

ON DERIVATIONAL SUFFIXES IN THREE LATE MIDDLE ENGLISH
ROMANCES: *GUY OF WARWICK*, *BEVIS OF HAMPTON*, AND *SULTAN
OF BABYLON*

PIOTR JAKUBOWSKI

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to provide an analysis of derivational suffixes in three Late Middle English romances. Since a number of new, foreign suffixes appeared in Middle English, more specifically of French origin, it is of interest to the author of the study to what extent these were adopted in medieval romances. One might expect that the number of French suffixes might be significantly higher than that of other texts given that romances were as a genre based on a French model. The paper investigates whether this was the case in the texts of *Guy of Warwick*, *Bevis of Hampton*, and *Sowdon of Babylon*, which represent the East Midland dialect in Late Middle English.

1. Aims

The present study has been inspired by the publication on derivational suffixes by Dalton-Puffer (1992). The aforementioned paper, among other aspects, focused on the productivity of Romance derivational suffixes found in the *Helsinki corpus of English texts*. The author questioned the productivity of Romance suffixes on the basis of the results from the conducted analysis. Apparently, the only suffix of French origin that was found to be productive to a limited extent was the suffix *-ment* (Dalton-Puffer 1992: 478). However, due to the nature of the *Helsinki Corpus*, which draws from text samples, it appears of interest whether an analysis of entire texts may provide different results. As was pointed out by Dalton-Puffer (1992: 479) “more conclusive statements, however, must be reserved until more suffixes have been considered in the method presented in this paper. This, as usual, points to the need for additional work” (Dalton-Puffer 1992: 479). The texts selected for the present study are Late

Middle English romances. The choice of the sources for the present investigation was not coincidental. First of all, little research has been conducted on the problem of derivational suffixes in these texts. Moreover, the texts represent the genre of French origin, which may have also had some influence upon the derivations found in these texts. One might expect that the number of French suffixes might be significantly higher than that of other texts given that romances were as a genre based on a French model.

A question inherent in the discussion of Middle English derivational morphology is that of productivity. Following Dalton-Puffer (1992), the criterion which will be employed in the assessment of the productivity of particular suffixes is their capacity to form hybrids. Hybrids, as defined by Dalton-Puffer are “lexical items, where the base and the suffix come from different subparts of the vocabulary” (Dalton-Puffer 1992: 478). The subparts referred to by Dalton-Puffer are native and French words.

Having employed the criterion of hybrid formation for the evaluation of productivity Dalton-Puffer arrived at a conclusion that native suffixes were highly productive in Middle English as opposed to the low productivity of their Romance counterparts (Dalton-Puffer 1992: 478). The number of hybrids formed with the French suffix *-ment* was very low, which put the problem of the productivity of French suffixes in question. The use of the native suffix *-ung* in hybrid formations was overwhelming and greatly outnumbered the occurrences of *-ment*.

The aims of the present study are threefold. First of all, the study aims to present the system of nominal derivation in the texts under investigation. Secondly, the focus of the paper will shift to the evaluation of the process of hybrid formation in the texts in order to determine the productivity of particular suffixes. Finally, it will be established whether the processes observed may be linked to the origin of the genre of these texts by means of the comparison of the results of the analysis with the findings presented by Dalton-Puffer.

2. Data

A few concepts need to be defined prior to the analysis of the derivational suffixes in the texts. First of all, it must be established what is meant by the concept of a derivational suffix. According to Marchand (1969) a derivational suffix is “a derivative final element which is or formerly was productive in forming words” (Marchand 1969: 157). Yet another definition, found in Fisiak (1968 [2000]) is that “word-forming (not inflectional) suffixes are bound morphemes following the root” (Fisiak 1968 [2000]: 108). The first of the quoted definitions is of great use in the analysis of loanwords from French and their derivational suffixes, as the derivational suffix is treated in the present study with regard to

these words as the one which “formerly was productive in forming words” (Marchand 1969: 157). This applies to cases in which the French word was formed on the basis of the Latin roots. The definition provided by Fisiak (2000) calls for the specification of what is meant by the “root” as opposed to yet another concept, namely that of the “stem”. In the analysis of derivational suffixes, and more specifically in determining the etymology of the base word, one will investigate the etymology of the root, and the bound morphemes that follow will be treated as derivational suffixes in the present study.

