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TO HELE THEM OF SOMME *SEKENESSES* AND *MALADYES* AND ALL *ILLNESS* OF THE STOMACH. ON THE RIVALRY BETWEEN *ILLNESS*, *SICKNESS* AND *MALADY* IN MIDDLE ENGLISH

Abstract: The present paper analyses the fates of the native nouns *illness* and *sickness* and those of the French borrowing *malady* in Middle English. Focusing on the regional and temporal dimensions of their rivalry, the study uses the evidence from the *Innsbruck Corpus of Middle English Prose* (ICMEP, Markus 2008), a collection of 129 works of Middle English prose. The analysis also makes use of other databases such as *Collins English Dictionary* (CED), the *Historical Thesaurus of English* (HTE), *Middle English Dictionary online* (MED), *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (MWD), and the *Oxford English Dictionary online* (OED).

The degree of the adaptability of the terms in question is best reflected in their varied frequency in the ICMEP's texts. The tentative research results place *malady* (107 attestations in total) far behind its Germanic equivalent *sickness* (701 attestations). A single instance of *illness* testifies to its low recognisability in the Innsbruck Corpus of Middle English Prose, probably due to its being often replaced by *sickness*, which leads to a considerable reduction in the use of the term.

Keywords: borrowing, *Innsbruck Corpus*, medical terminology, Middle English, native term.

Streszczenie: Niniejszy artykuł omawia rozwój dwóch germańskich terminów *illness* oraz *sickness* oraz francuskiego zapożyczenia *malady*, które oznaczają 'stan bycia chorym lub słabego zdrowia' (tłumaczenie autora). Uwzględniając geograficzny oraz czasowy wymiar rywalizacji tychże terminów, badanie omówione w niniejszym artykule oparte zostało na danych zaczerpniętych z *Innsbruck Corpus of Middle English Prose* (ICMEP, Markus 2008). Dalsza analiza dokonana została przy wykorzystaniu *Collins English Dictionary* (CED), *Historical Thesaurus of English* (HTE), *Middle English Dictionary* (MED), *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (MWD) oraz *Oxford English Dictionary online* (OED).

Poziom adaptacji omawianych terminów zaobserwować można na podstawie częstotliwości ich występowania w tekstach *Korpusu*. Wstępne wyniki badania

sytuują *malady* (107 wystąpień) daleko za swoim germańskim ekwiwalentem *sickness* (701 wystąpień). Pojedyncze wystąpienie terminu *illness* dowodzi jego znikomej rozpoznawalności, co prawdopodobnie spowodowane jest częstym zastępowaniem go przez *sickness*, prowadzącym do redukcji omawianego terminu.

Słowa kluczowe: zapożyczenie, *Innsbruck Corpus*, terminologia medyczna, średnio-angielski, termin rdzenny

Introduction

Medicine, with its function to protect individuals against the unseen enemies of the body and mind, gave the sense of stability and well-being. (cf. Bator – Sylwanowicz 2017, Sylwanowicz 2013b, 2014b, 2018ab, 2021). Health and comfort have always been prioritised and thus prompted people to treat any deviation from ‘a state in which a person is not suffering from any illness and is feeling well’ (CED, s.v. *health*) as a serious danger to their life. The above claims coincide with the four values of medical ethics, including autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence and justice (Beauchamp 2013), to establish the principles of medical care.

It was a common belief of primitive healers that illnesses resulted from ordinary conditions, such as cough, or were projected by evil forces, and thus required special treatment by a shaman. Lyons – Petrucelli (1978:31) state that “Primitive man apparently often distinguished between ordinary conditions (such as old age, coughs, colds and fatigue) and illnesses caused by spirits or evil forces that required the special services of a medicine man, shaman or witch doctor.” The mentally ill were seen to be the victims of evil spirits and therefore isolated, often mistreated or even sentenced to death.

Walsh (1920) offered a detailed account of medical history and the work of medieval physicians in the Middle Ages, which began with the deposition of Romulus Augustus in 476 and ended with the fall of Constantinople in 1453. The author introduces the history of medicine in the following way:

As a matter of fact, we have found that the history of medicine and surgery, and of the medical education in the Middle Ages, are quite interesting as all the other phases of their accomplishments. Hence the compression that has been necessary to bring a purview of all that we know with regard to medieval medicine within the compass of a brief book of this kind. The treatment has been necessarily fragmentary, and yet it is hoped that the details which are given here may prove suggestive for those who have sufficient interest in the subject to wish to follow it, and may provide an incentive for others to learn more of this magnificent chapter of the work of medieval physicians. (Walsh 1920: 1)

Green’s study (1992) of obstetrical and gynaecological Middle English texts contained a survey of thirty manuscripts of several Latin gynaecological texts, e.g. *Gynaecia of Musico*, the translation of the gynaecological writings of a Greek

physician Soranus of Ephesus as well as other medical texts written in Latin such as Petrus Hispanus, Bernard of Gordon and Gilbertus Anglicus.

