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# **Devil *aka* Satan: An *enemy* or *fiend*? On the rivalry between the familiar and the foreign in early English**

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## ABSTRACT

The present paper discusses the distribution of the two most common Mediaeval English euphemisms of Satan, i.e. *fiend* and *enemy*, in religious prose. We focus on the rivalry between the foreign word and the native word, comparing the contexts in which the two words tended to occur, and attempting to determine the semantic status of the French word *enemy* in relation to the sense originally denoted by *fiend*. The data come from the Middle English period, when French loanwords began to compete semantically with native words.

## **1. Preliminary remarks**

The history of English shows taboo-induced replacement (cf. Hock – Joseph 1996: 232) of the words referring to positive and negative supernatural powers. As stated by Hughes (2000: 44) “the motive is to describe the situation as better than it is, or to avoid the taboo area, thereby pacifying some dreaded force by managing not to offend it...”. Thus, the use of euphemisms may be a result of fear and/or respect, especially in superstitious times (cf. Katamba 2005: 191), leading, for instance, to the substitution of religious proper names such as Jesus or Satan by their euphemistic synonyms (cf. McMahon 1994: 181), e.g. *haelend* ‘healer’ or *witherwin* ‘adversary’, respectively.

Thus, not without reason, in mediaeval England, the evil powers, i.e. Satan and his followers, the devils, were referred to by a whole variety of euphemistic expressions. The present paper focuses on two euphemisms which gained prominence in Middle English, namely the Germanic *fiend*

and the newly-borrowed Romance *enemy*, presenting the circumstances of the first attestations of the borrowing and its temporal and dialectal spread in religious writings of the period. The distribution of *enemy* is further compared with that of the native *fiend* to verify whether the two items were employed in the same contexts. The study is expected to reveal the place of the two words in the semantic domain of SATAN and, thus, suggest the plausible reasons for the introduction of the foreign element, be it the result of need or, rather, prestige (cf. Campbell 2004: 64).

## 2. Euphemisms for Satan

When it comes to Satan in English mediaeval texts, the creature is rarely addressed directly by its proper name. The *Historical Thesaurus of English* (henceforth referred to as HTE) provides a number of semantically varying synonyms which were used instead, cf.:

the Devil or Satan

[noun]

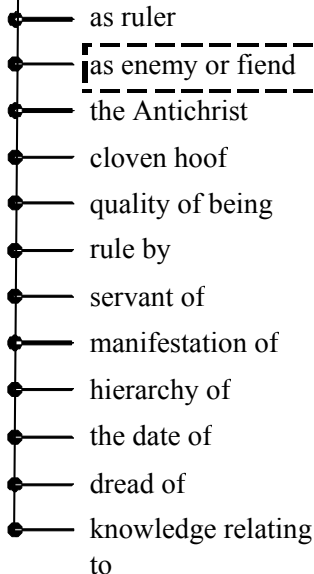


Figure 1. The categories of the Devil or Satan from HTE

To narrow the scope of the data, however, the present study covers only the semantic category of Devil or Satan in the meaning of ‘enemy or fiend’.

The Old English terms provided by the HTE within that category include *witherwin* (c897) and *fiend* (a1000). Further on, in Middle English, the next three euphemisms attested are *our foe* (?c1225), *fed* (a1300) and the first two foreign words, i.e. *adversary* (1340/ 1667<sup>1</sup>) and *enemy* (1382). Later synonyms include forms intensified by the prefix *arch-*, i.e. *arch-foe*, *arch-traitor*, and *arch-enemy*.

The HTE list of euphemisms is by no means complete. Other historical dictionaries, such as Bosworth–Toller’s *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (henceforth BT) and the *Middle English Dictionary* (henceforth MED), provide further terms, such as OE *wīperbreca*, *wīperhycgende*, *wīperweard*, *wīthersaca*, and ME *unwine*, all of which had the meaning of ‘enemy’ (cf. OED, MED) and were used with reference to Satan. For the expanded list of items, see Table 1.