Let’s now turn to the inventory of derivational suffixes in Middle English, as their presence or absence in the texts will be investigated and their productivity determined. As was already mentioned, the study will focus on nominal derivational suffixes exclusively, as to allow for a comparison with the results obtained in the study by Dalton-Puffer. The inventory of native derivational suffixes presented by Dalton-Puffer is as follows: *-dom*, *-els*, *-hede*, *-lac*, *-nesse*, *-reden*, *-ship*, *-th*, *-ung* (Dalton-Puffer 1992: 470). As regards the last derivational suffix in the list, it underwent a change from /ung/ to /ing/, and was absent in the texts dated after 1250 (Dalton-Puffer 1992: 474). Thus the analysis will focus on the use of the suffix *-ing* in the texts of Late Middle English romances. The Romance nominal derivational suffixes include: *-acy*, *-age*, *-al-*, *-acioun*, *-aunce*, *-erie*, *-esse*, *-ite*, *-ment* (Dalton-Puffer 1992: 470). The analysis of the derivational suffixes in the texts under investigation will proceed in this order for the description of the use and for the assessment of productivity.

3. Method of research

The method applied in the present study is quantitative. The number of the occurrences of particular derivational suffixes is calculated and the percentages are presented. This allows for the comparison with the results obtained by Dalton-Puffer. As the criterion of productivity applied in the present study is that of hybrid formation, the etymology of the base words is established on the basis of the *OED* entries for particular lexical items found in the texts.

4. The sources

The present study investigates the derivational suffixes in three Late Middle English romances. The texts are the *Guy of Warwick* (Auchinleck MS), *Bevis of Hampton*, and the *Sultan of Babylon*. According to the *MED*, all of these texts belong to the East Midlands dialect. The first text, *Guy of Warwick* comes from the beginning of the 14th century. *Bevis of Hampton* is from the second quarter of the 14th century, and the last of the three belongs to the start of the 15th century. The texts vary in their length, yet they were all analyzed in full. The first

of the texts, the *Guy of Warwick*, is about 10 000 verses long, whereas the remaining two, *Bevis of Hampton* and the *Sultan of Babylon*, are 4500 and 3000 verses respectively.

5. Analysis

5.1. Native suffixes

The first of the native suffixes on the list presented by Dalton-Puffer is the suffix *-dom*. According to Fisiak (1968 [2000]), the suffix was employed in Middle English to produce abstract nouns, derived from adjectives and nouns (Fisiak 1968 [2000]: 109). Indeed, this is the use which is found in the text of the *Guy of Warwick* and *Bevis of Hampton*. There were no instances of the use of this suffix in the text of the *Sultan of Babylon*. The suffix was attached exclusively to native bases in the investigated texts. As such, there were no instances of hybrid formations, i.e. the suffix was not found with roots of French origin. Nevertheless, the suffix has been recorded in very few examples, as demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1. *-dom* in LME romances

	<i>Guy of Warwick</i>		<i>Bevis of Hampton</i>	
	tokens	% total	tokens	% total
Deadjectival	2	33,3	0	0
Nominal	4	63,3	6	100

1) Examples from the *Guy of Warwick*:

1056 *halidom*
 9688 *braldom*
 5610 *erldom*
 2462 *crisendom*

2) Examples from the *Bevis of Hampton*:

4574 *erldom*
 4012 *kenedom/kingdom*
 608 *Crisendom*

The suffix *-hede* was used in the formation of nouns from nouns and adjectives in Middle English (Fisiak 1968 [2000]: 109). Out of the few instances found in only two of the investigated texts, the suffix was employed to form nouns from adjectives. There were no examples of the use of the suffix *-hede* in the text of

the *Guy of Warwick*. The suffix was not subject to hybrid formation in any of the investigated texts. Table 2 demonstrates the results of the analysis.