Medical terminology was strongly affected by words borrowed from other languages, predominantly from Latin. Jóskowska-Grabarczyk (2013:41) state that “Over the centuries, the development of medical terminology has been based on the process of creating parallel national and international terms, known all over the world and well-defined. In the field of medical, biological and pharmaceutical sciences, such a reliable tool of communication was Latin and Greek.” In fact, Latin exerted a vast influence on English lexis, inventing terms used to name new concepts in the language:

Latin has, since the earliest period of the history of English, been one of the principal donor languages in the expansion of the English vocabulary. A great many of the lexical items that can ultimately be traced back to Latin have entered English indirectly via French and various other Romance languages, which together with Latin probably contributed almost two-thirds of the word-stock of Present-Day English. Still the number of direct loans from Latin, although varying from period to period, is very considerable. (Berndt 1982: 50)

Kealey (1981) adopted rather sociocultural perspective on medieval medicine. His monograph centres on the growing number of physicians and hospitals in the period under question as well as methods of delivering health care. The author profoundly discusses the role of medical personnel and institutional facilities in the period 1100-1154, known for the establishment of infirmaries.

Drickx (1983) concentrated on the nature of medical English, its structure and characteristics. Having introduced the reader into the structure and dynamics of the English language, in the last chapter of his study, he turned his attention to the “diseases of the tongue,” which pertain to particular errors that collide with the main function of language to convey ideas.

Long-time studies on medical science involved not only the analyses of vocabulary but gave rise to extensive research on medical recipes, their structure and functions. Marqués-Aguado (2018:241) asserts that “recipes, which have a primarily instructional focus, are frequently encountered in scientific writing in the English vernacular written in all periods of the language.” Along similar lines, Connolly (2016: 135) argues that “The recipes typically outline the medical problem in their opening words, advise which substance ought to be used and how they should be prepared, and then give instructions as to preparation. Their structure and language reveal preferences towards the choice of language-specific expressions aimed at conveying required information as well as audience they are addressed to.” In her analysis, Marqués-Aguado (2018:243) concentrates on medical recipes collected in London Wellcome Library, drawing attention to their structural and linguistic features. The text of the manuscript, part of *The Malaga Corpus of Early Modern English Scientific Prose*, “contains mostly medical but also veterinary and household recipes” (cf. Marqués-Aguado 2018:243).

Medieval medicine has a long and interesting history, being the subject of scholarly discussions as well as an important research area. Undeniably, studies on centuries-old medical tradition, its origin and influence on humankind, may give significant results in the future.

Aims and research methodology

The paper seeks to analyse the development of the nouns *illness*, *sickness* and *malady* in Middle English, with special focus on semantic changes they underwent in time, as well as their dialectal and temporal distribution in the *Innsbruck Corpus of Middle English Prose*. Attention is also drawn to contexts in which the terms occurred, e.g. the names of illnesses mentioned in texts, their symptoms and therapeutic methods. Texts included in the ICMEP, divided into genres (e.g. biographies of saints, sermons, wills/charters, medical recipes or handbooks) and dialects, following the traditional division into Northern, Southern, Kentish, East- and West Midland, are arranged according to their manuscript date, from the earliest (c. 1100-1350) to the latest (c. 1400-1500). The timely division of the ICMEP's text sources may be summarised as follows:

- (1) c. 1100-1350
- (2) c. 1350-1400
- (3) c. 1400-1500

The first step of the study involved the choice of terms belonging to the semantic field of SICKNESS. To establish the ultimate list of items, several dictionaries and thesauri were consulted, i.e. the *Historical Thesaurus of English online*, *Middle English Dictionary online* and *The Oxford English Dictionary online*. The results of the selection revealed *illness*, *sickness* and *malady*, to be the most adequate lexemes representing the abovementioned lexical field.

The development of the noun *illness* in Middle English prose

The noun *illness* is a formation stemming from the adjective *ill* 'morally evil; wicked, iniquitous, depraved, vicious, immoral, blameworthy, reprehensible' and the suffix *-ness* 'the condition or state of'. Even though the noun *illness* refers to the state of being ill or suffering from a disease, its current sense varies from that in which it first entered English. Its original meaning (A) 'bad moral quality, condition, or character; wickedness, depravity; evil conduct; badness' (OED), related to moral depravity rather than poor health, and as such was first recorded in the 15th century prose romance *Melusine*, a translation of the French original *Roman de Mélusine*, in which *illness* (*ylnesse*), paired with *disobedienc* (*dysobedyence*), pointed to rebelliousness, and therefore failed to convey its present meaning, cf.:

- (1) That we were consentyng to the **ylnesse** & dysobedyence of Claude ayenst our souerayne lord naturel, your fader. [c1500 Melusine]
‘...illness (‘depravity’) and disobedience...’

Meaning (A) proved to be hardly identifiable in texts under analysis as well as in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Both sources quote the entry above as the only instance to render that meaning in the Middle English period. However, as was observed, sense (A) was given marginal treatment also later in time. Only one such instance appears in the 16th century (1562) and gives rise to a slight progression in the 17th and 18th centuries, being evidenced three times, with the last identified attestation dated to 1718 in Humprey Prideaux’s (1628-1724) *The Old and New Testaments connected: in the history of the Jews and neighbouring nations, from the declensions of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah to the time of Christ*.

