

First-Person Visibility: Ælfric's Authorship in his Prefaces

Myrthe Reuver, BA English

Supervisors:

*drs. Tangelder & dr. Chardonnnens, English
department*

Radboud Honours Project, 2015-2017

Overview of my project

1. *Ælfric?* *Ælfric!*
2. Methodology : digital analysis & Denmark
3. Results
4. Conclusion & Explanation
5. Questions and Discussion

Ælfric? Ælfric! A (very short) introduction

- Ælfric of Eynsham (955 to +/- 1015)
- Winchester; Benedictine Reform
- Bible translations and sermons
- Anxious, self-aware authorship
- Lay patronage and closeness



Ælfric of Eynsham

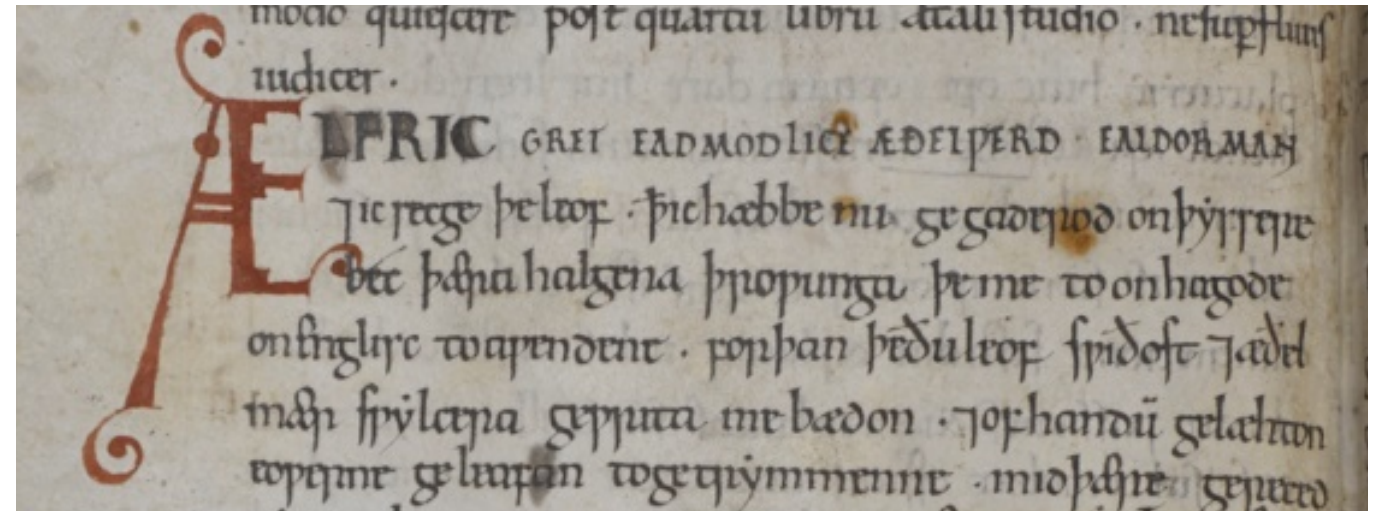
@Aelfricus

Monk, mass-priest, bestselling author,
loather of the sinful, wannabe-saint

📍 Eynsham

📅 Joined March 2013

- Unique style
- Prefaces



Preface to the Lives of Saints

Filled with **self reference**

“Ælfric friendly greets alderman Aehtelweard, and I say to you, my dear, that I have now gathered in this book the holy Passions of Saints..”

We will not draw out this narrative any longer, in case you might think it tedious; but you should pray for intercession from these innocent martyrs.”

Nativity of the Innocents, Homilies I

Ælfric's systematic use of language

The brand 'Ælfric' (Reuver, 2017)

- “extremely nervous” (Magennis, 2007)
- Prose like Old English poetry: rhythm, alliteration, & ‘half-line’ (Gneuss, 2009; Wilcox, 1994)
- No mere ‘translations’, but more ‘adaptions’ or ‘re-inventions.’ (Gneuss 2009)

Use of
onginnan/beginnen
is systematic, verb
positions are
“carefully selected”
(Los 2000, p. 271)

Anecdote:
personally
changing all
acc → dative in
a whole Homilie
Series (Irvine,
2006)

Earlier comments on the Prefaces

Swan (2009)

“we” = authorial voice

“ic” = more personal

“the shift from ‘I’ to ‘we’ is to move the locus of authority **away from a named individual and towards an author, translator and interpreter** whose individual identity is imbued with the **shared authority** of all teachers of the truth.”