Table 2. *-hede* in LME romances

	<i>Bevis of Hampton</i>		<i>Sultan of Babylon</i>	
	tokens	% total	tokens	% total
Deadjectival	2	100	1	100

3) Examples from the *Bevis of Hampton*:

1486 *graithede*

4) Examples from the *Sultan of Babylon*:

3258 *falshede*

Nouns from adjectives in Middle English could also be derived by means of the derivational suffix *-nesse* (Fisiak 1968 [2000]: 110). The instances of such use have been found in all the texts under investigation. However, the frequency of the forms derived by means of the suffix is very low. Interestingly, this native suffix is also employed with non-native roots, which is evident in the data from the text of the *Sultan of Babylon*. Two of five occurrences of the derived words are composed of Romance roots. The percentage provided in Table 4 is just a mere indication of the trend for the productivity of this native suffix, given that the number of tokens is extremely low.

Table 3. *-nesse* in LME romances

	<i>Guy of Warwick</i>		<i>Bevis of Hampton</i>		<i>Sultan of Babylon</i>	
	tokens	% total	tokens	% total	tokens	% total
Deadjectival	4	100	15	100	5	100

Table 4. Hybrid formations in *-nesse* in LME romances

	<i>Sultan of Babylon</i>	
	tokens	% total
Romance root	2	40

5) Examples from the *Guy of Warwick*:

7920 *hepenesse*

6139 *witnesse*

4600 *gladnesse*

6) Examples from the *Bevis of Hampton*:

500	<i>hethenese</i>
3899	<i>sikeneſse</i>
3706	<i>wildernesſe</i>

7) Examples from the *Sultan of Babylon*:

965	<i>softeneſse</i>
40	<i>worthyneſse</i>

7a) Hybrid formations in the *Sultan of Babylon*:

2944	<i>geauneſse</i>
1948	<i>hardyneſse</i>

A relatively high frequency was recorded with regard to yet another native suffix, namely *-ing* < OE *-ung*. The suffix was employed in Middle English to derive nouns from verbs (Fisiak 1968 [2000]: 11). In the same fashion, the suffix appears in two of the texts, although it is absent from the last of the texts – the *Sultan of Babylon*. Interestingly, the suffix appears in the texts of *Guy of Warwick* and *Bevis of Hampton* with words, whose roots were of non-native, Romance origin. Such use is most prominent in the earliest of the three texts, namely the *Guy of Warwick*. 14% of the forms found with the suffix *-ing* in the text of the *Guy of Warwick* are hybrids with Romance roots. A lower percentage is found in the text of *Bevis of Hampton*. The results may point to some measure of productivity of this suffix in the LME period.

Table 5. *-ing* in LME romances

	<i>Guy of Warwick</i>		<i>Bevis of Hampton</i>	
	tokens	% total	tokens	% total
Deverbal	86	100	38	100

Table 6. Hybrid formations in *-ing* in LME romances

	<i>Guy of Warwick</i>		<i>Bevis of Hampton</i>	
	tokens	% total	tokens	% total
Romance roots	12	14	4	10
Total	86		38	

8a) Examples from the *Guy of Warwick*:

3011 *blisceing*
 5515 *departing*
 6386 *wepeing*

8b) Hybrid formations in the *Guy of Warwick*:

1083 *ambling*
 3764 *spouseing*
 4227 *treueyling*

9a) Examples from the *Bevis of Hampton*:

167 *fighting*
 2989 *gadling*
 830 *honting*

9b) Hybrid formations in the *Bevis of Hampton*:

