



Jan Kochanowski University Press

This is a contribution from *Token: A Journal of English Linguistics*
Volume 2/2013.

Edited by John G. Newman and Sylwester Łodej.

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Middle English preposition and adverb *twix*

Ewa Ciszek-Kiliszewska

Faculty of English, Adam Mickiewicz University

ABSTRACT

The present paper discusses the Middle English lexeme *twix*, which could function as a preposition and as an adverb. The aim of the study is to revise the etymology of *twix* as well as to construct its semantic profile, dialect distribution, textual distribution and token frequency. The study is based on such acknowledged electronic databases as the *Middle English Dictionary online*, the *Oxford English Dictionary online*, the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* and *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* as well as on some complete Middle English texts supplementing the corpus. The dictionaries are used to review the etymology of *twix* and to draw tentative conclusions concerning a semantic profile, dialect distribution and textual distribution of *twix*. Subsequently, the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* and some complete Middle English texts are examined in order to corroborate the latter three features as well as to calculate the number of tokens of *twix*. Moreover, the study of the corpus, demonstrating the use of *twix* also in texts/manuscripts not included by the *Middle English Dictionary online* or *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, helps to provide a more complete record of texts/manuscripts and authors employing *twix*.

1. Introduction

The present paper belongs to a series of studies on the Middle English prepositions and adverbs meaning 'between' (Ciszek-Kiliszewska 2013, in press b, in press c). This paper concentrates on the Middle English preposition and adverb *twix*. The aim of the study is to review the etymology of *twix* as well as to provide its semantic profile, dialect distribution, textual distribution and token frequency. The first three features are initially examined on the basis of such acknowledged historical English dictionaries as the *Middle English Dictionary online* (henceforth the *MED*) and the third edition of

the *Oxford English Dictionary online* (henceforth the *OED*). The appropriate linguistic information included there is used to revise the origin of *twix* and to draw preliminary conclusions concerning the semantics, dialect distribution and textual distribution of the preposition and adverb *twix*. Moreover, the dialect distribution of *twix* will be examined in *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* (henceforth *LALME*). Next, the analysis of the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* and a few more complete Middle English texts in which the *MED* records the use of *twix* is conducted in order to verify the semantic profile as well as the dialect and textual distribution patterns of *twix*. The study of the extensive corpus and selected Middle English texts will reveal the use of the investigated preposition and adverb also in some texts/manuscripts not recorded as including *twix* by the *Middle English Dictionary online*, the *Oxford English Dictionary online*¹ or *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*. Hence, it will be possible to compile a more exhaustive record of texts/manuscripts containing this variant of the preposition/adverb meaning 'between'. Moreover, the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* and some complete ME texts supplementing the corpus are extremely valuable for the calculation of the actual token frequency of the recorded instances of *twix*.

2. Studies in Middle English prepositions

Several Middle English prepositions are focuses of recent studies, e.g., Lundskaer-Nielsen (1993), Molencki (2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2011a, 2011b), Iglesias-Rábade (2011) and Ciszek-Kiliszevska (2013, in press a, in press b, in press c). Lundskaer-Nielsen (1993) concentrates on three prepositions, i.e., *in*, *on*, and *at*, in selected Medieval English texts. Molencki dedicates a few of his recent papers to the analysis of prepositions such as *after*, *before*, *because*, *forward* in the framework of grammaticalization (Hopper – Traugott 1993) and subjectification (Traugott 1989, 1995) as well as to the investigation of a collection of prepositions/conjunctions borrowed from French. Iglesias-Rábade (2011) selects for his *Helsinki Corpus* analysis a group of twelve prepositions such as *aboue*, *after*, *at*, *bi*, *bifore*, *bihinde*, *biside*, *in*, *on*, *ouer*, *purgh* and *under* attested in Medieval English. Ciszek-Kiliszevska (in press a) discusses the Middle English loss of the OE preposition *yēond*. Ciszek-Kiliszevska (2013, in press b, in press c) verifies various aspects of the Middle English

¹ The *OED online* lists much fewer texts than the *MED online* (see e.g., 4 and 5.1.).

prepositions *atwēn*, *twēne* and *emell(e)*, respectively. The author investigates the etymology, dialect distribution, textual distribution and the number of attestations of each preposition. A thorough discussion of the preposition and adverb *twix* is thus far lacking from English historical studies.

