

# On the time-depth of variability: Orm and Farmon as h-droppers

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## 1. Introduction

In the section headed *The time-depth of non-standard variants* in his chapter ‘Middle English Dialectology’ in *The Cambridge History of the English Language* (Milroy 1992), James Milroy argues that “(h) has been a variable in English for many centuries” (1992:200). Describing the variable loss of the letter ⟨h⟩ in syllable-initial position in words like *hate* and *hopper*, Milroy says:

This pattern of variation is widespread in Early Middle English ... it seems in the early parts of the period to be most common in texts originating in the east midlands, East Anglia and the south. It is quite common ... in early east midland/East Anglian texts such as *Genesis and Exodus*, *King Horn*, *Havelok*. ... The geographical distribution of relevant texts from ca 1190–1320 is from Lincolnshire or Norfolk (in the north) to the southern counties, but the instability seems to be greatest in the east midlands. (1992:198–199)

Among the East Midland texts mentioned by Milroy, the *Ormulum* is not included. Admittedly, it was written somewhat earlier (ca 1160–1180<sup>1</sup>) than the earliest date given by Milroy, but the real reason for its exclusion must be that not a single syllable-initial ⟨h⟩ is missing in the only complete edition of the text so far (Holt 1878). A careful scrutiny of the manuscript shows, however, that even Orm occasionally indulged in [h]-dropping: he was just better than his contemporaries at covering his tracks. It is consistent with Orm’s general tendency to make changes in his text in order to normalize his spelling and morphology<sup>2</sup> that he should have chosen to restore the missing ⟨h⟩ in all the instances of [h]-dropping in the extant parts of the manuscript when he revised the text. As a consequence, no-one, to the best of my knowledge, has described these cases of [h]-dropping before.

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<sup>1</sup> For this date, see further Parkes 1983 and Johannesson 1998:420, fn. 27.

<sup>2</sup> For an account of Orm’s normalizing tendencies, see Burchfield 1956.

In this paper I will give an account of the cases of [h]-dropping that I have observed in the *Ormulum* manuscript<sup>3</sup>, as well as the ways in which Orm later modified the text. In addition, I will seek to demonstrate that the time-depth of the variable realization of /h/ is greater than Milroy suggests: a scrutiny of the Mercian scribe Farmon's contributions to the *Rushworth Gospels* from the tenth century<sup>4</sup> shows the same tendency towards [h]-dropping as can be observed in the *Ormulum* as well as the early East Midland texts described by Milroy.

## 2. [h]-dropping and cover-up in the *Ormulum*

The examples from the *Ormulum* printed here are presented in a diplomatic edition of the text as Orm first wrote it.<sup>5</sup> For ease of reference, each example is identified with column and line numbers in the manuscript, as well as with the numbers of the corresponding lines in Holt's 1878 edition.

### 2.1 *Prevocalic* ⟨h⟩

In the pronoun *itt* (< OE *hit*), the loss of the initial ⟨h⟩ is complete in Orm's text. Five instances of variable loss of prevocalic ⟨h⟩ in other words can be found in the manuscript:

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<sup>3</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Junius 1. I am grateful to Dr. Bruce Barker-Benfield for granting me access to the manuscript in the spring of 1997.

<sup>4</sup> See Ker 1957:352.

<sup>5</sup> The text is printed with the line division of the manuscript. The following symbols are used in the edited text: characters which were later erased (scraped off with the knife) are **pink**, whereas characters which were later deleted (covered with ink) are **brown**. Characters written over an erasure are **olive green**, whereas characters that were later overwritten are **bright green**. All the examples from the *Ormulum* are transcribed using Orm's own letter shapes in order to make it clearer how the changes was carried out. The special fonts used here are derived from the Junius fonts provided by Peter Baker, University of Virginia.

(1)

⁊ he pass an iudisskeñ mañ.  
full haliz i þ time. ⁊ haffðe zeon-  
nedd inn hiss þohht. ⁊ affz  
cristess come. ⁊ haffðe zeon-  
nedd aḡ þ he. Spa lañge moss-  
te libbeñ. ⁊ Pat he riþ eh-  
ne mihte seon. þe lafeñd  
crist on eorþe. (col. 173 l. 64–col. 174 l. 4; 7597–7604)

*col. 174*

At the bottom of col. 173 Orm first wrote ‘affð’; he then erased this and wrote ‘haf’ over the erasure and continued to produce ‘haffðe’. This change gives the impression of being an immediate correction, carried out as he wrote the text.

