Distribution of Lexical Doublets
in *The Complaynt of Scotland*

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Vocabulary has undergone a radical transformation throughout the history of the English langua-ge: whereas Old English takes very few borrowings from other languages and makes use of its own resources to express new concepts, either by changing the meaning of words already existing in the language (*hell* "hidden place" comes to mean "home of devils and of damned souls after death" with the arrival of Christianity) or by creating compounds from native elements (*prīnes* "trinity", *bōcrœft* "literature"), from Middle English onwards loanwords are borrowed in an indiscriminate way, especially from French and Latin, many of which express concepts that were expressed before by means of native vocabulary. The results are lexical doublets such as *brotherhood/fraternity, cold/gelid, fatherly/paternal, foot/pedal, hearty/cordial, thin/tenuous*, whose elements are now used as stylistic variants, depending on the register and the degree of formality.

This paper studies the distribution of some doublets in *The Complaynt of Scotland*, a literary work in prose written in 1549 by Robert Wedderburn, according to Stewart (1979), and apparently printed in France, probably Paris. Modelled on Chartier's *Quadrilogue Invectif*, *The Complaynt* is full of axioms, exempla, sententiae, and proverbs taken from the Bible and from classical sources (Aristotle, Cicero, Pliny, among others), and it makes use of a plain style, according to the author, "for i thocht it nocht necessair til hef fardit ande lardit this tracteit vitht exquisite termis, quhilkis ar nocht daly vsit, bot rather i hef vsit domestic scottis langage, maist intelligibil for the vlgare pepil" (1979:13).

The most explicit reference to the distribution of lexical doublets in Middle Scots is made by Aitken, who points out:

> that *knaw* and *pas*, for example, may have functioned as the literary "translations" of the vernacular *ken* and *gang* or *ga*, that the three members of the set *hound, dog* and *tyke* had quite different over-tones, that items like *cummer* (female crony), *gully* (large knife), *juggis* (lees of drink), *lug, bony* (bonny), *scunner*, as well as some others which are recorded only in comic verse, such as *gane* (face), *kyte* (belly), *larbar* (impotent), *lounge* and *queir*, had quite restricted spheres of use at the opposi-te pole from that of many of the "exquisite termis quhilkis ar nocht daly vsit..., dreuyn or rather to say mair formaly reuyn fra lating" (*Compl.* 16).
>
> (Aitken 1971:178)

Three of the doublets mentioned by Aitken occur in *The Complaynt*: *knau/ken, pas/gang, ga*, and *ere/lug*, all of which are made up of a borrowing, French in the case of *pas* and Scandinavian in the other two[1], and a native word. The Scandinavian element in Scots is considerable, since not only are there

quite a number of borrowings from that language, but many of them have become part of the core vocabulary, which is not the case with those taken from French[2]. Thus, this is the origin of the causative verb *gar* and the auxiliary *ma(u)n* ("must"), as well as that of the prepositions *till, fra,* and *lyik* (<*líkr*) which, later on, will be adopted by English, although with some differences. Another feature distinguishing Scandinavian and French borrowings is that whereas the former, according to Aitken, occur in more informal and colloquial registers than their native counterparts, the latter are typical of formal and literary styles.

In this paper I study the distribution of the doublets *knau/ken*[3], *pas/gang, ga,* and *ere/lug* in *The Complaynt*. My aim is to support or to refute Aitken's suggestion that the elements of these pairs coexisted as stylistic variants in Middle Scots. In every case, I begin by providing a short account of the history of these terms in English and, more specifically, in Scots. The information has been taken from *The Oxford English Dictionary* and *A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*[4]

1. KNAW/KEN

With regard to the first doublet, *know* (and its northern counterpart *knaw*) is a common Teutonic and Aryan verb, derived from the same root (*gen-, gon-, gn-*) as *can* and *ken*. With *(ʒe)cnawan* as its Old English ancestor, *know* is well established in all its main senses by 1200, and since then has broadened its semantic field and has taken over the original territory of the verbs *wit* and *can*, so that this English verb alone corresponds to Latin *n ōvisse, co-gn ōscere* and *sc īre,* and to Spanish *conocer* and *saber. Ken,* also a common Teutonic verb, originally had a causative meaning, "to cause to know", although at an early stage in all these languages it acquired the sense "to know", in the case of English probably influenced by Norse, where both meanings were in early use.