3. Corpus descriptions

The *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* selected for the analysis of *twix* belongs, together with the *Middle English Dictionary online*, to the *Middle English Compendium online* supported by the University of Michigan. The corpus presentation found on the official web site provides information about the corpus so far consisting of 54 Middle English texts. It is also stated that the corpus will be successively extended. However, the bibliography of the *Middle English Compendium online* comprises as many as 146 texts today (<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/cme/browse.html>; 14 June 2013). Those texts represent various genres and text types such as, e.g., religious texts, chronicles, documents and plays. Both poetry and prose texts are collected.

Moreover, the study of the tokens of the preposition and adverb *twix* will be supplemented with the analysis of a few complete texts or manuscripts of texts in which the *Middle English Dictionary online* records their use, but which texts or manuscripts are missing from the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse*.

4. Etymology of *twix*

The *Middle English Dictionary online* categorises the preposition *twix* as a “[s]hortened form of **bitwix(e prep. or atwix(en prep.)**”. It is worth mentioning here that while the ME *bitwix* goes back to Old English, the word *atwix* is a ME development recorded for the first time only in 1330 in *Guy of Warwick* (MS Auchinleck). The earliest attestation of *twix* recorded by the *MED* comes from *Cursor Mundi* (MS Cotton Vespasian A.3 and MS Göttingen Theol 107) written c. 1400. The adverb *twix* is treated under a separate entry and is ascribed to come “[p]rob. from **twix prep.** with implied obj.; also cp. **bitwixe(n adv. or atwix(en adv.**” The adverb is recorded for the first time in the same text and manuscript as the preposition *twix*.

The *Oxford English Dictionary online* describes *twixt* (prep.) as an “[a]phetic form of *atwixt prep.*, *betwixt prep.* and *adv.*”. The earliest quotation also comes from *Cursor Mundi* (MS Cotton Vespasian A.3), which the *OED*

online once calls Cott. and once Vesp. and dates the manuscripts to 13.. and 1400 respectively². Under the same entry the *OED* includes **twixt and phr.**, which is exemplified with one of the two quotations (from MS Göttingen Theol 107) illustrating the adverbial use of *twix* in the *MED online*.

My assumption is that *twix* is an aphetic form derived from *bitwix(t)(en)* alone. The reason is that *bitwix(t)(en)* is a better established lexeme than *atwix(t)(en)*. While the former goes back to Old English and is attested in numerous texts in both Old and Middle English, *atwix(t)(en)* is originally recorded in Middle English, around 1330 (see above), and is evidenced by the *MED* in only ten texts. Moreover, *bitwix(t)(en)* has a considerably wider range of reference than *atwix(t)(en)* (cf. *MED bitwix(e)* (prep.) and *bitwixe(n)* (adv.) as well as *atwix(en)*, *atwixt* (prep. & adv.)). Hence, *twix* must have been derived by analogy with the Middle English preposition *twēn(e)* coined from *bitwēn(e)* (see Ciszek-Kiliszevska in press b). As regards *atwix(t)(en)*, taking into account its first attestation in Middle English, a restricted scope of semantic reference and especially its morphological structure, the lexeme seems to have been coined by analogy with such pairs of words as *āforē* and *bīfore*, *among* and *bimong* or *atwēn(e)* and *bitwēn(e)* (see Ciszek-Kiliszevska 2013). My assumption is in a way corroborated by the *Middle English Dictionary*, which contradictorily to its statement on *twix* being a “[s]hortened form of **bitwix(e prep. or atwix(en prep.))**” (see above), labels *atwix(en)*, *atwixt* (prep. & adv.) as “modeled on such synonyms as **afōre = bifōre**”.

5. Semantics of *twix*

5.1 Dictionary analysis

The *Middle English Dictionary online* describes the preposition *twix* as having meanings such as ‘among, in among, between’. The preposition could be used with reference to various aspects, which are pointed out in the *MED online* definition:

twix (prep.) Also **twixt(en, twixit, tuix**

- (a) With ref. to position or location in space: among (several animals); in among (surrounding objects); ~ **hondes**, in (one’s) hands;

² The dating of the manuscripts in the *MED online* is more reliable as compared to that in the yet unrevised part of the *OED online*.