The further temporal development of *illness* reveals that the lexeme gained two other meanings (B) ‘unpleasantness, disagreeableness; troublesomeness; hurtfulness, noxiousness; badness’ and (C) ‘bad or unhealthy condition of the body; the condition of being ill; disease, ailment, sickness, malady’, both dated to the 16th and 17th centuries respectively. However, it is the latter which illustrates its current sense ‘an unhealthy condition of body and mind’ (MWD). While meanings (A) and (B) developed simultaneously and, as evidenced in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, became lost in the 18th century (1718), the meaning in (C) survived to 1875, being last recorded in Jowett’s translation of Plato’s *Dialogues* (7):

- (2) Wearied with the **ilnes** of the waye. [c1595 T. Maynarde Sir Francis Drake his Voyage]
‘illness (‘unpleasantness’) of the way’
- (3) By reason of their vnaptnes and **illnesse** of sound, when two vowels or letters can not be pronounced. [1690 J. Locke Essay Humane Understanding]
‘inaptness and illness (‘unpleasantness’) of sound’
- (4) By the darkness of the Night, or **illness** of the Weather. [1690 J. Locke Essay Humane Understanding] ‘ illness (‘unpleasantness’) of the weather’
- (5) Land flat marshy hardly inhabited for the **illness** of the air. [1718 G. Berkeley Jrnls. Trav.]
‘illness (‘unpleasantness’) of the air’
- (6) Rue is of excellent Use for all **illness** of the Stomach. [a1699 W. Temple Essay. Health & Long Life in Miscellanea]
‘illness (‘hurtfulness’) of the stomach’
- (7) Athletes..are liable to most dangerous **illnesses** if they depart. from their customary regimen. [1875 B. Jowett tr. Plato Dialogues]
‘dangerous illness’

Citations in (2-7) illustrate the senses (B) and (C) above. Interestingly, item (6) specifies the type of an illness by stating the name of an ailing organ, e.g. *illness of the stomach*. But, unlike the example from Temple's *Essay on Health and Long Life*, fragments under (2-5) refer *illness* to a tempestuous, adverse weather, commonly associated with discomfort and anxiety, here in a strongly metaphorical sense. The fragment from Plato's *Dialogues* conveys the literal meaning of bodily discomfort.

The development of the noun *sickness* in middle english prose

The history of *sickness* (< OE *seocnes*) goes back to the 10th century when the term was first used in the *Canons of Edgar*, a series of ecclesiastic regulations written by Wulfstan (8).

- (8) We lærað þæt ænig unfæstende man husles ne abirige, buton hit for ofer-
seocnesse sy. [c 967 Canons Edgar] ‘... those not fasting do not receive
 Holy Communion except when
 gravely ill’

The original meaning ‘the state of being sick or ill; the condition of suffering from some malady; illness, ill-health’ underwent narrowing towards more specific uses. First records from Old English texts stated that *sickness* initially referred to ‘a particular disease or malady’ (c1000, e.g. *horse-sickness*, *joint-sickness*, *sea-sickness*), where the first formative element specified the type of an ailment.

In the course of time, *sickness* underwent further semantic specialisation. Meanings developed in the 17th-18th centuries related to a particular type of sickness and its symptoms, i.e. ‘a disturbance of the stomach manifesting itself in retching and vomiting’ (1604) and ‘a disease in sheep, braxy’ (1794). Apart from medical correspondences, *sickness* gained the figurative meaning ‘utter disgust or weariness’ (1779) and an only once recorded sense ‘sickly hue’ (1849), however, such meanings were never attested in the ICMEP.

In the study conducted on the ICMEP's texts, *sickness* has an extraordinarily high degree of adaptability. Its 701 records contrasted with a single use of *illness* testify not to a rivalry between these two Germanic lexemes, but to an almost entire displacement of *illness* in the examined material. Importantly, the considerable predominance of *sickness*, did not prompt the loss of *illness* since they both, along with *malady* (see below), operate in Modern English.

Table 1: The distribution of *sickness* in the ICMEP texts from 1100-1350

Text title	Manuscript date	Number of tokens
<i>Ancrene Riwe</i> (ed. Tolkien)	1200+	26
<i>Ancrene Riwe</i> (ed. Wilson)	1200+ (c1225)	4
<i>Ancrene Riwe</i> (ed. Zettersten)	1200+ (c1225)	36
<i>Prose Life of Alexander</i>	1330-1340	13

As noted above, *sickness* presents a far higher frequency ratio than *illness* and *malady* do, which may be the decisive factor contributing to its survival. The earliest records of *sickness* come from texts written between 1100-1500 (e.g. *Ancrene Riwe*, *Prose Life of Alexander*). A strong disproportion in the use of *sickness* between three editions of *Ancrene Riwe*, a 13th century anonymous monastic rule for anchoresses, (36 vs. 26 vs. 4 forms) testify to an individual character of each edition. As many as 36 uses in Zettersten contrasted with 26 instances employed by Tolkien and 4 records in Wilson's edition prove its being increasingly redundant in texts. Aside from texts associated with medieval monastic culture, well-documented was *sickness* in *Prose Life of Alexander*, whose 13 forms confirm its still strong position as the dominant term to describe poor health.

Table 2: The distribution of *sickness* in the ICMEP texts from 1350-1400

Text title	Manuscript date	Number of tokens
<i>The Middle English Prose Complaint of Our Lady and Gospel of Nicodemus</i>	c1375	1
<i>Mandeville's Travels</i>	1350+	5
<i>Pepysian Gospel Harmony</i>	c1400	3
<i>Richard Rolle and His Followers</i> (vol.1)	a1400	4

As the earlier centuries reveal the decline of *sickness*, sources from 1400-1500 prove otherwise. Late Middle English texts show that the term turned out to be far better-established in 1400-1500 than in the earlier centuries, and thus became the dominant lexeme expressing lack of health at that time.