According to *OED,* it is this verb, *ken,* which is used in Scotland with the sense "to know", after having supplanted *knaw. DOST,* however, regards them as practically synonymous in that sense, and has examples of both in identical constructions: a) with a noun phrase as direct object and the sense "(re)conocer", as in: "Bot, for that men suld nocht him ken, He suld a mantill haf, ald and bar"; "He knew hyre nocht"; b) with nominal clauses as direct object and the sense "saber", as in: "Kennand that thai na kid ware"; "Knawand that Eufagen[e]a... Is spousit to the kinge of hewyn"; "Mycht nane ken quha had ony avantage"; "Quha hurt or haill was, nane micht knaw".

In *The Complaynt, knau* is the dominant verb, with forty-six examples, as against thirteen instances of *ken.* These data seem to confirm Aitken's hypothesis that *knau* is the literary "translation" of *ken,* dominant, therefore, in texts written in a formal style, such as *The Complaynt.*

The situation in this work is, however, more complex, since eleven out of the thirteen instances of *ken* select a noun phrase as direct object and have the sense "(re)conocer". The following examples illustrate this construction: "thai vald haue clair myskend it, be rasone that it vas sa mekil altrit fra the fyrst fassone" (p.55); "to grant them grace to ken them selfis, for as lang as thai ken nocht them selfis thai sal neuyr ken god" (p.102); "i am leukand gyf i can fynd my fathers hardyn pan, amang thir dede mennis banis bot i can nocht ken it amang them" (p.121). The only exceptions to this rule are: "sen god kennis that ʒour hartis ar euil, and that men kennis that ʒour verkis ar euyl" (p.135), where *ken* takes a nominal clause and means "saber".

As against the syntactic-semantic specialization of *ken, knaw* is not restricted in *The Complaynt* to

any particular construction. The following examples illustrate the different nominal clauses which this verb takes in this work in the sense "saber": "the pepil knauis thir mutations to be of verite" (p.17); "he that tynis ane thing, and syne knauis nocht quhair it is" (p.66); "ζe knau quhou thai and there forbears hes beene ζour ald mortal enemes" (p.68); "and sen ζe knau that god hes schauen sic fauoir" (p.71); "nocht ane of ζou knauis quhat ane vthir sais" (p.110); "be the quhilkζe may knau quha is ane vilaine" (p.114).

Knau also appears in *The Complaynt* in those constructions which are typical of *ken*, that is, with noun phrases as direct object and the sense "(re)conocer", as the following examples illustrate: "he possessis vthir pure pepil, that knauis his gudnes, vitht the samyn reches, that he hes tane fra them, that hes arrogantly miskanuen hym" (p.15); "ther is nocht mony that knauis the cause of thir mutations" (p.17); "his auful scurge of aperand exterminatione sal change in ane faderly correctione sa that ve vil knau his mageste" (p.20); "sum men that knauis the secret of scotland" (p.87).

Aitken's suggestion that *knaw* is the literary "translation" of *ken* does not apply, therefore, to *The Complaynt*, wich has examples of both. On the other hand, these forms are not merely synonyms in this work, but there are syntactic and semantic factors governing their usage. Thus, *ken* is the marked form in *The Complaynt*, being restricted to those collocations which *know* originally had, whereas *knaw* is the unmarked term, used not only in these constructions, but also in those which had previously been exclusive to the verb *wit*.

2. PAS/GANG, GA

With regard to the second doublet, *go* (and its northern counterpart *ga*) is a defective verb common to the Teutonic languages, semantically equivalent to Latin *ire*, which originally was also used in the sense "to go on foot, to walk". *Gang*, from Old English *gangan*, only survives in northern dialects. In Scots this verb is chiefly used in the infinitive, present participle and present tense; from the syntactic-semantic point of view, however, it is practically synonymous with *ga*, both in the senses "to go" and "to go on foot, to walk".