- (b) with ref. to association or relationship: between two (parties); also, among (parties) [quot. a1400, last]; **ben born (geten) ~**, to be born conjointly of (a man and a woman);
- (c) with ref. to division or apportionment: among (parties), between;
- (d) with ref. to similarity or difference: between (persons or things).

On the basis of the analysis of the context in which the Middle English preposition *twix* can be used, I have drawn a conclusion that *twix* could assume locative (a) and abstract (b, c and d) senses. The preposition is not recorded with a temporal sense. This means that the senses of the preposition *twix* are restricted as compared to the preposition *bitwix(t)(en)* from which *twix* was derived, since *bitwix(t)(en)* could assume all three discussed senses. In the *MED online* definition below meanings 1a., 1b., and 2. contribute to the prototypical locative sense, whereas the metaphoric, more semantically extended temporal and abstract senses are represented by meanings 3. and 4a.-8. respectively³.

bitwix(e (prep.) Also **bitwixen, bitwixt; bitwux(en, -twuxt, bitux(en, -tuxt; bitwex(e; bitwisse, -twist.**

- 1a. Of location or position in space: (a) between (two objects, localities, points); in among (several things); (b) in between (surrounding objects); ~ **armes, hondes**, in (one's) arms, hands; **in..~**.
- 1b. Of extent or distance: between (two places).
- 2. Of position in a series or sequence: between.
- 3. Of position or duration in time: (a) between (two events or periods of time); (b) ~ **and**, ~ **and til**, between (an implied point in time) and (a later event or time), until; [*?conj.;?adv.* meanwhile].
- 4a. Of association or relationship between two persons or parties: between; (a) of affection, love, trust; (b) of marriage, family ties; also *fig.*; (c) of procreation.
- 4b. Of relationship between two persons or parties: between; -- (a) of strife, conflict; (b) of disagreement, dissent, etc.

³ For a discussion of subjectification see Traugott (1989, 1995) and Traugott – Dasher (2002).

- 4c. Of communication, consultation, etc.: between; -- (a) of exchanging messages, conferring, dialogue; (b) of conferring or doing something confidentially or secretly; ~ **us two**, in confidence; (c) of making or reaching an agreement; (d) of reconciliation, mediation, etc.
5. Of dividing or sharing something: between.
6. Of a group of persons or things: among.
7. (a) Of qualities, states, emotions: intermediate between, wavering between, between; (b) of similarity or difference: between; (c) of comparing things: between; (d) of discriminating, judging: between.
8. **answren** ~..**teth**, respond under (one's) breath, fail to respond.

The *OED online* provides no explicit meaning of the Middle English preposition *twix*. Moreover, the dictionary lists only one manuscript (MS Cotton Vespasian A.3) of one Middle English text, i.e., *Cursor Mundi*, as including the preposition. In the presented quotations the meanings 'between' and 'in among' can be construed. Still, the context analysis of the restricted examples (see the *OED* quotations below) allows us to assume that the preposition *twix* could express abstract and locative senses.

13.. *Cursor M.22028* (Cott.), O fader and moder he sal be born..Bituix a man and a womman..Noght **tuix** a biscop and a nun.

a1400 (1325) *Cursor Mundi* (Vesp.) l. 3179 [Abraham] loked bi him **tuyx** þe thorns⁴.

The *Middle English Dictionary online* labels the adverb *twix* as meaning 'in the meantime, from this moment' and in a phrase *twix and* meaning 'until (sb. does sth.)' and 'at (what time to do sth.)'. Hence, the adverb could assume exclusively a temporal sense. According to the dictionary, the adverb *twix* can be found only in MSS Cotton Vespasian A.3 and Göttingen Theol 107 of *Cursor Mundi*. Interestingly, the adverb *bitwix(en)* could be used not only with a temporal sense (meaning b.) but also with locative (meaning a, first quotation) and abstract (meaning a, second quotation) senses (see the *MED* definition below).