(2)

⁊ hi buriþ lokenn him  
þ he. Ne gillte noht riþ  
pille. Ne burih iss þohht.  
ne burih hiss porð. Ne  
burih hiss bodiz dede. ⁊ taḡ  
iss riþ þe fite lot. Off  
god. 7 haliz shriste. (col. 178 ll. 17–23; 7863–68)

In col. 178, line 19, Orm first wrote ‘þuſſh iſſ’, which was later altered to ‘þuſſh h<sup>iſſ</sup>’. The change was carried out in the following manner: a superscript ⟨r⟩ was added above the first long ⟨r⟩, the second long ⟨r⟩ was overwritten with ⟨h⟩ but the descender was not erased. The word ‘iſſ’ was erased and a new, clumsier ‘iſſ’ was written slightly further to the left. The tips of the descenders of the original long ⟨s⟩’s can be seen to the right of the current ⟨s⟩’s. The whole point of the erasure must have been to attach ‘iſſ’ to the ⟨h⟩ which was originally the last letter of ‘þuſſh’.

(3)

Þatt ure la-  
 feſð iefu cſuſt. Þatt tume þ he co-  
 me. **H**i<sup>m</sup> ſhollðe bſuſſge<sup>n</sup> i<sup>n</sup> hiſſ  
 h<sup>ā</sup>ð. hiſſ ri<sup>n</sup>ðell foſſi to ri<sup>n</sup>ðre<sup>n</sup>.  
 7 foſſi to cle<sup>n</sup>ſe<sup>n</sup> h<sup>i</sup>m iſſ coſn. 7  
 ſſa þe chaſſ to ſhæde<sup>n</sup>. 7 ſa<sup>m</sup>- (col. 265 ll. 7–12; 10480–85)

The original ‘h<sup>i</sup>m iſſ coſn’ in col. 265 l. 12 was modified in the following manner: the first minim of the ⟨m⟩ was erased, an ⟨h⟩ was built over the remaining 2 minims, and another nasal stroke was added above the ⟨i⟩, thus yielding ‘h<sup>i</sup> hiſſ’.

(4)

7 **H**e paſſ þ liht þatt  
 lihhtedd paſſ. þuſſh çſteſſ  
 foþe leme. **H**e paſſ tatt  
 lihht tatt gaſſ uſſ lihht.

Acc nohhc tohh þurh **im**  
 sellfeñ. **F**oñ þurh þatt he  
 pass filledð all. Off haliz  
 gatteff lape. **Þ**ær þurh **zaf**  
**hum** þe laferhð crift. **T**o  
 lihðeñ mēneff heñteff.  
**Þ**urh fulluhht 7 þurh  
 spell off crift. 7 ec þurh  
 haliz biþne.

(col. 414 ll. 35–47; 19077–86)

In col. 414, l. 39 Orm first wrote ‘þurh **im**’, with sufficient space between ⟨h⟩ and ⟨i⟩ to make it perfectly clear where the ⟨h⟩ belongs. Later he erased the nasal stroke, made the ⟨i⟩ into the right leg (minim) of an ⟨h⟩ (thereby using up the space between the words) (the new parts of the ⟨h⟩ are more reddish). He erased the first arch in the ⟨m⟩, turning the first minim into an ⟨i⟩, then added an arch + minim on the right (at the end of the line, so there were no space restrictions), then added a superscript ⟨m⟩, yielding ‘þurh **hum**’. The change is very neatly executed.

(5)

nedð. **Ÿ** **O**ff sprillke  
 þ hē turh      ndeñ spa.  
**A**llflinðgeff to þe la-  
 feñð. **O**ff sprillke pæ-  
 nenn alle þa. **Þ**att hī

lihhtliȝ forrpurp-

penn.

(col. 370 ll. 56–62; 16574–77)

The original ‘**A**llflūngeſſ’ was altered in the following manner: ‘**A**ll’ was first erased. Orm must originally have meant to squeeze ‘**h**all’ into this space, otherwise it would have been enough to turn the ⟨A⟩ into an ⟨a⟩ and add the ⟨H⟩ before it. As it turned out, he changed his mind and wrote ‘**h**all’ with the ⟨H⟩ in the space between the columns, the ⟨a⟩ over the old ⟨A⟩, and the ⟨l⟩’s over the old ⟨l⟩’s, thus yielding ‘**h**<sup>l</sup>all<sup>l</sup>flūngeſſ’.