Pas, on the other hand, is a borrowing from French *passer*. Originally it meant "to step, pace, walk", but already in the 11th century in Old French it had come to denote progression or movement from one place to another. In English, *pass* has become the most general verb to express onward motion; in Scots, however, in spite of its being very common in that sense, it seems to be restricted to literary and formal registers.

In *The Complaynt*, *pas* is largely the dominant verb, with 131 occurrences, as against six examples of *gang* and nine of *ga/go*. In this work, however, the vernacular forms have not merely been supplanted by their supposed literary "translation" *pas*, but they have specialized semantically. Thus, *gang* is only used in the infinitive and in the sense "to go on foot, to walk", as the following examples illustrate: "quhen ve ar tirit to gang on oure feit, ve ar solist to seik horse to ryde" (p.27); "quha cam at his command, in ane charriot be cause he mytht nothir ryde nor gang be cause he vas decrepit for aige" (p.79); "he gart the bruit gang that thai presoneris hed eschaipit"[5] (p.91); "the ζong partan vald nocht gang euyn furtht bot rather sche ζeid crukit bakuart and on syd.... quod sche mother, i can nocht gang of my auen natur as thou biddis me bot nochtheles, vald thou gang furtht rycht befor me, than i sal leyrn to follou thy futsteppis" (p.126). To express this meaning ("to go on foot, to walk") in other tenses, the forms of

the verb *ga/go* are used, as in: "none of them suld tak ther refectione quhil thai hed gone ande run the tyme of fife or sex houris" (p.7); "sche ζeid crukit bakuart and on syd"[6] (p.126).

Apart from replacing *gang* in the sense "to go on foot, to walk", *ga/go* is used once in the construction SV with the meaning "to go away" ["than quhen he gois, al the leaue rynnis & follouis hym" (p.110)], and on another occasion it functions as an attributive verb and takes a subject complement ["al musing of meruellis amys hef i gone" (p.51)]. In the remaining examples, *ga/go* takes an adverbial and has the sense "go", being synonymous, therefore, with *pas*: "ther is ane vthir circle in the spere callit meridian the quhilk gais betuix the tua polis rycht abufe our hede" (p.39); "the sune circuitis and gais about the eird" (p.40); "sal i go vitht ζou to rumbelo fayr" (p.51); "O ignorant abusit ande dissaitful pepil, gone by the path vaye of verteouse knaulage" (p.56).

As against the semantic specialization of the vernacular forms *gang* and *ga/go*, *pas* is the most general verb in *The Complaynt* to express motion, being equivalent to Spanish "ir" and "pasar". The following examples illustrate the different constructions in which this verb occurs: a) SVA: "the sourde of vengeance sal nocht pas throucht ζour cuntre" (p.21); "quhen the sune castis oure grite heyt: ve pas vndir the vmbre or the schaddou" (p.27); "Iudas machabeus past athort the montanis and desertis" (p.60); "ther vas tua passagis to pas betuix the romans camp and lucere" (p.78); b) SV + infinitive: "vsit oft to visye the feildis to tak ther recreatione, ande to pas til hounting" (p.10); "left the glorius stait of athenes, & past to remane in ane litil village" (p.35); "sche vald pas to mak veyre contrar ethiope" (p.63); c) SV: "he past and perturbit al greice" (p.63); "than i past and i sleu hym" (p.94); d) SVO, with the noun phrase which functions as object expressing either place[7] or time: "the iugement of gode... is ane profound onknauen deipnes, the quhilk passis humaine ingyne" (p.17); "thou passis the limitis of baytht thir documentis" (p.102); "to pas the tyme quhil euyn" (p.49).

As it happened in the previous case, therefore, both the vernacular forms *gang, ga* and their supposed literary "translation" *pas* occur in *The Complaynt*, and their distribution depends on syntactic and semantic criteria. The French term, *pas*, is the most general verb to express motion in this work, being used in a wide range of constructions with the meanings "ir", "pasar", whereas the vernacular forms, and especially *gang*, have specialized in the sense "to go on foot, to walk".

