is tantamount to assuming that most of those words came from Low German and Dutch. As a result, Busse's contribution exclusively focuses on the influence of High German on English. The vigorous nature of the relations between Britain and the low varieties across the North Sea materialised itself in borrowings from those varieties during the Middle Ages, while the influence of High German only started to become patent in the sixteenth century. This situation conditions the limited number of borrowings from High German into early English, but these words are, nonetheless, "interesting and varied as far as areas of borrowing, transmission routes of words (i.e. ultimate v. immediate source), linguistic strategies (i.e. importation v. substitution), and mode of transmission (i.e. written v. spoken) are concerned" (25). Busse follows a chronological order and correlates the different periods, Old, Middle and Early Modern English, with key historical milestones, thereby providing a rounded historical and sociolinguistic contextualisation of the data.

Following a similar etymological approach, in "The Arabic Element in Scots Lexis", **Jeremy Smith** innovatively explores the Arabic origin of Scots vocabulary from a qualitative perspective. He takes two major dictionaries, the *Dictionaries of the Scots Language* and the *Oxford English Dictionary*, as his point of departure for

a detailed examination of individual lexemes which are classified as derived (even ultimately) from Arabic. In most cases, there are corresponding entries between the two dictionaries, which helps Smith to collate the lexicographical information provided, including the different etyma involved, senses, and illustrative citations. His contribution highlights the opportunities that such detailed lexicographical analyses offer, especially if complemented by other resources such as corpora. Some of the patterns that he pinpoints include the following: the main semantic fields to which Arabic-derived words contributed; the fact that, like pre-sixteenth-century borrowings from High German, these forms were mediated by Latin or French; and a usage divergence in Scots in comparison to English. Some distinctively Scots features range from semantic changes to specific sound changes. All in all, Smith's paper shows "how the ripples of the encounter between Islamic and Christian cultures, primarily around the Mediterranean littoral, reached the shores of a country almost at the edge of the world known to Europeans" (55).

Eleni Ponirakis's "Hellenic Language and Thought in Pre-Conquest England" traces back the earliest Byzantine influence in England in the seventh century in order to set the precedents for the connections between England and what was by then a "subtle Hellenistic influence in both the visual representations of faith and in approaches to piety" (64). The school of Theodore of Tarsus and Hadrian of Nisida (both native speakers) in Canterbury would become a referent for the study of Greek in early medieval England, a context marked by a general absence of purpose-built pedagogical materials for learning the language. However, as Ponirakis underscores, it was possible to learn—and even master—the language with resources other than grammars of Greek such as bilingual (Greek-Latin) texts. Bede, whose interest in Greek was motivated by the task of biblical exegesis, epitomises such linguistic success. Beyond an interest in the language, Ponirakis highlights that the importance of Greek must also be understood in the context of transmission of ideas. The work of Eriugena, the Irish monk responsible for translating Pseudo-Dionysius and Maximus the Confessor, played a crucial role in the access to the Greek mystical theology that surfaces in Old English texts, but these ideas may have been well received because of the legacy of Theodore of Tarsus, who probably knew Maximus the Confessor himself. Consequently, Ponirakis's overview, adducing evidence from the eighth to the eleventh centuries, analyses these two strands (Greek language and thought). The use of Greek, as she demonstrates, is not limited to sacred contexts; it is also found in magical charms and the hermeneutic style of poetry which popularised in the tenth century.

Finally, in "The Advent of the Printing Press and Britain's Multilingual Textual Culture, 1471–1510", **Jordi Sánchez-Martí** looks into the language/s selected for the publication of early printed books in England, Wales and Scotland, and into how these linguistic choices transformed the multilingual nature that had formerly characterised medieval manuscript culture. Whereas William Caxton's business model on the Continent had been multilingual (with works first being published

in Latin and later on, in French and English), once he settled in London, his—by then—finetuned commercial strategies led him to assess the market and generate needs that had not yet been covered by Continental printers, thereby concentrating on the publication of books which potential customers could not have acquired elsewhere (cf. Coates 2014). As Sánchez-Martí's contribution underscores, for Caxton and his successors, their competitiveness relied on printing books mostly in English, a largely neglected language since the invention of the printing press in Europe. The *English* in some of them was in actuality the product of—in some cases, silent—Anglicisation of works originally composed in Scots. Sánchez-Martí also considers the belated and limited printing of texts in Welsh (the first one published in London in 1546), and Scotland's *de facto* monopoly on the publication of texts in Scots. However, as Sánchez-Martí puts it, "none of the other linguistic communities in Britain offered a social ecosystem with similar cultural vigour and economic muscle that could guarantee the financial viability of an independent printing press" (97).