But: what does the data say?

Research Question

“What do patterns in Ælfric of Eynsham’s use of first person pronouns in his Old English writing tell us about his authorship ?”

2. Methodology and Denmark

Toronto Corpus: 200 Ælfric texts

Finding patterns with digital text analysis



Summerschool “Text Mining the Great Unread”




```

PrefHomII.freqs.rel.t <- PrefHomII.freqs.t/sum(PrefHomII.freqs.t)*100
PrefHomII.freqs.rel.t[1:10]

PrefGen.freqs.rel.t <- PrefGen.freqs.t/sum(PrefGen.freqs.t)*100
PrefGen.freqs.rel.t[1:10]

PrefGram.freqs.rel.t <- PrefGram.freqs.t/sum(PrefGram.freqs.t)*100
PrefGram.freqs.rel.t[1:10]

Saints.freqs.rel.t <- Saints.freqs.t/sum(Saints.freqs.t)*100
Saints.freqs.rel.t[1:10]

Let.freqs.rel.t <- Let.freqs.t/sum(Let.freqs.t)*100
Let.freqs.rel.t[1:10]

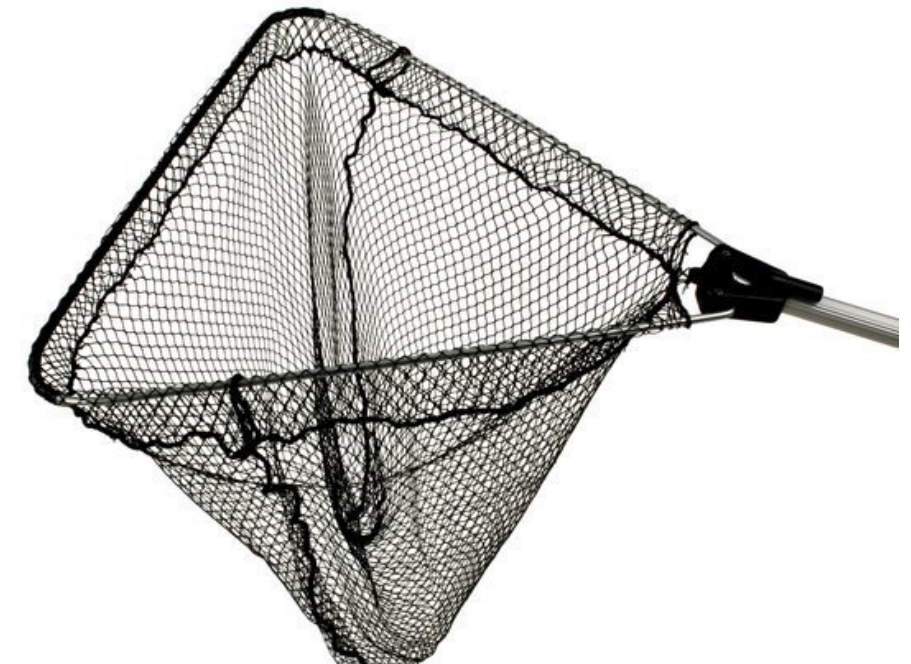
Ael.freqs.rel.t <- Ael.freqs.t/sum(Ael.freqs.t)*100
Ael.freqs.rel.t[1:10]

# individual word frequencies of singular and plural
Singular <- c('ic', 'me')
Plural <- c('we', 'us')

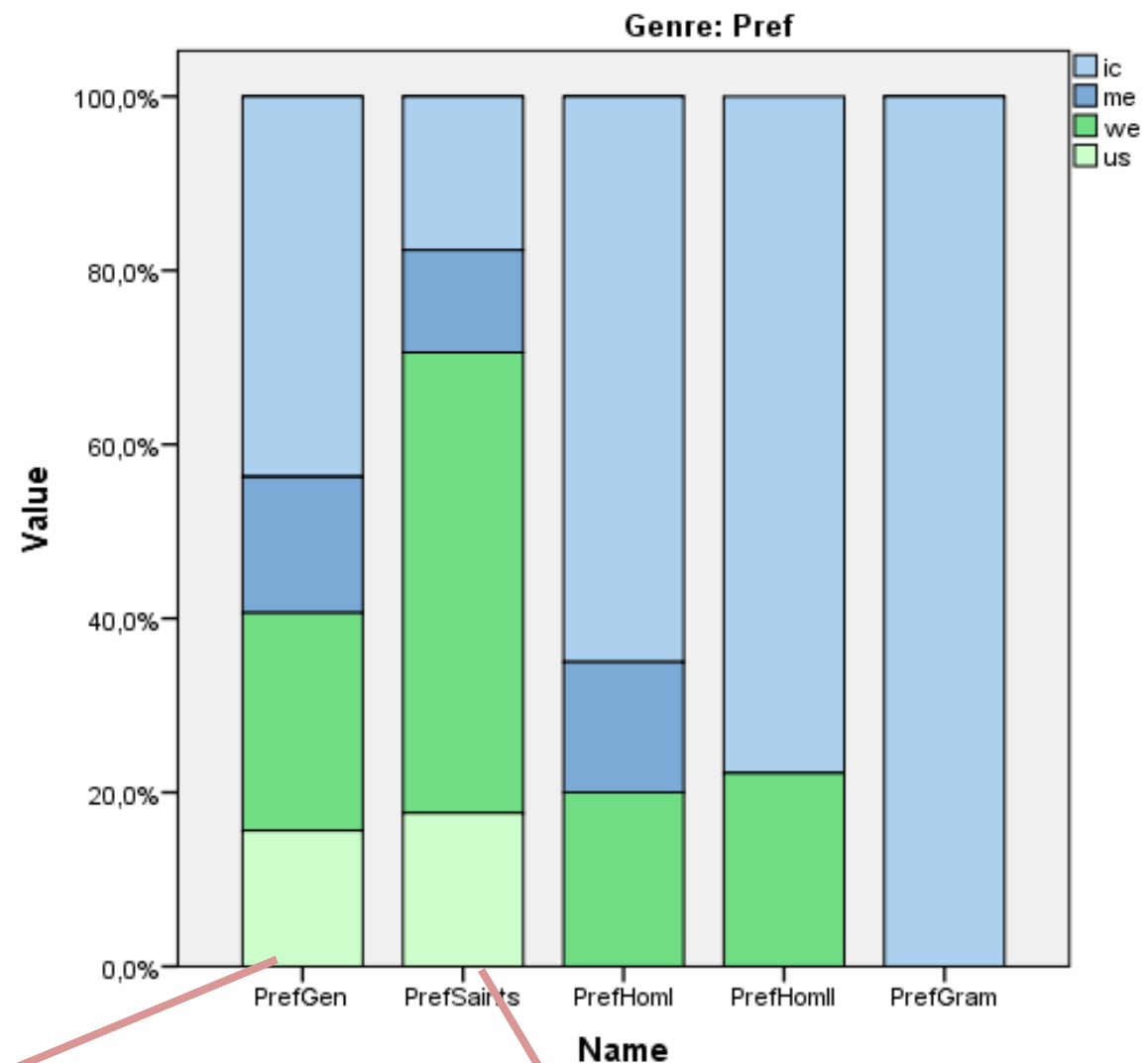