4565 *couroning*
 3646 *scorning*
 4564 *spusing*

5.2. Romance suffixes

The first of the derivational suffixes of Romance origin found in the texts under investigation is the suffix *-age*. According to Fisiak (2000), the suffix was used to derive nouns from verbs and nouns. The frequency of the occurrence of this suffix in the aforementioned functions is relatively high compared to other suffixes found in the investigated texts. However, the suffix appears almost exclusively with words borrowed from French, thus its productivity in terms of hybrid formation with native roots is questionable. There is only a single occurrence of a hybrid form in the text of the *Bevis of Hampton* with the word *morage*. Tables 7 and 8 present the values for the texts under investigation.

Table 7. *-age* in LME romances

	<i>Guy of Warwick</i>		<i>Bevis of Hampton</i>		<i>Sultan of Babylon</i>	
	tokens	% total	tokens	% total	tokens	% total
Nominal	25	67	13	50	2	14
Deverbal	12	33	13	50	12	86

Table 8. Hybrid formations in *-age* in LME romances

	<i>Bevis of Hampton</i>	
	tokens	% total
Native root	1	3
Total	26	

10) Examples from the *Guy of Warwick*:

1351 *ermitage*
 7365 *linage*
 7260 *pilgrimage*

11a) Examples from the *Bevis of Hampton*:

2945 *damage*
 1054 *omage*
 1439 *parage*

11b) Hybrid formations in *-age* in the *Bevis of Hampton*:

517 *morage*

12) Examples from the *Sultan of Babylon*:

972 *corage*
 629 *heritage*
 2806 *mesage*

Another Romance derivational suffix *-al*, which derived nouns from verbs in Middle English (Fisiak 1968 [2000]: 108) is present in all of the LME texts investigated in this paper. The frequencies are very low, however. The suffix formed no hybrids in the aforementioned texts. Table 9 presents the number of the occurrences of the suffix.

Table 9. *-al* in LME romances

	<i>Guy of Warwick</i>		<i>Bevis of Hampton</i>		<i>Sultan of Babylon</i>	
	tokens	% total	tokens	% total	tokens	% total
Deverbal	5	100	4	100	3	100

13) Example from the *Guy of Warwick*:

2599 *admiral*

14) Examples from the *Bevis of Hampton*:

3504 *marchal*

4345 *springal*

15) Example from the *Sultan of Babylon*:

90 *admyral*

Only one of the texts exhibits the occurrences of the suffix *-acioun*. Deverbal nouns were derived from this suffix in Middle English (Fisiak 1968 [2000]), and this process is manifested in just a few examples found in the text of the *Sultan of Babylon*. Table 10 presents the results.

Table 10. *-acioun* in LME romances

	<i>Sultan of Babylon</i>	
	tokens	% total
Deverbal	4	100

16) Examples from the *Sultan of Babylon*:

1558 *ymagynacion*

2116 *lamentacion*

2118 *meditacion*

The three of the Late Middle English texts manifest the use of the French derivational suffix *-aunce*. According to Fisiak (2000), the suffix was employed in Middle English to form deverbal nouns (Fisiak 1968 [2000]). Such use is recorded in all three texts, although in the text of the *Bevis of Hampton* the form is found only once. The suffix is not present in hybrid formations.

Table 11. *-aunce* in LME romances

	<i>Guy of Warwick</i>		<i>Bevis of Hampton</i>		<i>Sultan of Babylon</i>	
	tokens	% total	tokens	% total	tokens	% total
Deverbal	13	100	1	100	13	100

17) Examples from the *Guy of Warwick*:

5313 *contenaunce*
 4742 *acumbraunce*
 5082 *encumbraunce*

18) Examples from the *Bevis of Hampton*:

2424 *romaunce*

19) Examples from the *Sultan of Babylon*:

994 *grevaunce*
 3101 *ordynaunce*
 2446 *vengeaunce*

The French derivational suffix *-esse* was generally used in the derivation of nouns from verbs and nouns in Middle English (Fisiak 1968 [2000]: 109). It is in this function that the suffix appears in the three texts, although with very low frequency. No instances of hybrid formations have been found. Table 12 presents the results.