These four articles, tapping into several disciplines (linguistic and literary studies, history, translation and book history), are proof of how multilingualism comes under many guises and pervades all spheres of life (religion, trade, culture, etc.). Hence, while the contributions draw on linguistic terminology, the scope of the special issue transcends a purely linguistic approach and situates multilingual practices within a sociocultural and historical milieu. This special issue contributes to the ongoing scholarly conversation about under-researched aspects of multilingual Britain and its other languages beyond English, Latin and French.

Notes

1   A modern monolingual perspective is typically equated with speaking just one language with a politically recognised official status and, more importantly, perceived as "powerful" (e.g. English, Spanish, French, and German). Such a sense of linguistic superiority may lead to a state of "linguistic myopia" (Edwards 1994, 1), which can have sociocultural and political implications. As a result, the perception of monolingualism as the norm has recurrently been projected onto the past. Pavlenko's edited volume (2023) dispels long-standing myths by examining the history of multilingualism from the third century BC to the present.

2   The study of historical multilingual material has been productively informed by research into present-day multilingual practices. In particular, *code-switching*, understood as an umbrella term covering several types of language mixing, "from the insertion of single words to the alternation of languages for larger segments of discourse" (Bullock and Toribio 2009, 2), is now at the centre of linguistic and literary studies in medieval Britain and beyond (see, among

many others, Davidson 2009; Schendl and Wright 2011; Pahta, Skaffari and Wright 2017; Louviot and Delesse 2017).

3   For a full discussion of the inapplicability of notions of *proficiency* to medieval multilingual practices as found in a corpus of c. 250 English manuscripts from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, see Barranu (2022).

4   Linguistic innovation in a second/additional language is not restricted to present-day language contact scenarios but can also be studied with historical data. A case in point is the French article in Medieval Latin texts, which started to function as a textual marker to indicate a switch into the vernacular from the mid fifteenth century onwards, hence departing from its prototypical usage in French (for recent research into the uses of this French-origin article, see Roig-Marín 2021a, 325-326; 2021b).

5   During the Roman period, some scholars call that Celtic language *British* and, after a series of changes that it underwent c. 450–600 CE, *Brittonic* (see Coates 2007, 172). The linguistic descendants of Brittonic are Breton, Welsh, Cornish, and Cumbric in the north-west of England.

6   According to the traditional narrative, the Anglo-Saxons created a dichotomic way of conceptualising their identity, whereby the Britons became the "Other" and were subjected to English colonialism; the Anglo-Saxons would have completely erased the Britons in the territory of what would later correspond to England and confined them to Wales, Cornwall and Cumbria. This view, derived from documentary records such as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* or Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*, has been disputed for evoking nineteenth-century ideas about ethnic purity. An alternative view has suggested more continuity on the basis of historical and archaeological evidence. Yet, according to Coates (2007), the linguistic evidence, concentrating on lexical and onomastic borrowing, seems to favour the traditional view, at least in the south-east. Brady's (2017) study on the Welsh borderlands in early medieval England has demonstrated how the area populated by both Welsh and Anglo-Saxons was an area of contact, "a cultural nexus", rather than a military frontier, as it was traditionally depicted, which should make us reconsider long accepted scholarship. For a study on Wales and the Britons from the mid-fourth to the early eleventh centuries, see also Charles-Edwards (2013).

7   For one of the most recent and thorough introductions to the history of multilingual England (700–1400) for non-medievalist readers, see Critten and Dutton (2021), who prove how multilingualism is not a new phenomenon, but they do not contend with Celtic languages or other "non-native" languages like Greek or Hebrew.

8   Clanchy (2012, 1) gives insightful estimated figures: from early medieval England, c. 2,000 charts and writs are extant, whereas from the thirteenth century, tens of thousands of such documents survive. For an online database of all the archival materials used by Ormrod, Lambert, and Mackman (2019),

see "England's Immigrants, 1330–1550" (<https://www.englandsimmigrants.com>).

9   See Ormrod, Lambert, and Mackman (2019, 7-8) for an etymological discussion of the terms *immigrant*, *alien*, *foreign* and *stranger*, and the rationale behind the decision of not using *stranger*. In this introduction, "foreign" and "non-native" would be used in inverted commas given the complex history of Britain, which renders such a dichotomy (native vs. non-native/foreign) somewhat inexact in the Middle Ages.

10 Linguistic interactions and multilingualism also underpin full sections of reference books on medieval English Literature such as Strohm (2007) and the one edited by Radulescu and Rikhardsdottir (2022), which situates medieval literature in a trans-European context.

11 Sharpe (2013) is repeatedly cited because of the breadth of his paper: it covers not only English, French and Latin, but also Celtic languages (Welsh, Cornish, Gaelic and Irish), Old Norse, and the Dutch in the Flemish community in Pembrokeshire, Wales).