Table 1. Synonyms of the Devil or Satan (based on HTE, OED and MED)

Period	Item	First attestation
OE	<i>wīperbreca</i>	OE
	<i>wīperhycgende</i>	OE
	<i>wīperweard</i>	c888
	<i>wīperwin</i>	c897
	<i>feond</i>	a1000
	<i>wīpersaca</i>	a1150
ME	<i>oure fo</i>	?c1225
	<i>unwine</i>	a1225
	<i>fed(e)</i>	a1300
	<i>adversārie</i>	1340
	<i>enemī</i>	1382
ModE	<i>arch-foe</i>	1667
	<i>arch-traitor</i>	1751
	<i>arch-enemy</i>	1850

Interestingly, most of the Old English words are complexes formed with the prefix *wither-* ‘against, in opposition’ (OED) attached to the nouns, thus adding the negative meaning of hostility.

<sup>1</sup> Although the HTE dates the first attestation of *adversary* in the religious meaning to 1667, both the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) and the *Middle English Dictionary* (MED) quote an earlier example of its use in *The Ayebite of Inwytt*, a holograph dated to 1340. Thus, that date is taken into consideration in the present study.

For the sake of space and time, however, the present analysis is further narrowed down to the two most prototypical euphemisms in Middle English religious jargon referring to Satan, namely native *fiend* and foreign *enemy*, which, as Fig.1 shows, are quoted in the HTE as two synonyms of categorically equal semantic content.

## 2.1 *Fiend*

The noun *fiend* derives its meaning from the present participle form of the verb *fēogan* ‘to hate’ and as such it refers to an enemy or hater (Skeat 1968). Originally spelled *feond*, in Middle English the word had numerous orthographic variants, including (but not limited to) *feond*, *fende*, *finde*, *feynd*, *fynde*, *feende*, and *fiende*.

*Fiend* is attested in English for the first time in the 10<sup>th</sup> century *Rushworth Gospels*, in the phrase *Hate þine fiond* (Matt. v. 43, c975) and shortly afterward it starts to be used in reference to ‘the arch-enemy of man-kind, the devil’ (OED) or ‘Satan’ (MED), with earliest attestations before or around the year 1000, cf.:

- (1) a1000 Ðu **fiond** geflæmdest. (*Hymns* (Gr.) viii. 25)  
c1000 Hit eac deah wiþ **feondes** costungum yflum. (*Sax. Leechd.* II. 294)

In addition to the purely euphemistic sense of ‘Satan himself’, use of the word here also denotes ‘an evil spirit generally; a demon, devil, or diabolical being’ (OED), cf.:

- (2) OE No þær þa **feondas** gefeon þorfton. (*Guthlac* A 421)  
c1175 Ah a þer is waning and graming ... and **feonda** bitinga. (*Lamb. Hom.* 33)

This use often refers to the Devil as one of the evils tormenting man, cf. þreo cunne uan: þe ueont & teos wake worlt ant hare licomes lustes (St.Marg. (Bod 34)).

In time, the term’s meaning broadened to that of ‘a person of superhuman wickedness’ (OED), cf.:

- (3) c1220 For wo so...ðenkeð iuel on his mod fox he is and **fend** iwis. (*Bestiary* 450) c1300 He with his hend Ne drop him nouth, that sor **fend**. (*Havelok* (Laud) (1868) 2229)

Typical collocations quoted in historical dictionaries also indicate religious connotations with either Satan or his followers and other evil spirits. The most frequent are *the fiend of hell*, attested as early as c1225, and *foul fiend*, referring to both Satan and devils. Others usually indicate either the position or importance of Satan or the Devil, including *the heigh fiend* ‘the Arch Enemy’ or *the old fiend* ‘the Ancient Foe’, or kinship, †*fiend’s limb, kin, child*, etc. Not without reason, when describing the Devil, mediaeval scribes would often refer to its devilish qualities, in collocations such as *envious fiend, fals fiend, fiend unfre, wikked fiend, or wrenchful fiend*.