Table 3: The distribution of *sickness* in the ICMEP texts from 1400-1500

Text title	Manuscript date	Number of tokens
<i>De Consolatione Philosophie</i>	a1425	1
<i>The Brut, or The Chronicles of England</i> , (part 2)	c1400	10
<i>The English Conquest of Ireland A.D. 1166-1185</i>	1400+ (1425)	1
<i>Fistula in ano</i>	c1425	22
<i>Dan Jon Gaytryge's Sermon</i>	1400+	3
<i>Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum</i>	c1440	2
<i>English Gilds</i> ¹	14/15c	4
<i>Revelations of Divine Love</i>	c1420	10
<i>English Mediaeval Lapidaries</i>	15c	16
<i>Liber de Diversis Medicinis</i>	c1422-1454	9

¹ MED adds the following title: *English gilds: the original ordinances of more than one hundred early English gilds: together with The olde Usages of the cite of Wynchestre; the Ordinances of Worcester; the Office of the Mayor of Bristol; and the Costomary of the Manor of Tettenhall-Regi: from manuscripts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.*

Continued table 3: The distribution of *sickness* in the ICMEP texts from 1400-1500

<i>Works of John Metham</i>	1400+	1
<i>Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ</i>	1400+	9
<i>The Mirror of St. Edmund</i>	1400+	5
<i>A Myroure to Lewde Men and Wymmen</i>	1400+	2
<i>The Fire of Love</i>	1435	4
<i>The Mending of Life</i>	1434	2
<i>Agnus Castus</i> ²	1500+	4
<i>Alphabet of Tales (part 1)</i>	1450+	17
<i>Alphabet of Tales (part 2)</i>	1450	24
<i>The Revelations of Saint Birgitta</i>	a1475	3
<i>Book of Quintessence</i>	c1460-1470	11
<i>Abbreviation of Chronicles</i>	c1462-1463	12
<i>Lives of St. Augustine</i>	1440	45
<i>Four Sons of Aymon (part 1)</i>	c1489	1
<i>Four Sons of Aymon (part 2)</i>	c1489	2
<i>Blanchardyn and Eglantine</i>	c1489	1
<i>Dialogues in French and English</i>	c1483	1
<i>The Doctrinal of Sapience</i>	1489	12
<i>The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry</i>	1483	3
<i>Paris and Viene</i>	1485	3
<i>Quattuor Sermones</i>	1483	15
<i>Tulle of Olde Age</i>	1481	8
<i>Cely Letters</i>	1472-1488	14
<i>Cloud of Unknowing and the Book of Privy Counselling</i>	1500+	8
<i>Craft of Dying</i>	1450+	9
<i>Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers</i>	1450+	18
<i>Three Prose Versions of the Secreta Secretorum: Governance of Lordships</i>	1500+	12
<i>Middle English Translation of Macer Floribus de Viribus Herbarum</i>	1450+	6
<i>The Life of St. Hieronymus</i>	a1500	1
<i>The History of Reynard the Fox</i>	1481	6
<i>Le Morte Darthur</i>	1485	7
<i>Merlin: The Early History of King Arthur: A Prose Romance (part 1)</i>	c1450-1460	3
<i>Merlin: The Early History of King Arthur: A Prose Romance (part 3)</i>	c1450-1460	2
<i>Works of John Metham: Christmas Day (vol. 2)</i>	1450+	1
<i>Works of John Metham: Days of the Moon</i>	c1450	22
<i>Works of John Metham: Palmistry</i>	1448/1449	8

² The full title: *Agnus Castus: A Middle English Herbal Reconstructed from Various Manuscripts* (ed. Gösta Brodin)

Continued table 3: The distribution of *sickness* in the ICMEP texts from 1400-1500

<i>Works of John Metham: Palmistry</i> ³	c1450	6
<i>Works of John Metham: Physiognomy</i>	1448 (1449)	3
<i>The Myracles of Oure Lady</i>	1496	10
<i>The Third Order of Seynt Franceys</i>	15c	3
<i>The English Register of Oseney Abbey</i>	1460	1
<i>The Paston Letters</i> (vol. 2)	1420-1500	5
<i>The Paston Letters</i> (vol. 3)	1420-1500	4
<i>The Paston Letters</i> (vol. 4)	1420-1500	2
<i>The Paston Letters</i> (vol. 5)	1420-1500	9
<i>The Paston Letters</i> (vol. 6)	1420-1500	7
<i>De Paier Noster of Richard Ermyte. A Late Middle English Exposition of the Lord's Prayer</i>	1400 +	6
<i>The Donet</i> (vol.1)	c1475	4
<i>Three Prose Versions of the Secreta Secretorum: Governance of Princes</i>	a1500	7
<i>English Register of Godstow Nunnery</i>	c1450	20
<i>Richard Rolle and the Holy Book Gratia Dei</i> (vol. 2)	1400+	2
<i>Richard Rolle of Hampole ... and his Followers</i> (part 1)	a1450	17
<i>Richard Rolle of Hampole ... and his Followers</i> (part 2)	1489	30
<i>Richard Rolle of Hampole, Yorkshire Writers</i>	a1450	20
<i>English Prose Treatises of Richard Rolle de Hampole</i>	1420-1500	1
<i>The Rewle of Sustres Menouresses Enclosed</i>	a1500	1