3. ERE/LUG

With regard to the last doublet, *lug* as a synonym of *ere* is first used early in the 16th century, and in colloquial Scots it has supplanted the vernacular form, which is now restricted to a few collocations. The primary meaning of the Scandinavian noun was "something that can be pulled or laid hold of, an appendage", and it is possible that it was first used to refer to the flap of a cap or a bonnet, since this is the sense of the earliest attested examples, and that, by a later colloquial sense-transference, it came to denote "ear". Alternatively, and according to *DOST*, the sense "ear" "may have existed earlier but remained unrecorded as a purely colloquial use". In any case, *lug* is normally used in Scots in the sense "the external ear" (Spanish "oreja"), whereas in the sense "the ear as organ of hearing" (Spanish "oído") it is uncommon and late; *ere*, however, is used in both senses throughout Older and Middle Scots.

With regard to the usage of this doublet in *The Complaynt*, Aitken's suggestion that *lug*, together with other terms, "had quite restricted spheres of use at the opposite pole from that of many of the "exquisite termis quhilkis ar nocht daly vsit..., dreuyn or rather to say mair formaly reuyn fra lating" (1971:178) is not true for this work, which has two instances of this noun.

As with the previous doublets, however, *lug* and *ere* are not synonyms in *The Complaynt*, but each has specialized semantically. *Lug* is used in the sense "earflap", as in the example "euyrie scheiphird hed ane horne spune in the lug of there bonet" (p.34), and in the sense "the external ear" (Spanish "oreja"), as in "the tail quhou kyng midas gat tua asse luggis on his hede be cause of his auereis" (p.50).

Ere, on the other hand, means "the ear as organ of hearing" (Spanish "oído"), as the following examples illustrate: "nor his eyris ar nocht stoppit, bot he maye heir ζou" (p.59); "the damysele that heris and giffis eyris to the amourus persuasions of desolut ζong men" (p.85); "i vil nocht gyf eyris to thy excusations nor to thy purgations" (p.108); "i refuse to gyf eyris or audiens to thy accusations contrar thy tua brethir" (p.109).

CONCLUSIONS

The results obtained from the study of the distribution of these lexical doublets in *The Complaynt of Scotland* do not support Aitken's suggestion that *knau* and *pas* functioned in Middle Scots as the literary "translations" of the vernacular *ken* and *gang, ga* respectively, since both sets of forms occur in this work. The former, nevertheless, are dominant in *The Complaynt*, which proves that they are typical of literary and formal registers. The elements of these doublets are not, however, merely synonyms in this work, but there are syntactic and semantic factors governing their usage.

On the other hand, the occurrence in *The Complaynt* of the term *lug* which, according to Aitken, is restricted to colloquial registers, is a proof of the plain and intelligible language which the author states in the prologue to have used throughout his work, and turns, thus, his excuse for his "barbir agrest termis" into something other than a mere literary device.

NOTES

[1] *Ken* has been regarded as a Scandinavian borrowing since, although the verb *cennan* exists in Old English. it did not have the sense "to know", which it seems to have taken from Norse.

[2] Scandinavian influence is also apparent in the preference of Scots and northern dialects for the velar plosives /k, g/ in contrast with the palatal affricates /t , dζ/ of Standard English, which results in doublets such as *Kirk/church, Kist/chest, breeks/breeches, sic/such, ilk/each, quhilk/which, brig/bridge, rig/ridge, etc.*

[3] The compounds *mysknaw/mysken* have also been taken into account.

[4] Throughout the rest of this paper, these dictionaries will be refered to as *OED* and *DOST* respectively.

[5] In this collocation, Spanish does not use the verbs "andar" or "caminar", but "correr": "hizo correr el rumor de que estos prisioneros habían escapado".

[6] *Ga/go* being a defective verb, its past tense was supplied in *OE* by *eode,* which became in ME *ζede, yede, yode.* These forms died out in the south in the fifteenth century, and were superseded by *went,* the past tense of *wend.* In Scots *went* and *ζede* /or *ζeid*) were used in this function down to the latter part of the sixteenth century, when they were replaced by *gaed,* a new formation on the present-stem, which first appeared in the Bannatyne MS. of 1568.

[7] In this case it is translated into Spanish as "sobrepasar, exceder".

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