12 On the potential pitfalls in the application of present-day frameworks to medieval texts, see Roig-Marín (2019).

13 A discussion of the different labels for the variety of French used in the British Isles is here in order: the conventional way of referring to this variety of French is by using *Anglo-Norman* (hence, the *Anglo-Norman Dictionary*). Yet, objections to this label have been raised, arguing that it does not reflect the multiple continental sources (not just from Normandy) of the language. Other possibilities include *Anglo-French* and *Insular French*, the latter avoiding the exclusive association of French with England since it can be applied to the whole of Britain and Ireland. Since the focus of this introduction is not on this language, for the sake of clarity and consistency with the articles in the present special issue, I will use the traditional label *Anglo-Norman*.

14 On evidence from texts that are not in monolingual English such as those whose matrix language is Medieval Latin, see Durkin (2014, 291–295) and the references therein.

15 Compare Hsy's (2013, 6) use of *translingual* (writing and identities) in the context of the "complex literate practices of medieval code-switchers". *Translanguaging*, a term that originated in the description of bilingual classroom dynamics, involves drawing on the speakers'/writers' whole linguistic repertoires without concentrating on the constructs of *languages* as clearly distinct and separable entities, an idea which seems to capture the sociolinguistic reality in the Middle Ages, before the consolidation of "standard" languages.

16 Beyond the interest in these three sacred languages, Cain (2016, 83) touches upon the learned interest in esoteric languages such as Egyptian and Old English *indisc*, the language of India, in early medieval English monastic

contexts. However, the expression of such interest in linguistic esoterica is sparsely recorded in early medieval England as elsewhere (Cain, personal communication, July 8, 2020).

17 On Hebrew words in early Irish glossaries, see Moran (2010); for the study of Greek (and its pronunciation) in early medieval Ireland, see Moran (2011; 2012); more recently, Moran (2022) concentrates on a ninth-century copy of Priscian's Latin Grammar, which exhibits a combination of Latin and Old Irish annotations, as well as code-switching between the two languages.

18 For a recent and comprehensive historical account of the Jews in thirteenth-century England, see Tolan (2023).

19. Similarly, French also seems to have been the language for the formal instruction of Latin in grammar schools, information that can be gleaned from the early fourteenth-century writings of the monks Higden and Holcote (see Ingham 2012, 33-34).

20 The rest of the Hebrew manuscripts would have been either taken to the continent or repurposed (Nisse 2020, 166). For a discussion of prominent Jewish scholars and writers in the thirteenth century, see Roth (1948) and Nisse (2020). Nisse overviews important figures such as the Tosafist Elijah of London, the poet Meir of Norwich, or grammarians like Moses ben Isaac ha-Nessiah, among others. Other texts from prosaic domains include multilingual legal documents such as charters and documents (see De Visscher 2013; Olszowy-Schlanger 2001; 2016).

21 On the English humanist tradition, see Rundle (2019).

22 On John Gower's connections with Iberia, the reception and translation of his works, see Sáez-Hidalgo and Yeager (2014), Sáez-Hidalgo (2017) and Sáez-Hidalgo, Gastle, and Yeager (2017).

23 An important contribution to the study of the languages of traders is the cross-linguistic volume *Merchants of Innovation: The Languages of Traders* (Wagner, Beinhoff, and Outhwaite 2017), covering a broader chronological span and geographical area than the present special issue.

24 On the Italian legacy in Chaucer, see, e.g., Ginsberg (2002), Wallace (2004), and more recently, Fulton (2021) on the wider impact of Italian culture, including painting, politics or topography. In addition, Turner's (2019) biography of Chaucer as a European poet brought to light new evidence for the study of his private life, travels and early circulation of his works.

25 Note that Sephardi Jews also made use of the Arabic script (Sirat 2002, 30). See also Akbari and Mallete's (2013) edited volume for case studies from the Mediterranean world.

26 Investigations into the influences of other languages on the history of English vocabulary are far too numerous to be listed here, but the—relatively small—lexical contributions from Arabic into English have received less scholarly attention, with some exceptions such as Taylor (1934), Cannon and Kaye

(1994)—the largest lexicographical work on Arabic loanwords in English to date—, Durkin's overview (2014, 383–385) and studies on particular words (e.g. Conde (1998) on Mozarabic *cordwain* and *cork*).

27   An outreach activity of this research project was the "North Sea Crossings" exhibition at the Bodleian, jointly organised by the Universities of Bristol, Cambridge and the Bodleian Libraries, and the accompanying book, Levelt and Putter (2021), a compellingly illustrated volume with images of materials from the Bodleian's collections.

28   See the recent book *Anglo-Dutch Connections in the Early Modern World* (Levelt, van Raamsdonk, and Rose 2023) for the chronological continuation of these relations in the early modern period.

29   Another noteworthy edition (with facing translation) in the context of Anglo-Dutch relations is the Middle Dutch *Brut* (Levelt 2021).

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