Data in Table 3 confirm that, unlike in the earlier centuries, texts from the end of Middle English showed a considerable increase in the employment of *sickness*. It seems that among the authors of texts included in this group, John Capgrave used the term most extensively in his *Lives of Saint Augustine* (45 attestations)⁴. Even though the total number of uses in other texts does not equal the results attained by Capgrave, a group of texts, including the *English Register of Godstow Nunnery* (20 attestations), confirms the strongest position gained by the term in the last phase of the Middle English period. It seems that, apart from Capgrave, an English mystic and writer Richard Rolle often used *sickness* to describe moral dilemma corrupting human soul. The two parts of his *Richard Rolle of Hampole ... and his Followers* demonstrate the ratio of 30:17 attestations, whereas in the remaining sources,

³ The *Works of John Metham* come from different manuscripts. While the former was included in Garret MS in the Princeton Library, the latter stems from All Souls 81(Oxford).

⁴ The full title of the text: *John Capgrave's Lives of St. Augustine and St. Gilbert of Sempringham, and a Sermon*.

the frequency drops significantly, down to 1 (e.g. *Blanchardyn and Eglantine, Dialogues in French and English*).

It must be pointed out that the topic of a text is an important factor to decide about the use or omission of a term. As may be seen in Table 1, *sickness* generated an equal number of records in a medical and non-medical source. A comparison of the *Treatises of fistula in Ano, haemorrhoids and clysters* with Metham's *Days of the Moon*, proves the authors' knowledge of the lexeme and a need to employ it in both texts, even though *sickness* was more expected in medical discourse, cf.:

- (9) If, forsoþ, þe blode brist out it is called þe emoroyde³; but if þat it flowe temperatly it doþ many helpyngs and preserueþ þe body fro many **sekene³** aduste and corrupte, as is Mania, malencolia, pleuresis, lepre, morfe, ydropisy, mormale, quartane, passions of þe splene, and som of oþer like. [c1425 *Fistula in ano* 57/r28]
 'If, really, blood damages, it is called haemorrhoid; but if it flows temperately, it helps and preserves the body from many severe and destructive sicknesses such as insanity, melancholia ...'
- (10) Cause of þis **seknes** bene som tyme emoroides hid within þe lure, or pustule³, or excoriacions in longaon, or for chynnyngs of longaon which ar called ragadie, or for hote humour imbibed in longaon, or for þat cold humour is inuistate þer, or for aposteme³, or for vlcere³, or for takyng of laxatiue medi_cyne. [c1425 *Fistula in ano* 71/r32]
 'The cause of this sickness is sometimes haemorrhoides of the anus or pustule ...'
- (11) (...) he that fallyth seke that day schuld longe contynwe in hys **sekenes** but at the laste with gode gouer_nauns he schuld skape yt; qwat that a man dremyth that nyght schuld turne to trwthe; a man that day schuld noght blede but fore pestylens.
 [1450+ (c1450) Works of John Metham: Days of the Moon]
 '... he that falls sick that day should long continue his sickness but at the laste with good governance he should escape it ...'

John Arderne, an English surgeon, seen as the Father of English surgery, the author of *Practica Chirurgiae* 'Practice of Surgery', "where he details the regimen for treatment of this condition and in which he boasts that he had a survival rate of fifty percent, which was astonishing for this period" (Gardham 2012), frequently employs *sickness* with reference to 'a particular disease or malady.' However, the names of sicknesses mentioned by Arderne differ from those listed in the *OED*, and include i.a. melancholy, pleurisy and leprosy (see 9). Apart from stating the names of sicknesses, the author identifies their reasons, among which he enumerates *haemorrhoids*, *excoriations*, *inflammations* (10).

Two interesting examples of *sickness* appear in *Agnus Castus: A Middle English Herbal*. The citation from that 15th century medical recipe is said to be an instruction on the ways of overcoming sickness. According to the text, a pulverised herb may protect an individual against an uncontrolled flow of blood.

- (12) Also if a man haue þe feouours or þe flux oþer \ be feble with eny oþer sodeyn **sykenesse** tak þis herbe and poune hure with aysel. [1500+ Agnus Castus. A Middle English Herbal (198/r25)]
'And also if a man suffers from fever or blood loss or any other sudden sickness ...'

The compilers of the ICMEP's texts identified sickness not solely with the state of physical discomfort, but they shifted the interpretation of its meaning towards a religious understanding of the term as a corruptive force destroying human soul or a punishment sent by God to the humankind. Apart from frequent references to religion, the earliest literary sources rendered *sickness* as the method of self-discovery. It may be observed that chiefly in early religious texts *sickness* developed a wide range of meanings, some of them not identified in dictionaries. Citation under (14) where 'sickness makes man understand who he is' allows one to suggest that the term reflected the deeply religious notions of atonement and purification, characteristic of religious language. Further research confirms these observations, moreover, the results obtained from the analysis indicate that such entries were encountered only in the earliest literary texts without continuation later in the period.

