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978-1-107-05859-0 - Imagining Medieval English: Language Structures and Theories, 500–1500

Edited by Tim William Machan

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IMAGINING MEDIEVAL ENGLISH

Imagining Medieval English concerns how we think about language, and simply through the process of thinking about it give substance to an array of phenomena, including grammar, usage, variation, change, regional dialects, sociolects, registers, periodization, and even language itself. Leading scholars in the field here explore conventional conceptualizations of medieval English, and consider possible alternatives and their implications for cultural as well as linguistic history. They explore not only the language's structural traits, but also the sociolinguistic and theoretical expectations that frame them and make them real. Spanning the period 500–1500 and drawing on a wide range of examples, the chapters discuss topics such as medieval multilingualism, colloquial medieval English, standard and regional varieties, and the post-medieval reception of Old and Middle English. Together, they argue that what medieval English is depends, in part, on who's looking at it, how, when, and why.

TIM WILLIAM MACHAN is Professor of English at the University of Notre Dame. He has published extensively on historical linguistics, medieval English, and Old Norse, with a particular focus on language contact and change. His most recent books include *What Is English? And Why Should We Care?* (2013) and *Language Anxiety: Conflict and Change in the History of English* (2009).

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University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107058590

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First published 2016

Printed in the United Kingdom by Clays, St Ives plc

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Imagining Medieval English : language structures and theories, 500-1500 / edited by
Tim William Machan.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-05859-0 (Hardback)

1. English language—Middle English, 1100-1500. 2. English language—Middle English, 1100-1500—Texts. 3. English language—Middle English, 1100-1500—Discourse analysis.
4. English language—Middle English, 1100-1500—Variation. 5. Language and culture—England—History—To 1500. I. Machan, Tim William, editor.

PE525.L43 2015

427/.02—dc23 2015024948

ISBN 978-1-107-05859-0 Hardback

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Acknowledgments

This book began with a suggestion by Linda Bree and the continued support of Alastair Minnis. At the outset I would like to thank them both for their encouragement – Linda in particular for many insightful comments along the way, and Alastair for many years of friendship and intellectual inspiration. From the book came the idea of a conference, at which the contributors would meet to present penultimate versions of their papers. The conference became a reality on 15–17 September 2014, thanks to the University of Notre Dame's institutional commitment to the humanities and to generous grants from the Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts, the Notre Dame College of Arts and Letters, the Henkels Lecture Series, the Medieval Institute, the Nanovic Institute for European Studies, and the Department of English at Notre Dame. The conference was an extraordinary opportunity for improving not only the quality of the individual papers but also the coherence of the volume in its entirety. It made for an invigorating three days, and whatever success this volume has is owed in no small part to it and those who made the conference possible.

I thank the contributors for taking a flyer on a perhaps curious proposal to bring together linguists, literary scholars, and those who are a little of both in order to talk about matters of interest to them all. And I thank them for participating in the conference and writing the first-rate papers collected here. Bobby Meyer-Lee was a virtual contributor, crucial to the conference as well as the book, and many attendees whom I cannot name here asked probing questions, raised pertinent issues, and refined the essays and the book. For making the conference run as smoothly as it did, I thank the Notre Dame Academic Conference Center, especially Lauri Roberts, as well as several Notre Dame graduate medieval students who chaired sessions and animated discussions: Amanda Bohne, Mimi Ensley, Richard Fahey, Marjorie Harrington, Mae Kilker, Anna Larsen, Leanne MacDonald, and Erica Machulak. Amanda Bohne also contributed as an

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all-important research assistant in the preparation of final copy. For crucial help of various other kinds I thank my colleagues Steve Fallon, Valerie Sayers, and John Van Engen.

T. W. Machan
April, 2015