## 2.2 Initial ⟨h⟩ in consonant clusters

In words with initial *hl-* and *hr-* in Old English, the initial ⟨h⟩ is almost completely lost in the Ormulum. The exceptions are ‘**l**huðe’ (‘loud’; 1x, < OE *hlude*) and ‘**h**hof’ (‘roof’; 1x, alternating with ‘**h**of’ 2x < OE *hrof*). In all other words of this type the ⟨h⟩ is uniformly absent: ‘**l**ahh<sup>h</sup>ȝenn’ (‘laugh’; < OE *A hlæhhan*), ‘**l**aferrd’ (‘lord’; < OE *hlaford*), ‘**h**eopeþþ’ (3 *sg. pres.*), ‘**h**æp’ (*pret.*) (‘rue’; < OE *hreowan*, *hreaw*), etc. The forms ‘**l**huðe’ and ‘**h**hof’ do not seem to have disturbed Orm in the course of his revision work.

In words with initial *hw-* in Old English, on the other hand, Orm almost invariably writes initial ‘**ph-**’. There are, however, two examples where he first omitted the ⟨h⟩ and later restored it:

(6)

∮ Nu maȝȝ

mann unnderriſtañðenn hep.

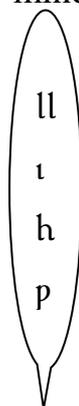
þurp<sup>h</sup> þiſe ſeofenn mahhteſſ.

Þiþ **pill**ke ȝiſeſſ halȝ gaft. hep

ſhofneþ criſteſſ þeoppeſſ.

(col. 217 ll. 16–20; 8805–8)

In the original ‘**pill**ke’ (‘which’) in col. 217 l. 19, Orm later erased ‘**pill**’, leaving only the descender of the wynn untouched. The reason for erasing so much of the word was presumably that he intended to squeeze in ‘**phill**’ over the erasure, a common enough technique elsewhere in the manuscript. If so, he changed his mind and wrote ‘**phill**’ rising in the inner margin, thus:



This kind of arrangement of the letters in a marginal addition is typical of changes which appear to have been made some time after the manuscript was finished: the ink is medium brown where the ink of the main text is blackish, and the lettering is somewhat coarser than in the main text. The letters are enclosed in what looks strikingly like a speech balloon in a modern cartoon. The place of insertion of the marginal addition is indicated by means of a guiding line from the balloon to the erasure; the line ends in the remaining descender of the original wynn.

In the second example of [h]-dropping from a ‘ph-’ cluster, the ⟨h⟩ is missing from text that Orm added after the original text was finished:

(7)

ƿ **Þ**iss hall-

<sup>h</sup>ʒe mahhte doþ þe pel. ʒiff þ tu

pel itt foll<sup>h</sup>ʒess̄t. Þuñþshupe

ʃhæpeñ oþne meñ. ʒēt foñþeñ

þine lah<sup>h</sup>ʒne.

(col. 121 ll. 8–12; 4952–55)

This passage is the second in a sequence of four occurrences of causative *don* followed by a bare infinitive; in a later change, Orm added the infinitive marker *to* before each infinitive. But since the number of

syllables in Orm’s verse is fixed, the addition of *to* meant that the verses had to be rewritten to accommodate this added syllable. In col. 121 ll. 10–11, the change was carried out in the following manner: ‘ſhi’ and ‘ſhæpeñ oþre’ were deleted, ‘Co’ was written in the inner margin with a guiding line indicating its proper place of insertion, the remaining ⟨p⟩ of ‘Puſþſhipe’ was overwritten to make an otiose ⟨p⟩, and ‘eʒʒpær alle’ was written between the lines. The change was made in grey ink, and with the pen held parallel to the line of writing (‘flat feet’); this indicates a change late in Orm’s revision work. This resulted in the verse Co Puſþþeñ eʒʒpær alle meñ. (added parts underlined).

Still later, a second corrector (presumably Orm at a later date), using dark brown ink, inserted an ⟨h⟩ above, and centered on, ‘ær’ (the nearest space available) with a thin guiding line indicating its proper place before the ⟨æ⟩, resulting in the form ‘eʒʒphær’.

### 2.3 Syllable-final ⟨h⟩

The final example of [h]-loss in the *Ormulum* does not, strictly speaking, come under the heading of ‘[h]-dropping’, as Milroy (1992) used the term, since this example involves loss of syllable-final, rather than syllable-initial, ⟨h⟩. Since this example, to the best of my knowledge, has never been discussed before, I nevertheless include a description here.