⁴ It seems that in the second quotation we actually deal with a preposition *bituyx* split with a personal pronoun *him*.

bitwixe(n (adv.)

(a) In between; **putten** ~, interpose; (b) of time: **noght lang** ~, not much later [cp. prep. 3 (b)].

(a) c1275(?a1200) Lay. Brut (Clg A.9) 29942: þat lond..þat lið þer **bitwixen**.

(c1384) *WBible(1) (Dc 369(2))* Heb.6.17: God, willinge for to schewe..the vnmouableness or sadnessse of his conseil, put **bitwixe** an oth.

(b) a1400(a1325) Cursor (Vsp A.3) 13521: Efter þat þis signe was don, Noght lang **bi-tuix** [Trin-C: be-twene] bot alson, A-noþer he did.

The Middle English adverbial use of *twix* is very briefly recorded by the *OED online* in a phrase *twix and* only in MS Göttingen Theol 107. The meaning label is 'until'⁵. Therefore, one can draw the conclusion that the adverb could be used with a temporal sense.

Tab. 1 below outlines the senses which both the preposition and the adverb *twix* could assume in Middle English. As can be seen, the preposition and the adverb were complementary in terms of senses.

Table 1. Senses of the preposition and adverb *twix*

Senses	<i>twix</i> (prep.)	<i>twix</i> (adv.)
Locative	+	-
Temporal	-	+
Abstract	+	-

5.2 Corpus and text analysis

The examination of the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* and selected Middle English texts mostly validates the semantics of the preposition and the adverb *twix* provided by the *Middle English Dictionary online*. However, the contextual analysis of the occurrences of *twix* in texts not mentioned by the *MED online* (see section 7 below) and the tokens from texts listed by the *MED online* but not included in the quotations reveals one more possibility of the use of the preposition with an abstract sense. This concerns meaning (b) in the definition above, which apart from referring to 'association or

⁵ The meaning 'before' refers to the quotation from 1689.

relationship: between two (parties)' can also be used with reference to 'peace, mediation: between two realms' such as the earth and the heaven, as in the following quotations from manuscript Fairfax 14 of *Cursor Mundi* (1400) and the parallel passages from MS Cotton Vesp. A.3 and MS Göttingen Theol. 107 of the same text:

- (1) þat alle wiþ traup mai come to griþ
& quen hit sette on ende is eyuen.
hit takenis pes **twix** erþ & heiuen.
(MS Fairfax 14, ll. 25,048-25,050)
- (2) þat al wit trouth mai cum to grith.
And quen it es sett on end vp euen,
It takens pes **tuix** erth and heuen.
(MS Cotton Vesp. A.3, ll. 25,048-25,050)
- (3) yoghat all wid trouth mai cum to grith.
And quen it sett es on end vp euen,
þat takins pes **tuix** erd and heuen.
(MS Göttingen Theol. 107, ll. 25,048-25,050)

6. Texts and dialect distribution

6.1 Dictionary analysis

6.1.1 Preposition *twix*

The *Middle English Dictionary online* does not explicitly specify the dialect distribution of the preposition *twix* in Middle English. The dictionary records the preposition *twix* in five texts preserved in six manuscripts. These manuscripts could be localised in the North and in the East Midlands. The manuscripts seem quite equally distributed. Three manuscripts (two texts) come from the North and three manuscripts (three texts) from the East Midlands. Moreover, it has to be clarified that a detailed analysis has shown that the *MED*'s label Robert Mannyng's *The Chronicle of England* actually refers to the passage of *The King Lear Story* in *The Chronicle of England*, i.e., the same story in which Thomas Castleford uses *twix* (see Tab. 2 below). The differences between the two texts, apart from the author, the manuscript and the date, are the dialectal localisation and the type of composition. MS Göttingen Hist 740 is a Northern text written in prose whereas MS Lambeth 131 is an East-Midland verse. Still, in both cases we deal with *The Chronicle of England*.

Tab. 2 below presents the dialect distribution of the texts and manuscripts including *twix* and listed by the *MED online*.