## 2.2 Enemy

The word *enemy* originally comes from Latin *inimīcus*, ‘unfriendly’, formed of the negative prefix *un-* attached to the adjective *amīcus*. It entered English via French, as *enemi* or *anemi*, in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century. Characteristically, in the Middle English period, *enemy* occurs in various spellings, the most frequent of which are *enemi(e)*, *enemy(e)*, *enmi(e)*, and *enmy(e)*. Additional, quite unconventional orthographic variants are also found, the most extreme examples being *elmy* or *elmee*, which are recorded in the letters of the Paston family.

The first attestation of English *enemy* mostly likely dates to the turn of the 14<sup>th</sup> century (cf. the appearance of the noun in MS Cambridge University Library Gg. IV.27 (2) of c1300 (?1225), which contains *King Horn* and a portion of the *Cursor Mundi*. The MED provides the plural form *enemis* in a quotation from that MS version of the former text.

The general meaning of *enemy*, i.e. ‘one that cherishes hatred, that wishes or seeks to do ill to another’ (OED), allowed the word to develop more specific meanings such as that of ‘a member of a hostile army’ and ‘a destructive quality or force’ (OED, MED). Within a hundred years of its assimilation into the English lexicon, *enemy* also started to be used with reference to Satan, the first attestation coming from the early version of the Wycliffite Bible, dated to 1382 (OED), cf.:

- (4) I haue 3ouun to 3ou power of defoulinge, other tredinge on... al the vertu of **the enemy**. (*Bible Wycliffite, E.V.*, Luke x. 19)

It is interesting to note that the MED quotes the passage from Chaucer’s *The Tale of Melibee* as the first use of *enemy* in that meaning, but the dating provided (c1390) is that of the original not the manuscript. Moreover, within

the entry of *enemy* defined as “Of an evil spirit, esp. the Devil”, the dictionary does not provide any quote from the Wycliffite Bible.

According to these dictionaries, in the religious meaning, the word *enemy* most often collocates with possessive pronouns and adjectives such as *ghostly*, *great*, and *old*. Other frequent collocations are seen in the phrases *the enemy of hell*, *the enemy of mankind*, and *the enemy of souls*. The noun is typically preceded by the definite article *the* suggesting reference to Satan himself.

### 3. Data

The data for the present study come from *The Innsbruck Corpus of Middle English Prose*, which contains complete Middle English prosaic texts of various genres. The use of these texts proved essential, since, unlike poetry, where the selection of words is often determined by metre and rhyme, prosaic data provide a more reliable source of information. As the dating and the dialectal distribution are of importance for the research, the study includes only those texts which come from manuscripts of fairly reliably specified dates and provenances. Thus, the list of texts examined includes 59 sources from all five Middle English dialects, dated to various centuries of Middle English, ranging from a1200 to 1500. An additional advantage of that text selection is that it represents various genres (including that of chronicles, etc.), which allows for a more thorough analysis since religious meanings and contexts are also found in secular texts.

All the texts have been examined for forms of the two words central to the study, i.e. *fiend* and *enemy*. From all the instances of their usage, those with religious meanings were singled out in order to establish their frequency in various periods of Middle English. Furthermore, the contexts in which these two nouns refer to Satan, the Devil, or a devilish creature were compared in order to discover potential differences in their applications.

The study disregards those texts where neither of the nouns appears (12 texts)<sup>2</sup>, and it focuses out of necessity on those where at least one instance of either *fiend* or *enemy* is evident. The textual sources examined are divided into three categories according to the presence or absence of each noun. There are those in which:

<sup>2</sup> i.e. *Twelfth-Cent. Homilies* (Bod 343), *History of the Holy Rood-tree*, *Old English Homilies*, *Vices and Virtues*, *Kentish Sermons*, *Two Fifteenth-Century Cookery Books*, *Agnus Castus*. *A Middle English Herbal*, the works of John Metham: *Christmas Day* [1], *Christmas Day* [2], *the Days of the Moon*, *Palmistry*, and *Physiognomy*.

- (1) *enemy* is absent and *fiend* is present;
- (2) *enemy* is present and *fiend* is absent;
- (3) *enemy* is present and *fiend* is present.