(8)

Foſſ þ teʒʒ pollðenn bliþeliʒ.  
 haſðneñ ʒiff þ teʒʒ mihheteñ. Þatt  
 teʒʒre bapptiffteſſ fulluhht. Þaſſ  
 bettre 7 heſre 7 ðere.’ Þann þ taċ  
 paſſ biʒunneñ þa. Þuſh criſt færl-  
 like 7 nepeñ. (col. 395 ll. 20–25; 18218–23)

The comparative form of ‘*heh*’ (‘high’) in col. 395 l. 23 was first written ‘*heppe*’. The form used elsewhere in the text is *hehhre*. The form in col. 395 was normalized in the following manner: the descender of the first ⟨r⟩ was erased, and the letter ⟨h⟩ (with in-turned minim) superimposed on what remained of the first ⟨r⟩. Above minim height there is a mess. This may be an attempt to add a later ⟨h⟩ to the same stem: something that may have been a minim can be seen at ascender height.

It is not clear whether *herre* was a genuine variant form in Orm’s dialect, or whether the form is simply a copying error, anticipating the following comparative *derre*. The assumption that *herre* was a genuine form is supported, however, by the fact that the same form is found in twelfth-century copies of Old English texts (quoted from the Toronto Corpus):

Eale hwu heh mæden Godes moder, Hwæt mihte beon **herre**? (‘In festis sancte Marie’ DOE Electronic edition; from London, British Library, MS. Cotton Vespasian D.xiv, mid-12th century (s. XII med); Ker 1957:271, 275)

Seo boc sægð þæt Noes flod wæs feowrtig fedmen heh ofer þa hegesta dunen þe on middenearde synden and neorxenewang is feowrtig fedme **herre** þone Noes flod wæs. (‘De sancto Iohanne’ DOE Electronic edition; MS. Cotton Vespasian D.xiv)

Nyton þonne nan **herre** good þonne eallra þara deorwyrðestena ðinga gegadrunga to hiora anwealde ðæt he nanes ðinges buton þæm ne þyrfe. (Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy, Book 3 (DOE Electronic edition); from Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Bodley 180 (2079), early 12th century (s. XII<sup>1</sup>); Ker 1957:358f.)

## 2.4 Summary

Most of the h-less forms described above (a<sup>ff</sup>ðe, ımm, ı<sup>ff</sup> (2x); e<sup>z</sup>z<sup>p</sup>ær, pıllke; he<sup>r</sup>ne), occur elsewhere in the manuscript in variant forms with the ⟨h⟩ firmly in place; the only exception is ‘*ǰallflı̄nge<sup>ff</sup>*’ (although ‘*hall<sup>f</sup>*’ is common enough). The word ‘*ǰallflı̄nge<sup>ff</sup>*’ is particularly interesting since it occurs at the beginning of a verse and is therefore written with a

capital ⟨A⟩, so Orm must in all likelihood have been aware of what he was doing when he wrote the word without the initial capital ⟨H⟩.<sup>6</sup>

All the [h]-less forms (except ‘imm’<sup>7</sup>) also have parallels in other early Middle English texts:

Willelm eorl of Albamar, þe þe king **adde** beteht Euorwic, (*Pet. Chr.*, 2nd cont., 1138, Hall 1920:9; from Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 636, written ca. 1155)

we **auen** forgult ure saules wille ... 7 bireusen þat we **auen** don. (*Trin. Hom.*, Scribe II, Morris 1873:55; from Trinity College, Cambridge, MS 335 (B.14.52), late 12<sup>th</sup> century (s. xii ex.); Laing 1993:37).

Niht bitokneð her unbileue. þat is **aiware** aleid. 7 rihte leue arered godeðonc. (*Trin. Hom.*, Scribe II, p. 11)

Her me ah to understonden for-whi hit seið **alf** quic. and noht **alf** ded. (*Lambeth Hom.*, Morris 1868:81; from London, Lambeth Palace Library 487, ca. 1200; Laing 1993:111)

elch man þe ledeð **is** lif rihtliche on an of þese þre hodes he is cleped king. (*Trin. Hom.*, Scribe II, p. 45)

Ge herde **wilche** laze weren er crist wes iboren. (*Lambeth Hom.*, p. 15)

he hadde wuniende on him þe holi gost þe him dide suterliche to understonden þat ure drihten wolde man bicumen. 7 **ware**. 7 **wanne** 7 of **wam** ben boren. 7 hware deð þolien. 7 wiðinne **wiche** firste þar-after arisen of deaðe. <...> 7 **wich** lif leden. 7 **wich** lif leden. 7 **wiche** him hersumien. 7 **wich** mede þerto-genes understonden in heuenriche. (*Trin. Hom.*, Scribe II, p. 145)

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<sup>6</sup> Each half-verse of Orm’s septenarius begins with a capital letter. Orm furthermore distinguishes between the first and second half-verse by alternating between two different sets of capital letters. Hence the beginning of a half-verse would be a point which demanded heightened attention in order to select the right type of capital letter, a point where Orm would be least likely to skip a letter accidentally.