Table 2. Dialect distribution of the *MED* texts containing the preposition *twix*

North	East Midlands
<i>Cursor Mundi</i> (1400) (MS Cotton Vesp. A.3) (MS Göttingen Theol. 107)	Robert Mannyng of Brunne, <i>The Chronicle of England*</i> , Part 1 (1450) (MS Lambeth 131)
Thomas Castleford, <i>The King Lear Story in The Chronicle of England</i> (1425) (MS Göttingen Hist 740)	Thomas Hoccleve, <i>Regement of Princes</i> (1450) (MS Harley 4866)
	John Lydgate, <i>Song against Flemings</i> (1479) (MS Lambeth 84)

* In the *MED online* the text is called *The Chronicle of England* and in the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* the title is *The Story of England*.

6.1.2 Adverb *twix*

The adverb *twix* is recorded by the *Middle English Dictionary* as occurring in two manuscripts of *Cursor Mundi*, which can be localised in the North (see Tab. 3 below).

Table 3. Dialect distribution of the *MED* texts containing the adverb *twix*

North
<i>Cursor Mundi</i> (1400) (MS Cotton Vesp. A.3) (MS Göttingen Theol. 107)

The *Oxford English Dictionary online*, similarly to the *MED online*, lists texts in which it records *twix*. Among them, there are only two Middle English texts (see above).

6.2 Corpus and text analysis

6.2.1 Preposition *twix*

The investigation of the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse*⁶ demonstrates the evidenced use of the preposition *twix* also in three manuscripts (two

⁶ All conceivable spellings were searched; these include *twix**, *twyx**, *tuix**, *tuyx**, *twix** and *toyx**.

texts) not catalogued in the *Middle English Dictionary online*. One text is preserved in two manuscripts, one from the North and the other from the West Midlands. The second text can be localised in the East Midlands (see Tab. 4 below).

Table 4. *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* texts containing the preposition *twix* not recorded by the *MED*

North	East Midlands	West Midlands
<i>Cursor Mundi</i> (1400) (MS Fairfax 14)	<i>The Brut</i> (or <i>The Chronicles of England</i>) (1400) (MS Raw. B171)	<i>Cursor Mundi</i> (1400) (MS Trinity Coll. R.3.8. (383))

The preposition *twix* in *The Brut*, (or *The Chronicles of England*) preserved in MS Raw. B171 from 1400 can be found in a passage which is the *Song against Flemings*, attributed to John Lydgate and included in *The Brut*. Hence, as regards the content, it is the same song which the *MED online* lists under the entry of the preposition *twix* (see Tab. 2) but preserved in a different manuscript. *The Brut*, or *The Chronicles of England* comprises also *The King Lear Story* (see section 6.1.1 above).

6.2.2 Adverb *twix*

The *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* contains no instances of texts including the adverb *twix* other than these provided by the *Middle English Dictionary online*.

6.3 LALME analysis

An interesting observation is the treatment of *twix* by the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English*. Of the nine manuscripts investigated here, six are localised in the atlas. However, in only one of these six manuscripts is *twix* recorded (see Tab. 5 below).

Table 5. *LALME*'s localisation of *twix*

MSS	<i>twix</i>	MSS	<i>twix</i>
MS Cotton Vesp. A.3	+	MS Raw. B171	–
MS Fairfax 14	–	MS Göttingen Hist 740	–
MS Trinity Coll. R.3.8. (383)	–	MS Lambeth 131	–

7. Token frequency of *twix*

A detailed study of the complete preserved Middle English texts in which the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* and the *MED online* record *twix* (see Tables 2, 3 and 4 above) gives insight into the token frequency of the analysed preposition and adverb. The frequencies will be discussed in particular dialect areas in which *twix* was recorded.

7.1 Northern

The Northern manuscripts exhibit the highest number of occurrences of the preposition *twix*. This frequency is incurred especially by the two manuscripts of *Cursor Mundi*, i.e., MS Cotton Vespasian A.3 and MS Göttingen Theol 107. They include 25 and 16 occurrences of the preposition *twix*, respectively. MS Fairfax 14 of the same text contains 3 instances.

Thomas Castleford in *The King Lear Story*, which is a part of *The Chronicle of England* (1425) preserved in MS Göttingen Hist 740, uses the preposition *twix* once.