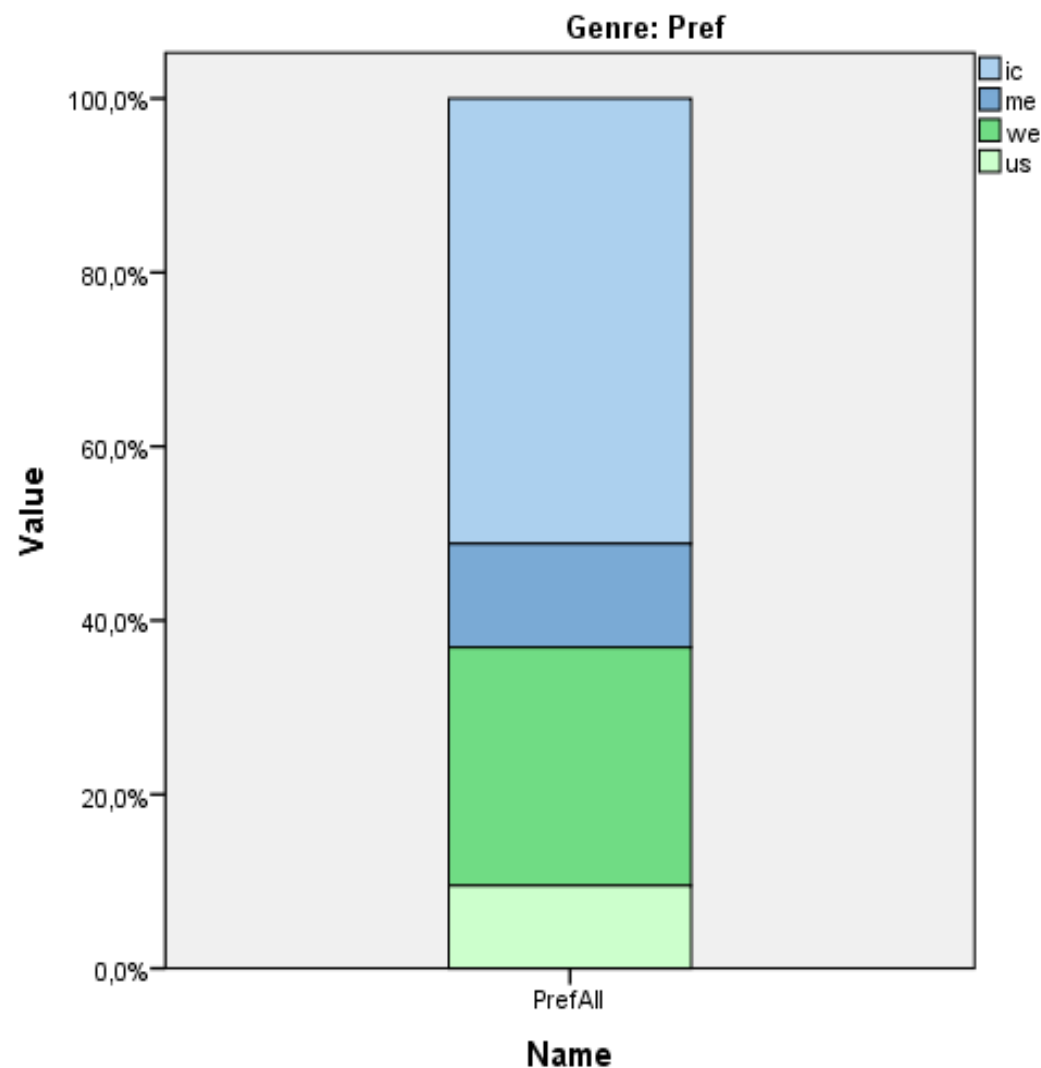
PersonalRefHomIAverage <- data.frame(Singular = rep(0,5), Plural =
rep(0,5))
for (w in 1:length(Singular)){
  PersonalRefHomIAverage[w,1] <- AverageHomI[Singular[w]]
  PersonalRefHomIAverage[w,2] <- AverageHomI[Plural[w]]
}

#HomI
PersonalReferenceHomIAverage.dt <- data.frame(Singular = rep(0,5),
Plural = rep(0,5))
for (w in 1:length(Singular)){
  (PersonalReferenceHomIAverage.dt[w,1]) <- HomI.freqs.t[Singular[w]]
  (PersonalReferenceHomIAverage.dt[w,2]) <- HomI.freqs.t[Plural[w]]
}