- (13) And in al þe werlde nas yfounde an hole half on noman forto ben yleten bloode on for þe **sekenesse** þat man lay inne for his synne. [1200 + Ancrene Riwe 41/r20]
'... the sickness that one spills for his sins.'
- (14) **Sicnesse** ðet god send. [1200 + Ancrene Riwe 80/r27]
'Sickness that God sent.'
- (15) **Secnesse** makeð mon to understonden hwet he is. [1200 + Ancrene Riwe 95/r11]
'Sickness allows one to understand who one is.'

Such a contextual diversity characterises mainly religious literature. Frequent correspondences to God and (the) Devil, as the dominant forces illustrating the opposition of right and wrong, predominate in *Ancrene Riwe*. Such references to supernatural beings corresponded to the semantics of the adjective *sick* 'spiritually

or morally sick or corrupted, perverse’, ‘distressed emotionally by grief, anger’ (MED), being the key semantic component of the word.

It must be emphasized that the term should not be understood exclusively as a consequence of physical defects. The core meaning ‘the state of being sick or ill; the condition of suffering from some malady; illness, ill-health’ (OED), evolved towards metaphorical senses related to the sphere of human soul such as ‘spiritual or moral sickness’, ‘sickness caused by emotional distress’, ‘sickness caused by love, lovesickness’ (MED). Relevant citations from *Middle English Dictionary* and the *Oxford English Dictionary* suggest that non-literal entries emerged in English before 1400 to disappear in the first half of the 19th century, cf.:

- (16) Þe secunde **sekenesse**..comeþ of..sorwe. [(?1387) Wimbledon Sermon]
‘The second sickness comes of sorrow.’
- (17) When the spirit is sore fretted, even tired to **sickness**
of the janglings..of the world.
[1821 C. Lamb in London Mag.]
‘When the spirit is strongly distressed, even tired to develop sickness
of the prattling of the world’

Examples recorded in the ICMEP lead to certain conclusions as regards the contextual use of the term. Based on data from the *Innsbruck Corpus of Middle English Prose*, the nouns *death*, *febleness*, *infirmity*, *penance*, *sorrow* and *tribulation* frequently occur in pairs with *sickness*. It was perhaps the author’s intention to pair the headword *sickness* with another lexeme of a similar meaning, associated with ‘insalubrity, weakness’ (HTE, s.v. ‘infirmity’), and thus to stress the negative load of the term in question. Binomials such as *languor & sekenes*, *penance & sekenes*, *sekenes and trebulaciouns*, *sorow & siknesse*, *of infirmite or of sekenes* occur in texts with a various degree of frequency and illustrate the author’s preferences towards the choice of discourse-specific vocabulary. In addition to the formations above, the recorded instantiations of *sickness* are sometimes paired with the French synonym *malady*, most probably to illustrate a parallel usage of two etymologically different words, and thus raise a discussion on their potential rivalry. Out of 15 binomials (Gustaffson, 1975, Sauer 2017a: 7-37, 2017b: 61-78, 2017c: 275-303, Sauer 2019a: 2019b: 309-326, Sauer 2020: 97-116, Zhao 2021: 180-188) exemplified in the examined material, as many as 4 such pairs are adduced in *The Doctrinal of Sapience*, Caxton’s translation of the 14th century (1389) French religious instruction *Le Doctrinal de Sapience*. The remaining four texts observe a steady decrease in the number of uses, to ultimately reach 1 in *Mandeville’s Travels*, *The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry* and *Tulle of Olde Age*:

- (18) And ther ben also somme breuettis and wrytynges whyche they do bynde vpon certeyn persones for to hele them of somme **sekenesses and maladyes**. [1450+ (1489) The Doctrinal of Sapience (55/r8)]
'And there have also been some patents and writings which they bind to certain people to heal them of sicknesses and maladies.'
- (19) And ho that drynkyth thryes of that watyr fastynge, he is hol of ony **seknesse or maladye** that euere he haue.[1350+ Mandeville's Travels 87/r28]
'And he who drinks water when fasting, he is cured of any sickness and malady that he ever had.'
- (20) (...) wherewith he hadd also gret **siknesse, maladie**, and lacke of sustenaunce. [1450+ (1483) The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry 103/r18]
'... wherewith he suffered also a great sickness, malady and lack of livelihood'
- (21) That is to witt that **sekenesse and maladye** is propryd to the age of puerice in childhode, & cruelte is appro_prid to the age of youghth, worshipfulnesse and sadnesse of maners be appropryd to the age of virilite whiche is the fyfthe age. [1450+ (1481) Tulle of Olde Age p32]
'... sickness and malady are characteristic of boyhood and childhood, cruelty characterises youth, worshipfulness and sadness of manners are appropriate to the age of virility to be reached at the age of fifty.'

The data in Tables 1-3 confirm that *sickness* reached its most stable position in the last decades of the period. Results obtained from the research of Early Middle English texts present its remarkably lower frequency of use (79 vs 13), in contrast to the sources from the years 1400-1500, which witnessed a significant growth of records (609 attestations).

According to MED, the earlier borrowing *malady* dates back to the 13th century (c1275; *Kentish Sermons*), unlike its rival disease 'bodily infirmity or disability, sickness, illness, disease; also a malady or ailment', first recorded in Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (a1393). Four 15th century texts contain single attestations of *sickness* in close proximity to another French loan *disease* (< OF *desaise*). This confirms the authors' familiarity with a variety of terms denoting 'the state of being sick or unhealthy' and testifies to the simultaneous employment of two borrowed forms (*disease* vs *malady*) to reflect the same meaning, cf.:

- (22) He was full of such **desese** That he mai nought the deth eschape.
 [(a1393) Gower CA]
 ‘He was full of such a disease due to which he may not escape death.’