As regards the adverbial use of *twix*, there are only four such recorded cases. Three instances can be found in MS Göttingen Theol 107 of *Cursor Mundi* and one in MS Cotton Vespasian A.3. Examples (4) and (5) include the adverbial use of *twix* in passages other than those exemplified in the *MED online*:

- (4) Has he sett me ani dai
 þat i widin me graith mai?
 I wald gladli witt **tuix** and quen,
 To take leue at mi kines-men,
 (MS Göttingen Theol 107, ll. 20,179-20,182)
- (5) Þis rain rained euer on-ane,
Tuix and fourti dais war gane,
 (MS Göttingen Theol 107, ll. 1,835-1,835)

Tab. 6 below presents the token frequency of *twix* in Northern manuscripts.

Table 6. Token frequency of *twix* in Northern manuscripts

North	Tokens		North	Tokens	
	<i>adv.</i>	<i>prep.</i>		<i>adv.</i>	<i>prep.</i>
<i>Cursor Mundi</i> (1400) (MS Cotton Vesp. A.3)	25	1	Thomas Castleford, <i>The King Lear Story</i> in <i>The Chronicle of England</i> (1425) (MS Göttingen Hist 740)	1	–
(MS Göttingen Theol. 107)	16	3			
(MS Fairfax 14)	3	–			

To put some of the *Cursor Mundi* (1400) results in context, it can be mentioned that the top frequency preposition meaning ‘between’ in MSS Göttingen Theol. 107 and Fairfax 14 of *Cursor Mundi* is the preposition *bitwix* with 96 and 46 occurrences, respectively. Surprisingly, the use of the preposition *bitwix* in MS Göttingen Theol. 107 is not recorded by the *MED online* (see also Ciszek-Kiliszevska in press b).

Examples (6)-(9) below illustrate the use of the preposition *twix* and other prepositions meaning ‘between’ or ‘among’ in parallel passages of the manuscripts of *Cursor Mundi*.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>(6) I ne roght quat dede it ware.
 þat blisced bodi to wind þai wald,
 And i bigan it to wid-hald,
 Sli strijf tuix vs was þare.
 (MS Göt Theol 107, ll. 24,577-24,580)</p> | <p>I. ne royoght quat dede hit ware
 þat blessed bodi to winde þai walde
 & I. be-gan againe to halde
 suche strife twene vs was þare.
 (MS Fairfax 14, ll. 24,577-24,580)</p> |
| <p>(7) As douues eye hir loke es suete,
 As rose on thorn er to vnmete;
 And tuene þaim fayre acord es nane,
 Sua es tuix hir kin and my lenman.
 (MS Göt Theol 107, ll. 9,361-9,364)</p> | <p>As dovis eie hir loke is swete
 Rose on thorne to hir vn-mete
 By-twene hem feire accord is non
 Then by-twene her kynne & my
 lemman.
 (MS Fairfax 14, ll. 9,361-9,364)</p> |
| <p>(8) In his time was a batel grim
 Tuix israel and beniamin,
 (MS Cotton Vesp. A.3, ll. 7,007-7,008)</p> | <p>In his time was a batail grim
 Bi-tuix israel and beniamyn,
 (MS Göt Theol 107, ll. 7,007-7,008)</p> |
| <p>(9) Quen syeon, þat mikel prist,
 þat bar the hali-gast in brest,
 þat iesus tuix his handes fang,
 And said, ‘lauerd liued haf i lang
 (MS Cotton Vesp. A.3, ll. 17,721-17,724)</p> | <p>Quen syeon, þat mekil prest,
 þat bar þe hali-gast in his breist,
 þat iesus tuix his hend he fang,
 And said, ‘lauerd liued haue i lang
 (MS Göt Theol 107, ll. 17,721-17,724)</p> |

7.2 East Midland

Thomas Hoccleve’s *Regement of Princes* (1450) in MS Harley 4866 includes 9 occurrences of *twix*. The other East-Midland texts/manuscripts contain only one instance of the preposition under discussion each. The second and the last positions in Tab. 7 below represent the same line of the *Song against Flemings* in two different manuscripts distant in time (see also section 6.2.1. above).