<sup>7</sup> The only examples of *im*, *ym* that are listed in MED are from the fifteenth century.

### 3. [h]-dropping in the Mercian Rushworth glosses

The Rushworth Gospels<sup>8</sup> were produced in the 10th century. The Latin text was provided with Old English glosses by two glossators: Farmon, a Mercian, and Owun, a Northumbrian. Owun's glosses<sup>9</sup> are strikingly free from [h]-dropping<sup>10</sup>. Farmon, on the other hand, engages in variable [h]-dropping just like Orm and the other early Middle English East Midland scribes.<sup>11</sup> The following examples illustrate Farmon's [h]-dropping (quoted from the Toronto Corpus):

- Mt. 6.21 *ubi enim est thesaurus tuus ibi erit et cor tuum* forþon þær þin hord is þær is þin **eorta**.
- Mt. 7.16 *a fructibus eorum cognoscetis eos numquid colligunt de spinis uuas aut de tribulis ficos* from wæstmum **eora**<sup>12</sup> ge ongetaþ heo ah he somnigaþ of þornum winbegêr oþþe of gorstum ficos *vel* nyte.
- Mt. 7.24 *Omnis ergo qui audit uerba mea haec et facit ea adsimilabitur uiro sapienti qui aedificauit domum suam super petram* æghwiltc þara þe gehereð word min þas & fremmað hie he bið lic were þæm snottra þe getimbrade hus **is** on stane.
- Mt. 8.20 *et dicit ei iesus uulpes foueas habent et uolucres caeli tabernacula ubi requiescant filius autem hominis non habet ubi capud reclinet* & cwæp to him hælend foxes hole habbaþ & fuglas heofunas selescota þer hie restaþ bearn *vel* sunu þonne monnes næfð **wær** he heafud ahelde.
- Mt. 8.33 *pastores autem fugerunt et uenientes in ciuitatem nuntiauerunt omnia et de hiis qui demonia abebant* hiordes þonne flugon & cumende in cæstræ sægdun *vel* cyðdon all & be þæm þe deofulseoke werun ær *vel* **aefdon**.
- Mt. 21.24 *respondens autem iesus dixit illis interrogabo uos et ego unum sermonem dicite mihi quem si dixeritis mihi et ego uobis dicam in qua potestate haec facio* onswarade þa se hælend cwæp to heom ic ahsige eow & ek anes wordes sæcgaþ me þæt þonne gif ge sæcgaþ me & ic ek eow sæcge in **wilce** mæhte ic þas do *vel* wyrce.
- Mt. 22.18 *cognita autem iesus nequitia eorum ait quid me temptatis hippochritae* ongetende þa se hælend hete heora cwæp **forwon** ge min costigað licetteras.
- Mt. 22.24 *dicentes magister moyses dixit si quis mortuus fuerit non habens filium ut ducat frater uxorem illius et suscitetur semen fratri suo* cwæþende lareu

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<sup>8</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Auct. D.2.19 (3946).

<sup>9</sup> Mark 2.16–end, Luke and John (apart from 18.1–3).

<sup>10</sup> With the possible exception of one occurrence of *welchwoegnu* 'something' (Lk. 11.54). Since this is an isolated occurrence, however, I choose to regard this as a slip on Owun's part, and not as a genuine example of [h]-dropping.

<sup>11</sup> For a quantitative analysis of Farmon's loss of ⟨h⟩ from consonant clusters, see Toon 1992:438.

<sup>12</sup> An early Middle English parallel is found in the Trinity Homilies: 7 þerfore wurð **ere** ende werse þene here biginninge. (*Trin. Hom.*, Scribe II, pp. 83, 85). Morris thought it necessary to emend *ere* to [h]ere.

moyses cwæþ gif **wa** swylte & ne hæfde sunu þæt is broþer foe to his wife & wæcce sed his broðer.

