



# **ORRM'S FRENCH AND NORSE- DERIVED TERMS**

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# Chatbots 'explain' the *Ormulum*: Perplexity AI on loanwords

The *Ormulum* is a twelfth-century work of biblical exegesis, written by an Augustinian canon named Orm (or Ormin) and consisting of just under 19,000 lines of early Middle English verse. The language of the *Ormulum* is an East Midlands dialect, which includes numerous Old Norse phrases, particularly doublets, where an English and Old Norse term are co-joined.

**While there is no specific information on loanwords in the *Ormulum*, it is known that the language of the speakers of the Danelaw, which includes the East Midlands, did more to directly change English than did the Norman French. Therefore, it is possible that some of the Old Norse phrases in the *Ormulum* are loanwords.**

It is worth noting that the *Ormulum* is known for its unique phonemic orthography adopted by its author, which preserves many details of English pronunciation at a time when the language was in flux.

**Overall, while there is no specific information on loanwords in the *Ormulum*, it is known that the language of the speakers of the Danelaw, which includes the East Midlands dialect of the *Ormulum*, did more to directly change English than did the Norman French.**

# No specific information on loanwords in the *Ormulum*?

- Brate (1885): main study of Norse-derived vocabulary
- Egge (1887): PhD dissertation
- Björkman (1900–02): Norse-derived terms in ME
- Rynell (1948): ME *taken* vs. *nimen*
- Olszewska (1962) and (1973): alliterative phrases
- Hille (2004): ME *til* (cp. Olc *til*) vs *to*
- Johannesson (1995): 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural pronouns
- Skaffari (2009): Norse and French loans in EME
- Pons-Sanz (2015): study of Norse terms in the semantic field of EMOTION
- (Johannesson and Cooper 2023: new edition — glossary includes etymological information)

# Structure

- Identification and classification of the Norse and French loans:
  - Etymologies
  - Semantic distribution
- Interaction between the Norse and French loans and their near-synonyms:
  - Lexico-semantic factors
  - Stylistic factors

- **A. Formal comparative evidence for derivation from ON**
  - A1 = phonological criteria: ME *baisk* 'bitter' (cp. Olc *beiskr* 'bitter')
  - A2 = morphological criteria: ME *hauer* 'skilful' (cp. Olc *hagr* 'handy, skilful')
  - A3 = phonological and morphological criteria: ME *þwertout* 'wholly' (cp. Olc *þvert* 'across')

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- **B. The (Germanic) root of the lexeme \*is not\* recorded (early enough) in OE, but recorded in ON**
  - B1 = There is no clear evidence for forms derived on the same root anywhere else in Germanic: ME *grith* 'peace' (cp. Olc *gríð* pl. 'truce, peace')
  - B2 = Forms derived on the same root are also found in Go. and/or continental WGmc, but not (early enough) in OE: ME *bōth* 'booth' (cp. Olc *búð* 'temporary building or tent')
- **C. The root of the lexeme \*is\* recorded (early enough) in OE but some aspects of form/sense/usage are unparalleled in OE (etc.), and paralleled in ON**
  - C1 = derivational form: ME *aue* 'fear, terror' (cp. Olc *agi* 'dread, awe')
  - C2 = orthographic (phonological) form (where this does not constitute a decisive 'test' of type A): ME *atbresten* 'to break away' (cp. Olc *bresta* 'to crack')
  - C3 = sense: ME *blōm* 'flower, blossom' (cp. Olc *blóm(i)* 'bloom, blossom')
  - C4 = formation of compound or phrase: ME *broppfall* 'epileptic fit' (cp. Olc *broffall* 'epileptic fit')
  - C5 = frequency: ME *til* 'to, till' (cp. Olc *til* 'to')
- **D. Etymology obscure**