Along with other terms of French origin, *disease* entered English as a result of the Norman Conquest. As Horobin-Smith (2002:74) argue “However, from the fourteenth century onwards, French words from Central French dialects enter the language at a great rate, reflecting the cultural status of Central France.” Along with legal, also medical nomenclature formed an important part of Middle English lexicon. A quotation from Gower’s poem, which illustrates the use of *disease* in the 14th century, confirms this fact.

Disease and *malady* entered English along with other French loanwords to co-occur with native terms and fill the semantic gap in the lexical field SICKNESS.

The development of the noun *MALADY* in middle english prose

Malady (< OF *maladie*), the last of the analysed terms and the only loanword examined in the present paper, deserves special attention. From the core meaning ‘ill health, sickness, disease’ (OED), its further changes reveal a gradual progression towards other, also non-medical, senses.

Towards the end of the 14th century, *malady* became associated with (the lack of) love and madness. In a quotation from Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales: Knight’s Tale*, *malady* yields the sense ‘lovesickness’ (a1385), while its use in Gower’s *Confessio Amantis* (a1393) ‘mental affliction, madness’ (MED) confirms a simultaneous development of an additional sense that *malady* attached to designate mental states.

The evidence from MED, suggests that *malady* underwent other developments, as medieval writers often introduced the noun to reflect upon human sins, comparing vice to a ‘malady of courage’, as did Chaucer in his translation of Boethius’s *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, e.g. *For ryght so as langwissyng is **maladye** of body, ryght so ben vices and synne **maladye** of corage*. Similarly, Hoccleve argued that sin may be the source of ill-health, e.g. *Beeth leches of our synful **maladie!***

Text sources show other meanings *malady* conveyed in medieval times. Sources from the end of the 14th century reveal that, at the end of the 14th century, *malady* raised associations with injury and sorrow. Such correspondences appeared in Chaucer, Gower and Hoccleve, who treat melancholy as an instance of malady, e.g. *Pi **maladye** A-bregge it schal, & þi malencolye*.

Unlike MED, the OED uses the term *figurative* to distinguish meanings other than the core. A fragment from Chaucer’s *Knight’s Tale*, i.e. *And in his gere for al the world he ferde Nat oonly lyk the louteris **maladye** Of Heroes, but rather lyk manye Engendred of humour malencolyk*, rendered as ‘lovesickness’ (MED) or ‘the condition of mental, spiritual, or moral ill health; any such condition that calls for a remedy’ (OED), recorded in both dictionaries, is in the latter interpreted as a figurative use.

Of the terms examined in the present paper, *malady* sees the most consistent temporal distribution, increasing from 1 attestation in 1100-1350 towards 4 uses in texts dated to 1350-1400, to ultimately reach a fixed position with 102 attestations in texts from the end of Middle English (1400-1500). In Early Middle English texts, *malady* does not enjoy a stable position and seems to be disregarded in favour of the Germanic *sickness*, with the proportion 1:79 attestations in favour of the latter. Such a tendency may be explained by the fact that it took the newly borrowed French lexeme long time to become the fully-fledged member of English lexicon, and possibly due to its being unfamiliar to the compilers of the texts, *malady* became often replaced with the well-known *sickness*.

It seems that London writers demonstrated far better familiarity with the borrowed terminology than did their contemporaries writing in other dialects. A particularly significant role *malady* played in the works of Geoffrey Chaucer (1343-1400), who favoured the term and gave his preference due expression via the frequent use of the loanword. Chaucer and Caxton's translations of *De Consolatione Philosophiae* and *The Doctrinal of Sapience* stand apart as regards the total number of uses, as they contain 15 and 17 attestations respectively. The study of other Chaucer's writings reveals as many as 9 attestations in *The Parson's Tale*, the last of 24 stories in *The Canterbury Tales*, with a simultaneous omission of *sickness* in the same text. Supposedly, it was the author's intention to use borrowed rather than native lexemes, and thus reveal his intellectual and poetic craft. Another explanation in favour of the consistent use of *malady* suggests that due to its location and the status of the capital city, London attracted the highly-intellectual and well-educated elite of the period, which gave preference to more elaborate and perhaps therefore rare linguistic forms. Apart from Chaucer, no other Middle English writer employed the term with even a similar degree of frequency.

Other works written in the London dialect include 20 attestations in total, which confirms that Chaucer's contemporaries introduced the term in their texts less willingly than he did. As many as 7 records in *Middle English Translation of Macer Floribus de Viribus Herbarum* and only 1 token in *Cely Letters 1472-1488* present the significant loss of the relevant form in texts from the East Midland. Such a discrepancy as regards the spread of the term between two neighbouring areas suggests that their proximity did not influence the use of the lexeme. The predominance of *malady* in texts mentioned above was motivated by the authors' individual choices rather than any sociolinguistic factors.

Writers from the West Midland and the South omit *malady* in favour of *sickness*, which is particularly observed in texts from 1100-1350, cf. 30 attestations of the latter in *Ancrene Riwe* contrasted with a single use of *malady* in the Southern *Late Middle English Treatise on Horses*:

- (23) it is good for al-manere schabbe. & al oper filþe & **maladie** þat gendereþ on þe skyn.