Mt. 25.24 *accedens autem et qui unum tallentum acciperat ait domine scio quia homo durus es metis ubi non seminasti et congregas ubi non sparsisti* þa cumende ek seþe an onfeng cwæþ dryhten ic wat þætte þu eart **eard** monn & ripes þær þu ne sewe & somnast þær þu ne stencêt.

Mt. 25.35 *esuriui enim et didistis mihi manducare sitiui et didistis mihi bibere hospis eram et colligistis me* forþon ðe mec **yngrade** & ge saldun me etan mec þyrste & ge saldun me drincan cuma ic wæs & ge feormadun mec.

Farmon's glosses are relevant to a study of the *Ormulum*, not only because of the [h]-dropping, but also because they provide evidence of emerging variant forms which are fully established in Orm's dialect. Examples include:

- the indeclinable definite article *þe*: ... *quod dictum est a domino per essaiaam prophetam* ... þæt acweden is *vel* wæs from drihtne þurh esaiaam **þe** witgu.
- plural forms of nouns in *-as/-es* (Orm *-ess*) extended beyond the masculine *a*-stems as well as beyond the nominative/accusative plural: *dic ut lapides isti panes fiant* ... gecwæþ þæt þas **stanes hlafes** beon *vel* gewærþe; *Et circumibat iesus ciuitates omnes et castella docens in sinagogis eorum* ... & geond eode se hælend þa **burgas** alle & **cæstras** lærende in gesomnungum heora; *nolite ergo timere multis uos meliores istis passeribus* ne forþon forhtigaþ mongum ge sindun bettra þonne þas **spearwas**; *homo quidam habebat duos filios* ... monn sum hæfde twægen **sunes**; *scriptum est enim quia angelis suis mandauit de te ut custodiant te in omnibus vis tuis* ... gewriten is þæt he his englum bebeodeþ be þe þætte he þe gehalden in allum **weogas** þine.
- plural present tense forms of verbs in *-an* (Orm *-enn*): *cum ergo facies elimoysinam noli tuba canere ante te sicut hyppochrite faciunt in synagogis* ... forþon þonne þu wirce ælmissen ne blau þu beman for þe swa liceteras **doan** in heora somnungum.
- imperative forms of verbs in *-eþ* (Orm *-eþþ*): *quemcumque osculatus fuero ipse est tenete eum* swa hwilc swa ic cysse se hit is **genimeþ** hine.
- nominative forms of nouns with added *-e*, e.g. *ceastre* 'city', *hælende* 'saviour' (OE WS *ceaster*, *hælend*; Orm *chesstre*, *hælennde*).

A detailed comparison between Orm's and Farmon's dialects is, however, beyond the scope of this paper.

## 4. Conclusion

Two points have emerged from what has been said above:

- Orm’s dialect was characterized by the same kind of variable realization of syllable-initial (and, in one case, syllable-final) (h) as we find represented in other early Middle English East Midland manuscripts (although this ‘[h]-dropping’ obviously offended Orm’s sense of regularity, since he did his best to eliminate its consequences from his text).
- Farmon’s tenth century Mercian dialect was characterized by the same variable realization of (h) (thus increasing the time-depth of this case of variation by two centuries), as well as showing some other points of resemblance with Orm’s south Lincolnshire dialect<sup>13</sup> (not all shared with Owun’s Northumbrian dialect).

On the basis of these observations, it is tempting to postulate a close relationship (presumably not, however, a direct line of descent) between the dialects of Farmon and Orm. As stated in the Rushworth Gospels, Farmon was a priest ‘æt harawuda’. Harewood in West Yorkshire would be a place where Farmon could reasonably be expected to have had a Northumbrian collaborator in his glossing project. If we tentatively place Farmon’s dialect in northern Lincolnshire or Nottinghamshire<sup>14</sup>, it is not unreasonable that he may have moved from there to Harewood in Yorkshire.

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Parkes 1983.

<sup>14</sup> The similarities with Orm’s dialect, as well as Milroy’s comment on [h]-dropping, “[i]t is not characteristic of early texts known to be west midland, such as the Katherine group” (1992:199), obviously call for a localization in eastern Mercia. Ker (1957:352) comments on the identity of ‘Harewood’: “[it] has been identified with Harewood near Leeds, and more recently, by Förster, with Harewood near Ross-on-Wye”. It seems to me considerably less plausible that the Mercian Farmon could have been a priest near Ross-on-Wye in Herefordshire, and yet found occasion to collaborate with the Northumbrian Owun.

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