# The Gersum taxonomy

## Etymological distribution of the terms considered to be Norse-derived

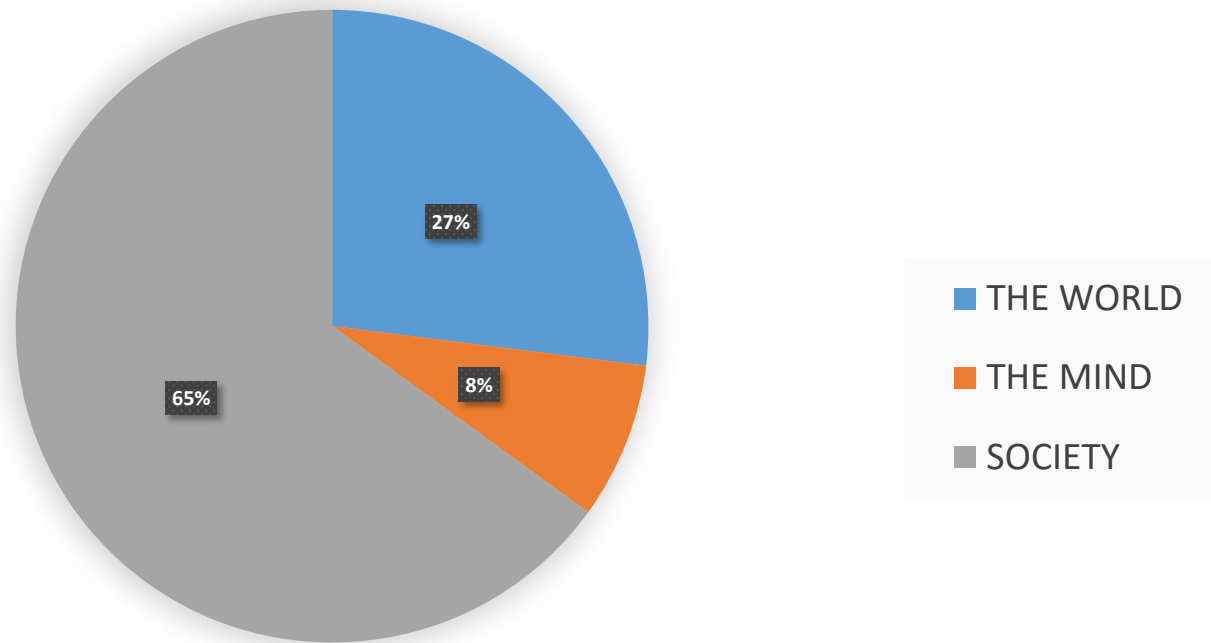
- **Category A words: 101**
- **Category B words: 53**
- **Category C words: 239**
- **Category D words: 29**

# Etymological distribution of the (currently) 47 items considered to be French-derived

- Challenges
  - Origin: which of the two source language, or both?
  - Latin loans of the OE period + reinforcement by and re-borrowing from Anglo-Norman/Old French.
  - General etymologies of PDE or late ME words may not reflect the exact word origin underlying adoptions by a particular author or uses in a particular text.
- Language contact: also through texts and written tradition.
- **Of French origin**
  - e.g. gyn, kariteþ, skarn
- **Latin and/or French**
  - e.g. arrke, leun; farisew, seraphin
- **Hybrids** = polymorphemic, with native & French-derived (or L/F) element
  - e.g. kasstelltun, ma33stredwale, passkeda33; bikacchenn, gluternesse
- **Unclear/not French-derived**
  - e.g. wile

Excluded: proper nouns and adjectives derived from them.