For the purposes of the present analysis, the last group, including both items, is of greatest significance and, as such, is discussed in greater detail below.

### 3.1 The absence of *enemy* and the presence of *fiend*

The first category takes in the texts that contain instances of *fiend* but not *enemy*. As should be expected, the majority of those sources are dated to the period before *enemy* had, to our knowledge, entered the language, i.e. the first centuries of Middle English times, cf.:

Table 2. Texts including *fiend* but not *enemy*

Date	Dialect	Text
[1150-1250]	WMdl	<i>Seinte Marherete</i> (Roy)
[1150-1250]	WMdl	<i>St. Julian</i> (Bod)
[1150-1250]	WMdl	<i>St. Julian</i> (Roy)
[1150-1250]	Kentish	<i>Twelfth-Cent. Homilies</i> (Vesp)
1150-1250	WMdl	<i>Hali Meidenhad</i> (Bod)
1150-1250	WMdl	<i>Hali Meidenhad</i> (Tit)
1150-1250	WMdl	<i>Hali Meidhad</i> (crit)
1150-1250	WMdl	<i>Sawoles Warde</i>
12/13c.	WMdl	<i>Wohunge of Ure Lauerd</i>
?a1200	Southern	<i>Ancrene Riwe</i> (Ner)
?a1200	WMdl	<i>Ancrene Riwe</i> (Tit)
?a1200	WMdl	<i>Ancrene Wisse</i> (Corp-C)
?c1200	WMdl	<i>St. Katherine</i> (Roy)
a1225	EMdl	<i>Old English Homilies</i>
c.1200-1250	WMdl	<i>Ancrene Riwe</i> (Gon-Ca)
c1230	WMdl	<i>Seinte Marherete</i> (Bod)
1340	Kentish	<i>Dan Michel, Ayenbite of Inwytt, or Remorse of Conscience</i>



This class also includes texts that originated in Old English and were copied only later, such as the so-called AB language works. The chronologically most recent text to exhibit *fiend* exclusively is Dan Michel's *Ayenbite of Inwoyt*, a Kentish translation of *Somme le Roi*, dated to 1340. Given the fact that Dan Michel is known for having translated the French source *literatim*, thus including direct calques from French (Janecka 2008: 151), it is interesting that the French borrowing *enemy* is not attested in his work, as it is claimed to have entered English at least half a century earlier (see section 2.2). The absence of the word might be attributed to what has been called "the conservative nature of his language" (Gradon in Morris 1965: 12), which represented not the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century but rather the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, (Laing 1993: 67), the time when *enemy* should not have been widely recognized yet.

In the texts examined, the word *fiend* is employed in more than a single meaning. As the selected data illustrate, it was an antonym to *friend* (5a), but it also denoted 'an opponent' in general (5b) or 'an opponent in a fight' in particular (5c), cf.:

- (5) a. þine **frend** sariliche wið reming and sorhe. þine **fend** hokerliche to schome and wundren up o þe. A nu haue þai broht him þider. (*Wooing Lord*, p. 283)  
 Mi feader & Mi moder for þi þ ich nule þe forsaken: habbe forsake me. & al mi nestfalde cun. þ schulde beo me best **freond** beoð me meast **feondes**. (*St. Julian* (Bod), 1.277-280)
- b. seo swicola Dalila þone strange Sanson, hire agene were, mid olæcunge bepæhte, & bescorene fexe his **feonden** belæwde. (*Twelfth-Cent. Homilies*, (Vsp)., p.57, 1.12-14)  
 [...] to uoryeue þe on to þe oþre and louye oure **uyendes** [...]  
 (*Ayenbite of Inwoyt*, p.114)
- c. hwen me asaled þurhes oðer castel; þeo wið innen healdeð scaldinde weater ut. & weried swa þe walles. ant 3e don alswa as ofte as þe **feond** asaled ower castel & te sawle burh [...] (*Ancrene Wisse*, p.125, 1.1-5)

Still, the sense in which *fiend* is used most frequently is one involving evil power, or, more specifically, one synonymous with Satan. As such, the noun is found especially in religious texts, such as sermons, homilies, or texts directed at members of religious orders. The incidence of that usage might be indicated by the high frequency with which the word occurs in that sense in the text *Ancrene Wisse* (Corp-C 402); 66 instances of such usage appear there.