```



3. Results → Distribution



“We also say beforehand that the book is very spiritually deep to understand, and we write no more than the naked narrative”

We say nothing new in this composition, because it has stood written down before in Latin books [..].”

Genesis & Saints

	Singular	Plural
Nominative	14	8
Accusative	5	5

	Singular	Plural
Nominative	43%	25%
Accusative	15,6%	15,6%

	Singular	Plural
Nominative	3	9
Accusative	2	3

	Singular	Plural
Nominative	17,6%	52,9%
Accusative	11,8%	17,6%

Saints vs Homilies

	Singular	Plural
Nominative	3	9
Accusative	2	3

	Singular	Plural
Nominative	17,6%	52,9%
Accusative	11,8%	17,6%

	Singular	Plural
Nominative	13	4
Accusative	3	0

	Singular	Plural
Nominative	65%	20%
Accusative	15%	0%

	Singular	Plural
Nominative	7	2
Accusative	0	0

	Singular	Plural
Nominative	77,8%	22,2%
Accusative	0%	0%

3 Results → Frequencies (raw)

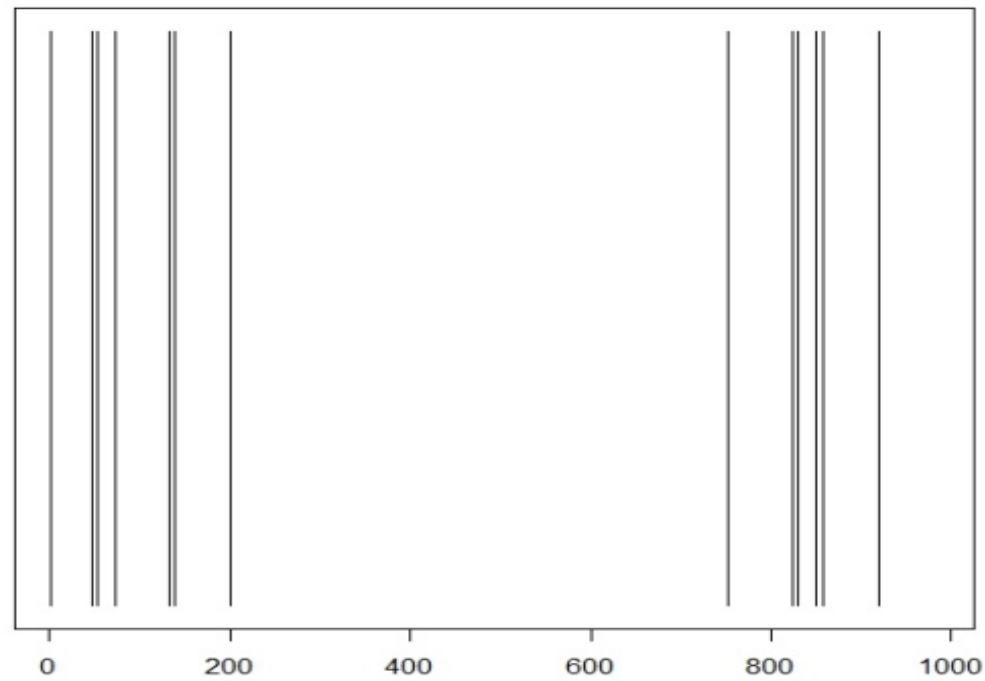
Prefaces	Word Token	ic	godes	we	hoc	god	nu	heora	bið	gode
	Frequen cy	43	23	23	22	22	17	13	12	12

Lives of Saints	Word Token	ic	cwæð	god	þu	heora	godes	we	halgan	wearð
	Frequen cy	583	539	492	432	427	399	386	384	355

