

A Corpus of Narrative Etymologies: chaque orthographe a son histoire

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One of the most striking aspects of written Middle English is the extraordinary number of spelling variants for a single word. Much of this spelling diversity is systematic, yet no history of English so far provides a set of etymologies to account for the diachronic and regional variants. Traditional etymologies, as exemplified in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, focus on the semantic history of a word; form changes are explained only broadly.

A Corpus of Narrative Etymologies (CoNE) aims to explicate in detail the evolution of individual words and affixes, from the input language to the Anglo-Saxon settlement, into the variant forms attested in early Middle English (1150-1325). Underpinning CoNE will be a Corpus of Changes (CC), documenting and explaining the linguistic changes referred to in the individual word-histories. CoNE will go beyond existing historical English dictionaries, in the systematic presentation of all changes and the explanation of all attested form-types as a set of branching narratives.