### 3.2 The presence of *enemy* and the absence of *fiend*

The database also includes texts that utilize *enemy* but never *fiend*. It must be noted that all the texts here are dated to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when the French word is assumed already to be well-rooted in the language. As Table 3 shows, it was especially common in the eastern areas, cf.:

Table 3. Texts including *enemy* but not *fiend*

Date	Dialect	Text	<i>enemy</i>	
			Total	Religious
[c1400]	WMdl	<i>Brut, or The Chronicles of England</i>	61	---
c1425	EMdl	<i>Fistula in ano</i>	2	---
1420-1500	EMdl	<i>Paston Letters</i>	93	---
c1452	EMdl	<i>Capgrave's Lives of St. Augustine</i>	12	---
a1464	EMdl	<i>Capgrave's Chronicles, Abbreviation of</i>	38	---
c1450	EMdl	<i>Secreta Secretorum</i>	10	---
1472-1488	EMdl	<i>Cely Letters</i>	1	---
a1475	EMdl	<i>Spheres and Planets, in The Book of Quintessence</i>	1	---
a1500	EMdl	<i>Secreta Secretorum</i>	12	---
c1400	Southern	<i>Three Middle English Sermons (Worcester Chapter Manuscript F. 10)</i>	28	5
a1450	EMdl	<i>Trevisa, Methodius, The Bygynnyng of the World</i>	2	2

Interestingly, in the majority of those texts the loanword is used in the secular meaning only, referring to notions other than Satan/the Devil or devils. This, presumably, follows from their genre since they are mainly non-religious documents such as medical or astrological treatises, historical chronicles, or private letters. The word *enemy* is employed here in the meaning of someone opposing something or, more specifically, an armed opponent in a fight (6a). Also, the meaning of the word is sometimes metaphorical, expressing a destructive or hostile force (6b-c), cf., e.g.:

- (6) a. [...] þei spedde faste toward her **enemyes** for to 3eue hem bataylle  
 [...] (*Brut*, p.12, l.33-34)

- b. ffor after ypocras cold þing<sup>3</sup> in acte bene **enemys** to bone<sup>3</sup>, to synowe<sup>3</sup>, to teþe, to brayne, to þe lure, to þe bladdre, and to þe nerw<sup>3</sup> of þe ribegone. (*Fistula in ano*, p. 70, l. 22-25)
- c. Mars is an **enemy** to alle thyngis to be gendrid; wherfor he is clepid god of batel [...] (*Spheres and Planets*, p. 26)

In the two texts which employ *enemy* exclusively, i.e. a treatise by Trevisa entitled *Methodius*, written in the East Midland dialect, and *Three Middle English Sermons* in a Southern manuscript (Worc F. 10), the word is used in the religious sense. In *Methodius*, *enemy* occurs twice with reference to the Antichrist (7a). In the *Sermons*, only five out of 28 instances of the word reflect religious usage. Curiously, in most passages where the word denotes the Devil, the referent is further specified, cf. (7b-e):

- (7) a. And onone he sal sla þis beste, Antecrist **enmy** & disceyfer, with þe swerd of his mowthe [...] (*Methodius*, p.111, l.22-24)
- b. [...] I vndirstond no-tyng ell at this tyem bot hour gastlyche **enmy, þe deuel of hell**, þis kursyd iþe, þis wyckyd Pharoo [...] (*Three Middle English Sermons*, p.23, l.31-33)
- c. [...] & lift vr sowle fro þe stynkyng dingel o lustes o þis world, þat **vr enmy, þe deuel of helle** [...] (*Three Middle English Sermons*, p.58, l.255-256)
- d. [...] 3if we þus do; **vr enmy, þe deuel**, schal ner take a-way vr offryng' from vs. (*Three Middle English Sermons*, p.65, l.477-479)
- e. [...] whan a streþte His bodi o þe cros & þrew down mannis **enmy, þe deuel of helle** [...] (*Three Middle English Sermons*, p.49, l.884-885)

Because the majority of uses express a secular meaning of *enemy* as the opponent, it seems that in the constructions quoted above additional phrases such as *the devil of hell* function as an explicitation of the religious sense of the term. This, in turn, suggests that the religious meaning of *enemy* might then have been considered peripheral.