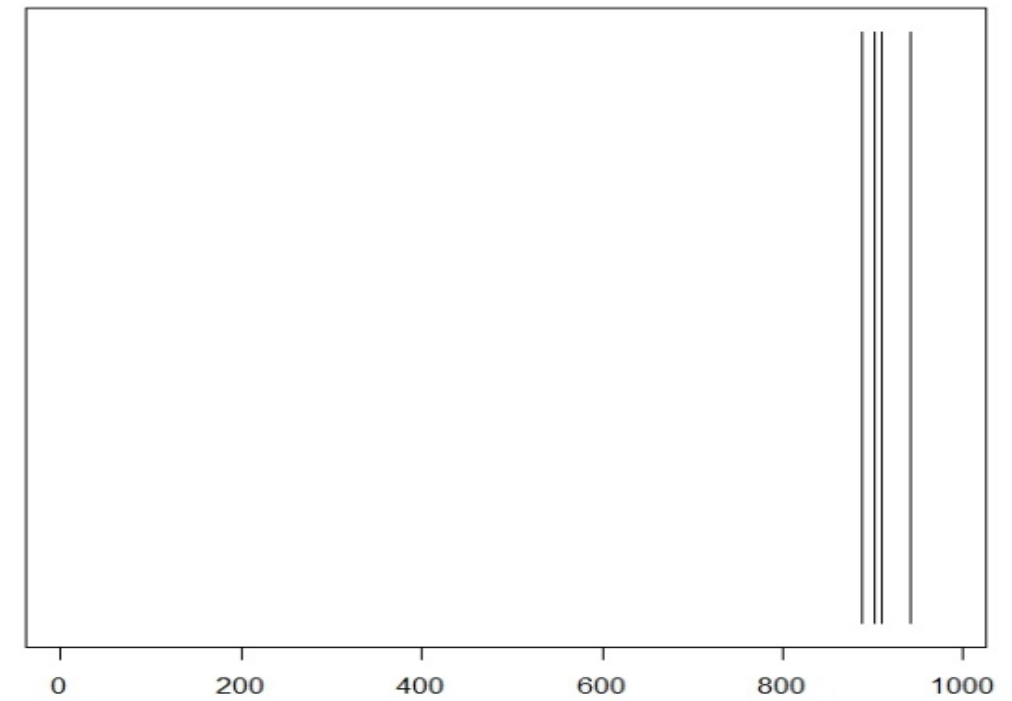
3. Results → Frequencies (relative)

Prefaces	Word Token	ic	godes	we	hoc	god	nu	heora	hið	gode
	Relative Frequency	1.317 4020	0.70465 69	0.704656 9	0.674019 6	0.674019 6	0.520833 3	0.398284 3	0.367647 1	0.367647 1
The Lives of Saints	Word Token	ic	cwæð	god	hu	heora	godes	we	halgan	weard
	Relative Frequency	0.579 9322	0.53616 3	0.489411 0	0.429726 7	0.424753 1	0.396900 4	0.383968 8	0.381979 3	0.353131 9

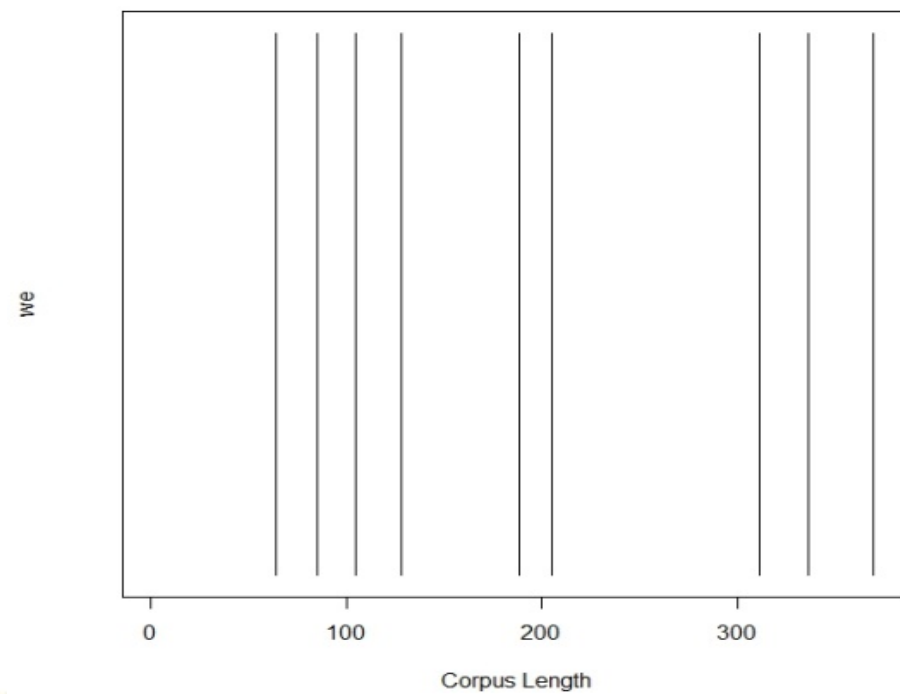
Dispersion plot of 'ic' in Preface of Homl