[1500+ Late Middle English Treatise on Horses 109/325]

‘...it is good for any type of skin disease and any type of other filth and malady developed on the skin.’

The evidence from the last decades of the period illustrates the emergence of *disease*, whose meaning ‘bodily infirmity or disability’ goes back to the 14th century. The competition of two borrowed forms (*malady* and *disease*) is observed only once in the Late Middle English romance *Le Morte d’Arthur*, unlike the rivalry of the Germanic *sickness* and the French *disease*, with 8 instances in the ICMEP:

- (24) For alle the mysease that sir tris_ tram hath / was for a letter that he fond / for as to me I dyd to hym no displeasyre / and god knoweth I am ful sory for his **disease and malady**. [1450+ (1485) *Le Morte Darthur* p367]
 ‘...I really apologise for his disease and malady.’
- (25) And tho that grudgyn in **sekenes** , losse of goodes or other **diseasis** ayenst God doo ageynst this peticion and gretely displese God. [1450+ (1483) Caxton, *Quattuor Sermones* (20/r23)]
 ‘And those who suffer from sickness, loss of goods or other diseases against God...’
- (26) And wher as ye desier me to send yow woord whether my brodyr John Paston, your fadyr, was with my fadyr and hys, whom God assoyle, duryng hys last **sykenesse** and at the tyme of hys **dissease** at Seynt Brydis, or nowght. [1400+ (1420-1500) *The Paston Letters* (p.87)]
 ‘And if you wish me to send you a word whether my brother John Paston was with my and his father, to whom God gave absolution during his last sickness and at the time of his disease...’
- (27) Blasfemye is whan a man spekyth & grucchith a 3ens god in tri_bulacion or in **dissese or in seknesse**. [1450+ Lavynham, *A Litol Tretys* (13/r17)]
 ‘Blasphemy is when a man speaks and complains against God in trouble or in distress or in sickness.’
- (28) For yf he sente the **sykenesse or other disease**. [a1450 Richard Rolle of Hampole ... and his Followers (p.91)]
 ‘If he sent sickness or other disease.’
- (29) Also yf [thou] be chastysed with losse of goodes / take hede to þe pouerte of Iob where þou may haue a grete example of pacyence, for

with grete thankynges to god he toke full mekely & gladly grete pouerte, **sykenes & many dyseases**. [a1450 Richard Rolle of Hampole ... and his Followers (p.99)]

‘...take heed to the poverty of Job, who is a great example of patience, who, with gratefulness to God, fully and meekly accepted powerful sickness and many maladies.’

Tendencies observed with regard to the development of *malady* leave no doubt that it was a serious rival of *sickness*. Their competition is mainly seen in texts from the end of the period. After entering English in the second half of the 13th century, *malady* fixed its position in the English language two centuries later, and due to its regularly increasing employment in texts, the term survived up to the present moment, and thus became a regular competitor of the remaining items discussed.

Conclusions

The analysis of texts compiled in the *Innsbruck Corpus of Middle English Prose* reveals remarkable quantitative differences regarding the proportion of native and foreign terminology denoting ‘the state of being ill or unhealthy’ (CED, s.v. *sickness*), and thus makes it possible to draw conclusions as regards the authors’ preferences towards the preservation of a word and a simultaneous omission of another one. The consistent use of a single lexical item testifies to the author’s familiarity with that term but may also indicate his unknowing of the existing synonyms. The examination of data from the ICMEP leads to the following conclusions:

- (1) *Sickness*, as the dominant term reflecting ‘the state of being ill or unhealthy’, considerably outnumbered *malady* and left *illness* far behind. Being fairly well-established in Early Middle English, especially in the 13th century *Ancrene Riwe*, which brought 66 attestations, it began losing its popularity in the 14th century (only 13 attestations) to gain momentum at the end of the period (609 attestations, 15c). Its high frequency was observed in texts from three different dialectal areas: *Richard Rolle of Hampole*, in the Northern dialect of Middle English, generated 30 uses. Further reduction in the use of the forms of *sickness* was observed in Chaucer’s *Alphabet of Tales*, written in the London dialect, (24 attestations), and then continued in Metham’s *Days of the Moon*, from the East Midland (Norfolk), with 22 attestations.
- (2) The rivalry of two Germanic nouns shows a drastic disproportion or even an almost entire reduction in the use of *illness*, being displaced by *sickness* throughout Middle English. Such an inconsistent usage may be explained by the fact that the adjective *sick* entered English earlier than *ill* did, and therefore stood a chance to produce a large variety of forms.

- (3) It has already been argued that *malady* lost competition with *sickness* at every stage of Middle English. Striking disproportions, seen as early as the 13th century, lead to assume that it took *malady* two centuries to become a well-established lexeme and to compete with the remaining items. Despite its low recognisability in Early Middle English and centuries-long adaptive processes, *malady* reached a stable position in the 15th century, which is evidenced by its use in the texts of the period.

Conclusions formulated above shed a new light on the fate of medical terminology in Middle English. Quantitative and temporal changes the terms were subject to, contributed to their survival, and, as can be observed with regard to *malady*, a step-by-step progression in the use of a term borrowed from another language may be the key mechanism responsible for its further adaptation.

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