### 3.3 The presence of both *enemy* and *fiend*

For purposes of the present study, of greatest importance are the texts which contain both words, *enemy* and *fiend*, since they might display differences in the employment of the two items. Some of the texts include the two euphemisms in both secular and religious meaning, cf.:

Table 4. Texts including both *enemy* and *fiend* in various meanings

Date	Dialect	Text	<i>enemy</i>		<i>fiend</i>	
			Total	Religious	Total	Religious
a1425	Emdl	<i>Adam and Eve</i>	2	2	7	7
1434	Emdl	<i>Misyn, The Mending of Life</i>	3	1	11	11
1435	Emdl	<i>Misyn, The Fire of Love</i>	20	5	27	27
?a1450	North	<i>Alphabet of Tales</i>	27	1	150	150
a1450	Emdl	<i>Pater Noster of Richard Ermyte</i>	5	3	14	14
?c1450	Southern	<i>The Book of The Knight of La Tour-Landry</i>	15	5	17	17
c1450	Emdl	<i>Julian of N.'s Revelations (Shorter Version)</i>	5	5	16	16
a1500	WMdl	<i>De Imitatione Christi</i>	26	8	4	4
a1500	WMdl	<i>Speculum Sacerdotale</i>	28	2	2	2
a1500	Kent	<i>Merlin</i>	105	5	29	29

In only two of the texts listed in Table 4, *Julian's Revelations* and *Adam and Eve*, do all instances of both words, often used in proximity, denote an evil power, cf.:

- (8) a. And whanne Adam say hir, he cryede wepynge: "O Eue, where is þe werk of þi penaunce; how is it þat **oure enemy** haþ þus bigylid þee, [...]" Whanne Eue herde þis, sche knew hir-silf bigylid þoru þe **feend**, and fel grouelynge to þe erþe [...] (*Adam and Eve*, p.83, l. 16-21)
- b. [...] 3e, vnto alle creatures lyevande that schulde be saffe agaynes alle the **feendys** of helle & agaynes alle gostelye **enmyes**. (*Julian's Revelations*, p. 43, l.24-26)
- c. For I trowe sothlye, ware I saffe fra synne, I ware fulle saife fra alle the **fendes** of helle & **enmyse** of my saule. (*Julian's Revelations*, p. 75, l.19-20)

While in item (8a) the terms seem to be nearly synonymous, items (8bc) allow for the determination that these nouns have a semantic scope broader than one encompassing spiritual opponents which are only *fiends of hell*, a phrase that refers specifically to devils. Also, in both sources, *enemy* is less frequent

than *fiend*, the ratio being 2 to 7 in *Adam and Eve* and 5 to 16 in *Revelations*, respectively.

In the remaining texts listed in Table 4, only the Germanic word is used in religious contexts. In contrast, *enemy* typically refers to secular opponents and only occasionally denotes Satan or devils, e.g.:

- (9) Cesarius tellis of a knyght þat on a tyme was taken with his **enmys** & slayn. [...] And when he dyed, a man þat was vexid with a **fend** was delyverd. (*Alphabet of Tales*, p. 331-332)

As item (9) shows, the word *enemy* denotes the knight's opponents who kill him in a fight. But when referring to the devil that possessed the man, the author employs the word *fiend*, not *enemy*. A similar distribution may be observed in other texts, which suggests that *fiend* rather than *enemy* tends to be associated with a religious meaning. Still, the two items are occasionally treated as being nearly synonymous, cf.:

- (10) a. Happy is þe ryche þat has slike possessyon; & þis to haue þe warldis vanyte þou forsake: & he þe **enmy** sal ouercome & þe to his kyngdom brynge. Þe **feynd** sall be ouercomen þat þe noys, þe flesch made sogett þat þe greuys (*Misyn, The Fire of Love*, p.63, l.5-7)
- b. But true mariage is ordeined be God [...] and therfor the **fende** of hell hathe no pouer in that holy sacrement, [...] and, as a smithe that is euer blowinge in the fire, and right so seruith the **ennemy** of hell that besiethe hym euer forto kendill and lyght the fere flame of dedly synne witheinne the hertis of man and woman bi fals delite [...] (*The Book of The Knight of La Tour-Landry*, p. 164, l. 28-32)
- c. Wityrly noon but þe envious **enemy**, þe **feende** of helle, þat euer ylike procuriþ wiþ his wrenchis [...] (*Pater Noster*, p.6, l.19-20)

Interestingly, in the above passages both the native and the borrowed term happen to be used in the same collocations, cf. *The enemy shall overcome* vs. *The fiend shall be overcome* (10a), and *the fiend of hell* vs. *the enemy of hell* (10b).

Item (10b) further confirms that both words may occur with the same collocates, such as the adjectives *foul* or *envious*, or the postmodifier *of hell*. That phrase, however, most frequently modifies *fiend*, while the collocation with *enemy* is sporadic. Still, identical modification seems to suggest that the foreign item not only took on the semantic properties of the native *fiend* but also some of its collocates. On a side note, the fact that *enemy* is also often

preceded by determiners may indicate the need for more precision when referring to the Devil or his followers, hence *our enemy*, *his enemy*, etc.

The remaining sources that utilize both items, all of the East Midland dialect of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, show a clear semantic distribution of the two words in question, cf.:

Table 5. Texts including *enemy* in secular contexts and *fiend* in religious contexts

Date	Dialect	Text	<i>enemy</i>		<i>fiend</i>	
			Total	Religious	Total	Religious
a1400	EMdl	<i>Ancrene Riwe</i> (MS Pepys)	17	---	72	72
a1400	EMdl	<i>The Gospel of Nicodemus</i>	3	---	1	1
a1400	EMdl	<i>Pepysian Gospel Harmony</i>	5	---	56	56
a1450	EMdl	<i>Mandeville's Travels</i> (Bodley Version)	4	---	1	1
c1450	EMdl	<i>Speculum Christiani</i>	19	---	23	23
c1450	EMdl	<i>Lavynham, A Litil Tretys</i>	1	---	10	10
a1475	EMdl	<i>Book of Quintessence</i>	2	---	2	2

In all of the texts listed in Table 5, *fiend* is employed solely in its religious meaning, while the use of *enemy* is restricted to the secular use. This indicates a high degree of specialization of the two items in those works, and foreign *enemy* has acquired a secular meaning in certain instances. Compare the uses of the two words within the same texts in (11):

- (11) a. As Iudas betrayede Criste to his **enmys**, so the mynister of the sacramente or the receyuer vnworthi, in as mych as in hym es, be-take[3] hym to deueles, whil he putte3 [hym] in a place that es vnder power of **fendes**. (*Speculum Christiani*, p. 178, l. 16-19)
- b. þei putte away also þe craft of **þe feendis** temptaciouns, and ymagynaciouns of dispeir. þei distroie, & make a man to for3ete almaner of yueles, and naturally bryngiþ him a3en to resonable witt. and for as myche as saturne þe planete naturally ys coold and drye, and is **enemye** to al kynde. (*Book of Quintessence*, p. 18, l.12-16)
- c. Whan þe **deuel** assaileþ 3ou.casteþ out scoldyng water opon hym as men done att Castels opon her **enemyes**. For þere þat water comeþ. **þe fende** flei3eþ sikerlich. (*Ancrene Riwe* (Pepys), p.111, l.25-27)

In the items under (11), the two words appear in close proximity, which, we may suppose, the firmer difference in their meanings allows. In all three quotations, the word *enemy* denotes an opponent, either in a general sense (11ab) or in a military one (11c). In contrast, *fiend* always has a religious connotation denoting evil power.