Table 12. *-esse* in LME romances

	<i>Guy of Warwick</i>		<i>Bevis of Hampton</i>		<i>Sultan of Babylon</i>	
	tokens	% total	tokens	% total	tokens	% total
Nominal	2	100	2	40	1	50
Deverbal	0	0	3	60	1	50

20) Example from the *Guy of Warwick*:

2416 *richesse*

21) Examples from the *Bevis of Hampton*:

2476 *destresse*
 3762 *ostesse*
 737 *promesse*

22) Examples from the *Sultan of Babylon*:

3016 *richesse*
 2946 *distresse*

Another low frequency suffix present in the texts of the three Late Middle English romances is the suffix *-ite*. The suffix was employed in de-adjectival noun formation in Middle English (Fisiak 1968 [2000]: 110). Again, no instances of hybrid formations were found in any of the texts.

Table 13. *-ite* in LME romances

	<i>Guy of Warwick</i>		<i>Bevis of Hampton</i>		<i>Sultan of Babylon</i>	
	tokens	% total	tokens	% total	tokens	% total
Deadjectival	6	100	1	100	2	100

23) Examples from the *Guy of Warwick*:

8120 *natiuite*
 10403 *trinite*

24) Example from the *Bevis of Hampton*:

1657 *garite*

25) Examples from the *Sultan of Babylon*:

18 *dignite*
 1312 *Trinite*

The only Romance suffix, which according to the criteria laid out by Dalton-Puffer, appeared to be productive in Middle English was *-ment*. This suffix primarily formed nouns from verbs in Middle English (Fisiak 1968 [2000]: 110). However, in the texts of three LME romances any forms of hybrid formations is absent. Thus, it may appear that at the time of the composition of these texts the productivity of this suffix may have finally declined. Table 14 shows the results of the analysis. The suffix was found only in the *Guy of Warwick* and the *Bevis of Hampton*.

Table 14. *-ment* in LME romances

	<i>Guy of Warwick</i>		<i>Bevis of Hampton</i>	
	tokens	% total	tokens	% total
Deverbal	36	100	10	100

26) Examples from the *Guy of Warwick*:

2134	<i>agreement</i>
2030	<i>comberment</i>
7546	<i>iugement</i>

27) Examples from the *Bevis of Hampton*:

4331	<i>comaundement</i>
3889	<i>oiniment</i>
3765	<i>tornement</i>

6. Conclusions

To conclude, the three romance texts of the Late Middle English period employ the majority of the nominal derivational suffixes listed by Dalton-Puffer in her study of derivation based on the *Helsinki Corpus*. However, most of the suffixes appear with very low frequency which is obviously due to the length of the texts under investigation.

With regard to the problem of the productivity of particular suffixes, the study revealed that, as in the study conducted by Dalton-Puffer, the native suffixes are productive, most prominently the suffix *-ing* < OE *-ung*. There is only a single occurrence of a non-native suffix on the native root, namely *-age*. However, this is a single occurrence and it is believed by the author of the present paper that it should be treated as marginal. Surprisingly, the suffix *-ment*, which manifested at least a limited degree of productivity in the study conducted by Dalton-Puffer is not productive in the sense of the potential for hybrid formation in the investigated texts. Thus, the significance of the French patterns for derivation should, at least in the texts of the selected LME romances, be rejected.

Finally, there seems to be no connection between the French genre of the texts and, as has just been demonstrated, the increased use and productivity of the Romance suffixes. In fact, the Romance derivational suffixes proved to be unproductive. Obviously, the investigation into other texts of the Late Middle English period is still necessary, yet with regard to the selected LME romances

the questions presented in the introduction of the present study seem to be answered.

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