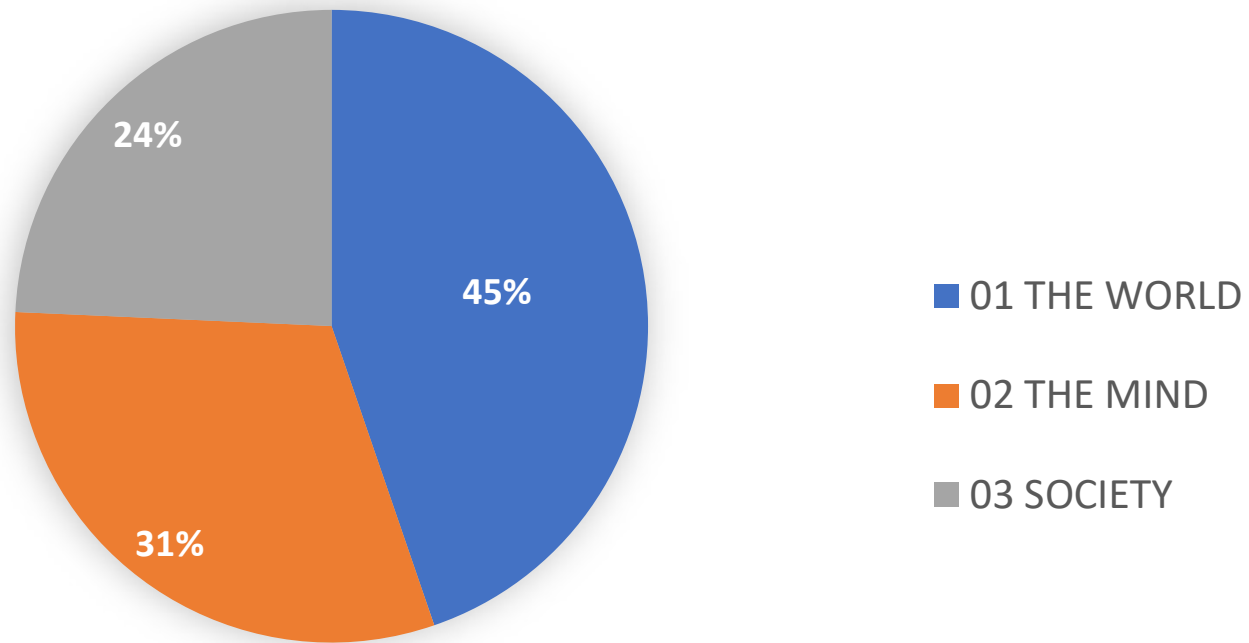
# Semantic distribution of the French-derived loans in the *Ormulum*



Nouns only.



# Semantic distribution of the Norse-derived loans in the *Ormulum*



Content words only.

# Comparison of top fields

## Norse-derived

- THE WORLD
  - **Action and operation**
  - Relative properties
  - Movement
- THE MIND
  - **Emotion**
  - Possession; Attention and judgment
- SOCIETY
  - **Society and the community**
  - Morality; Faith

## French-derived

- THE WORLD
  - **The supernatural**
  - Earth; Food and drink
- THE MIND
  - Emotion; Possession; Attention and judgment
- SOCIETY
  - **Faith**
  - Armed hostility; Authority

# Interaction between Norse-derived terms and their near-synonyms

- **Lexico-semantic factors:**
  - Well-established collocations:
    - <griþþ & friþþ> (cp. OE *griþ* and *friþ* word-fields)
  - Semantic precision:
    - <weng> vs. ME *fether* (OE *fiþere* 'wing' + OE *feþer* 'feather')
  - Lexical gaps:
    - <boþe> and <chepinngboþe> (cp. OE *cēapsetl* and *cēapsceamol*)

# Interaction between Norse-derived terms and their near-synonyms

- **Stylistic factors:**

- Alternation within the hemistich:
  - <sware> vs. <anndswere>
- Alteration at the end of the hemistich:
  - <la<sub>3</sub><sup>h</sup>e> vs. <æ> 'law'

# Interaction between French-derived terms and their near-synonyms

- Few words; mostly very low frequency → patterns difficult to establish
  - The most frequent ones collocate with proper nouns
- Often close to native synonym: <kariteþ>
- Used with a near-synonym:
  - “To stirenn. 7 to buttenn.”
  - Collocation with another loan: “onn hæpinng. 7 o skarn”
  - But <gyn> does not pair up with <skill>, though both are used close to <witt>.

‘Certain’ French-origin items only.

# Concluding remarks

- Etymologies of medieval words: Significant advances have been made, but there is still work ahead.
- Norse vs. French loans in the *Ormulum*: The numbers are very different, but the semantic differences may not be great. Orm's word choices reflect his pedagogical and stylistic needs. Orm seems to use his whole lexical repertoire.

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