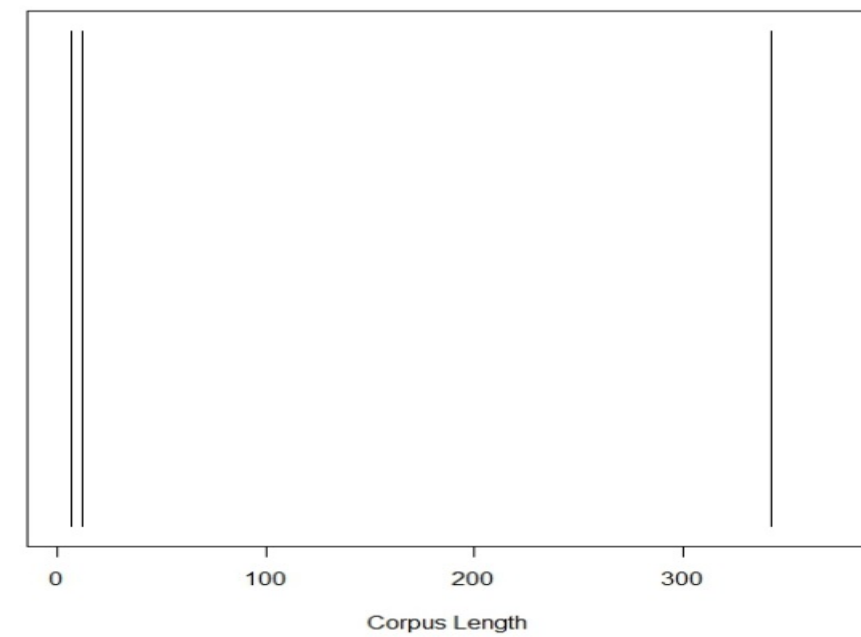
Dispersion plot of 'we' in Preface of Homl



Dispersion plot of 'we' in Preface of Saints



Dispersion plot of 'ic' in Preface of Saints



Results :
Topic Model

Topic 1	ABSTRACT LORE	JESUS	HOLY WORDS	Topic 5	EGYPT	Topic 7	Topic 8	HEAVENLY KINGDOM	EARTHLY KINGDOM	
[1]	"byð"	"gast"	"het"	"þing"	"halga"	"cyning"	"mine"	"hys"	"sind"	"sunu"
[2]	"rice"	"sunu"	"sona"	"sæde"	"sona"	"sona"	"sind"	"sceal"	"ðisum"	"gast"
[3]	"sume"	"nis"	"andwyrde"	"gast"	"wer"	"lande"	"scep"	"menn"	"ðæra"	"acenned"
[4]	"wif"	"urum"	"casere"	"eall"	"martinus"	"folc"	"sceal"	"butan"	"rice"	"deaðe"
[5]	"hyre"	"gesceop"	"wurdon"	"word"	"het"	"het"	"lare"	"mann"	"dæge"	"dæge"
[6]	"þing"	"sceolon"	"apostol"	"lare"	"sæde"	"folce"	"oðrum"	"hym"	"dæg"	"sind"
[7]	"sceal"	"hæfð"	"min"	"sawle"	"siððan"	"gehaten"	"sæde"	"hyne"	"ðing"	"iohannes"
[8]	"sind"	"synna"	"godum"	"her"	"ferde"	"hæfde"	"lufe"	"habban"	"eorðan"	"hyre"
[9]	"þysum"	"þing"	"wundra"	"butan"	"eode"	"ongean"	"sceolon"	"oppe"	"witodlice"	"maria"
[10]	"sylfum"	"butan"	"naman"	"bec"	"casere"	"moyses"	"oðre"	"swapeah"	"lichaman"	"syððan"

	<u>Pref_Gram</u>	<u>Pref_Gram</u>	<u>Pref_HomI</u>	<u>Pref_HomI</u>	<u>Pref_HomII</u>	<u>Pref_HomII</u>	<u>Pref_Saints</u>	<u>Pref_Saints</u>
[1]	4	4	9	9	4	1	4	4
[2]	7	8	8	1	9	4	6	3



4. Conclusion and Explanation

- “we” more connected to the material than to Ælfric’s own identity -> uniqueness of **Saints**
- The prefaces mostly show a unity in **topic**, but also a (slight) difference in distribution and frequency of pronouns, with Saints being the odd one out.