It is interesting to note that the native word is used not only to refer to Satan himself but also to signify all kinds of devils. In such a context, it is not preceded by a definite article and may take various other modifiers, including the indefinite article (12a), a numeral (12b), or an adjective (12c). It may also assume a plural form (12d), cf.:

- (12) a. Now was þere a man amonges hem þat hadde a **fende** wiþin hym. (*Pepysian Gospel Harmony*, p.19, l.27-28)
- b. Hou þat Jesus enchasced **sex þousande & sex hundreþ and sexti & sex fendes**, and after passed hym ouer þe se. (*Pepysian Gospel Harmony*, p.20, r.19)
- c. [...] the synnes accusynge schal be on the ryght syde, **innumerable fendes** scha[l] be on the lefte syde [...] (*Speculum Christiani*, p.54, l.3-4)
- d. for **fendis** aperyng to hem opynly and afrayen hem and flyen into the eye with thondyr and fer and othere hidous tempestis (*Mandeville's Travels*, p.105, l.22-24)

The plural usage of the word may in part have been the result of a semantic extension which transferred the meaning of Satan to that of devils associated with him. Strangely enough, the word *devil* does not seem to have been treated as taboo; it was frequently employed in Middle English. The corpus of texts examined yields more than a thousand instances of its use. Thus, even though *devil* in its meaning of 'the supreme spirit of evil' (OED) may often have been replaced by euphemisms, the word in its other meanings, such as 'evil or unclean spirits' (OED), also started to lose ground to some of the same euphemistic expressions, such as *fiend*.

Elsewhere, the same word, *fiend*, may also be interpreted in a broader sense as a kind of embodiment of evil, i.e. an evil person or creature, cf.:

- (13) a. And þo seide Jesus þat on of hem twelue was a **fende**. And þat he seide of Judas, þat hym bitraied. (*Pepysian Gospel Harmony*, p. 48, l.38-39)

- b. And þis knyght held hur still, & þis womman pullid faste & wolde hafe bene away. So at þe laste sho pullid so faste at all hur hare braste of hur heade, & sho ran away & þis **fiend** folowd after & tuke hur [...] (*Alphabet of Tales*, p.310, l.20-23)
- c. [...] till that Gawein that to euery nede was nygh it a-parceyved, and saugh the grete harme that he dide of her peple, and seide to hym-self yef this **feende** lyve eny while we may moche lese. (*Merlin*, p.589)
- d. [...] the victorie that he hadde yeve the kynge, ffor neuer hadde | thei seyn so grete a **feende**; [...] (*Merlin*, p.649)

As these quotations show, the word *fiend* was employed in the sense of 'a person of superhuman wickedness' (OED). Still, it could reasonably be argued that such persons were treated here as those who serve, or even personify, the devil. Hence, given the scarcity of data (4 cases), the present study classifies that sense as religious.

#### 4. Conclusions

The analysis of the distribution of the two items under scrutiny yields the following conclusions:

- (1) the semantic range of the native word *fiend* has taken in opponents of all kinds, yet the core meaning of that item seems to have been one of an opposing evil power;
- (2) the French word *enemy* is attested in its initial English meaning of opponent in the prosaic texts of the database for the first time at the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century;
- (3) at a certain point, *enemy* broadened its semantic scope and began to be used in a religious sense as a euphemism for Satan/ the Devil, especially in East Midland and Southern (15<sup>th</sup> c.), and, occasionally, it also appears with collocates typical of the native *fiend*, cf. *enemies of hell*;
- (4) however, *enemy* does not maintain its religious sense well, being attested rarely and sporadically (in 12 of the 59 texts examined) with a religious meaning – yet comparatively frequently with meanings such as 'opponent in life', 'opponent in battle', etc.;
- (5) simultaneously, *fiend* loses non-religious meanings, and by the 15<sup>th</sup> century is used with reference to Satan and/ or his followers only;



- (6) in time, the rivalry between the two words led to a quite clear semantic distinction, one which is still observed in Present Day English, i.e. the specialization of *fiend* to religious contexts, and the narrowing of *enemy* to the non-religious denotation of ‘opponent’.

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