Table 7. Token frequency of *twix* in East-Midland manuscripts

East Midlands	Tokens
Thomas Hoccleve, <i>Regement of Princes</i> (1450) (MS Harley 4866)	9
<i>The Brut</i> (or <i>The chronicles of England</i>) (1400) (MS Raw. B171)	1
Robert Mannyng of Brunne, <i>The Chronicle of England*</i> , Part 1 (1450) (MS Lambeth 131)	1
John Lydgate, <i>Song against Flemings</i> (1479) (MS Lambeth 84)	1

* In the *MED online* the text is called *The Chronicle of England* and in the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* the title is *The Story of England*.

7.3 West Midland

The only West-Midland manuscript in which the use of the preposition *twix* is recorded, i.e., MS Trinity Coll. R.3.8. (383) of *Cursor Mundi* (1400), contains only a single instance of *twix*. It is also interesting to notice that apart from this occurrence of *twix* the manuscript uses exclusively *bitwēn(e)* (see also Ciszek-Kiliszevska in press b).

Table 8. Token frequency of *twix* in West-Midland manuscripts

West Midlands	Tokens
<i>Cursor Mundi</i> (1400) (MS Trinity Coll. R.3.8. (383))	1

8. Conclusions

The aim of the present paper was to focus on the Middle English preposition and adverb *twix* and to revise its etymology as well as to provide its semantic profile, dialect distribution, textual distribution and token frequency. The analysis was based on acknowledged electronic dictionaries such as the *Middle English Dictionary online* and the third edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary online* as well as on the extensive electronic database *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* and on selected complete preserved Middle English texts. The results concerning the dialect distribution were also verified in *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*.

As regards the etymology of *twix*, my assumption is that it was a shortened (aphetic) form of *bitwix(t)(en)*, not *bitwix(t)(en)* and/or *atwix(t)(en)*. *Bitwix(t)(en)*, which goes back to Old English and is recorded in numerous texts seems to be a more probable forerunner of *twix*, since *bitwix(t)(en)* was better established and much more widely used than *atwix(t)(en)*, originally attested only in 1330. *Atwix(t)(en)* must have been formed by analogy with such pairs of words as *āforē* and *bīfore*, *among* and *bimong* or *atwēn(e)* and *bitwēn(e)*.

In terms of semantics, the ME preposition *twix* had the meaning 'among, in among' and 'between', whereas the adverb *twix* could mean 'in the meantime, from this moment'. Moreover, in a phrase *twix and*, *twix* denoted 'until, at'. The analysis demonstrates that the preposition could assume locative and abstract senses, whereas the adverb *twix* assumed a temporal sense. The range of senses of both the preposition and the adverb *twix* is restricted when compared to the range of the three senses of both the preposition and the adverb *betwix(t)(en)*, from which *twix* was derived.

The text and dialect distribution of *twix* has been inferred from the localisation of the manuscripts of texts including *twix* listed by the *Middle English Dictionary* and those found in the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse*. The preposition *twix* is recorded in two Northern texts, of which one is the *Cursor Mundi*, preserved in three Northern manuscripts, four East-Midland texts, where three of them are different versions of the same text (i.e., *The Chronicle of England*) and one is a work by Thomas Hoccleve, and in one West-Midland manuscript of the *Cursor Mundi*. The adverb *twix* is attested in two Northern manuscripts of the *Cursor Mundi*. Of the nine manuscripts including *twix*, six have been localised by recourse to *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*. Interestingly, the use of *twix* is recorded in only one of those manuscripts.

The investigation of the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* and some complete Middle English texts supplementing the corpus has allowed the calculation of the actual token frequency of *twix*. The results demonstrate that *twix* is most frequent in Northern manuscripts with as many as 49 occurrences. There are 12 tokens in East-Midland texts and one in a West-Midland text. There are no recorded instances of *twix* in any Southern or Kentish texts.

A more general conclusion is that the content of the *Middle English Dictionary online* and the *Oxford English Dictionary online* could be improved through the analysis of extensive electronic corpora such as the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* and complete Middle English texts especially

for the investigation of the actual number of recorded tokens of a given lexeme. The corpora could also provide a broader perspective on textual distribution and possibly dialect distribution.

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