Thanks to..

- Monique Tangelder and Sándor Chardonnens
- “Textmining” Aarhus Summer School, specifically Kristoffer Laigaard Nielbo
- The Honours Academy

References

Ælfric. *Ælfric's Prefaces*. Ed. Jonathan Wilcox. Durham: Durham Medieval Texts, 1994.

Gneuss, Helmut. *Ælfric of Eynsham: His Life, Times, and Writings*. Medieval Institute Publications, 2009.

Kleist, Aaron J. "The Ælfric of Eynsham Project: An Introduction." *The Heroic Age*, 2007.

Los, Bettelou. Onginnan/beginnan with bare and to-infinitive in Ælfric.

In Fischer O, Rosenbach A, Stein D, editors. *Pathways of Change: Grammaticalization in English*. (Studies in Language Companion Series). Philadelphia: Benjamins. 2000. p. 251-274.

Magennis, Hugh. "Ælfric Scholarship." In: *A Companion to Ælfric*. Ed. Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan. Leiden: Brill, 2009.

Swan, Mary. "Identity and Ideology in Ælfric's Prefaces." In: *A Companion to Ælfric*. Ed. Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan. Leiden: Brill, 2009.

Wilcox, Jonathan. *Ælfric's Prefaces*. Durham: Durham Medieval Texts, 1994.

Irvine, Susan E. "Beginnings and Transitions: Old English," in *The Oxford History of English*, ed. L. Mugglestone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 32-60.

Reuver, Myrthe E. *First-Person Visibility : Ælfric's Authorship in his Prefaces*. Unpublished Honours Thesis (available on request).

niče lingue infiro . quia arguē me peccatis multoz fidelioz
& maxime æþelþeodū ducis . & æðelmeow nri . q̄ardentissimoz
nriē interpretationes amplectuntur lætando . sed deo
modo quiescat post quartū librū Atali studio . ne supfluit
iudicer .

EÐRIC GREI EADMODLIC AÐELPERD EALDOÐMAN
7 ic sege þe leof . þi chæbbe nu . ge gaderod on þyrtre
bēc þa hla halgena þrowunga . þe me to on hagede
on singlic to aþendenc . forþan þe duleof swidost 7 æðel
in aþi swylara geppta me bædon . 7 oþhandū gelæhton
to ge me gelæpan to getrymmenne . mid þa hre . gepæced
nyrtre . þe ge on eowum geþeode naðdon ær . þu past leof
þe aþendon on þam tpa . æppum bocum þa hla halgena
þrowunga 7 lif . þe angel cynn mid fteols . dagū purpād .
Hu ge pæpād us þe þa boc be þa hla halgena . þrowungū
7 lif . ge diltan þe in ynsar menn mid heora þenungū be
tux him purpād . Ne sege þe nan þing mper on þyrtre
gecnyrtre . forþan de hit stod gefyrn appten on leden
bocū þeah þe þa lāþedan . men þnyrtan . Nelle pæc mid
leawungū þyllie licetan . forþan þe ge lēaþfulle fæderas
7 halige lareowas hit appten on leden spræce . to langū
gemýnde . 7 to trymmence þam to pendum mannū . Sū
pæga clýpode þurh þon halgan gaste 7 cþ . Mirabilis dī
infancas suis . & cetera . Pundorlic is god on his halgū . he
sylf for gfd mihte 7 swengde his folce . gebletrod is he
to . Ðe apptad fela pundra on þyrtre bēc . forþan þe
od is pundorlic on his halgū swaspa pæcī pædon 7 his
halgena pundra purpād hine . forþan þe he forhte
a pundra þurh hi . An populo cýnnes hæfd fela þigna
mislice pientias . he ne mæg beon purpful cýnnes
uton he hæbbe þa geþincde þe hi gebýpād 7 swylec þenung
nen . þe þe apptat nyrtre hi gebedon . Spa is eac þam

Questions?