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

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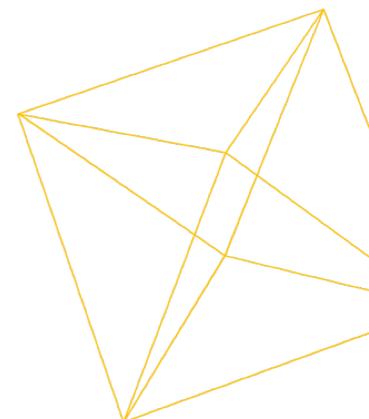
Radboud Honours Project, 2015-2017

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
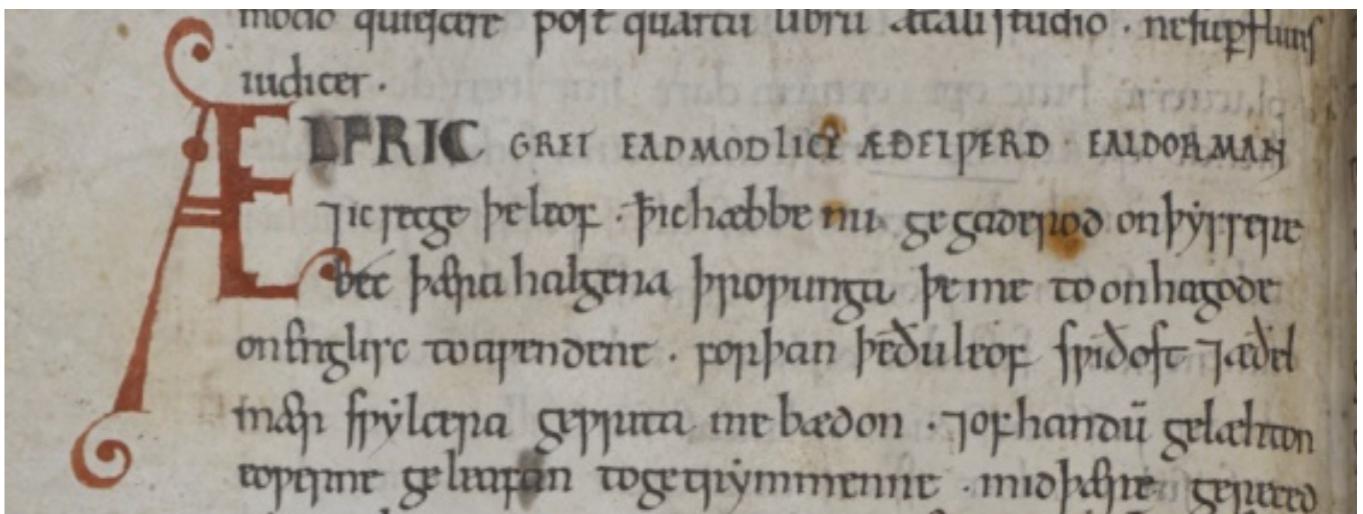
Ælfric of Eynsham
@Aelfricus

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 greats 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 <u>patterns</u> 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]]
    }
```
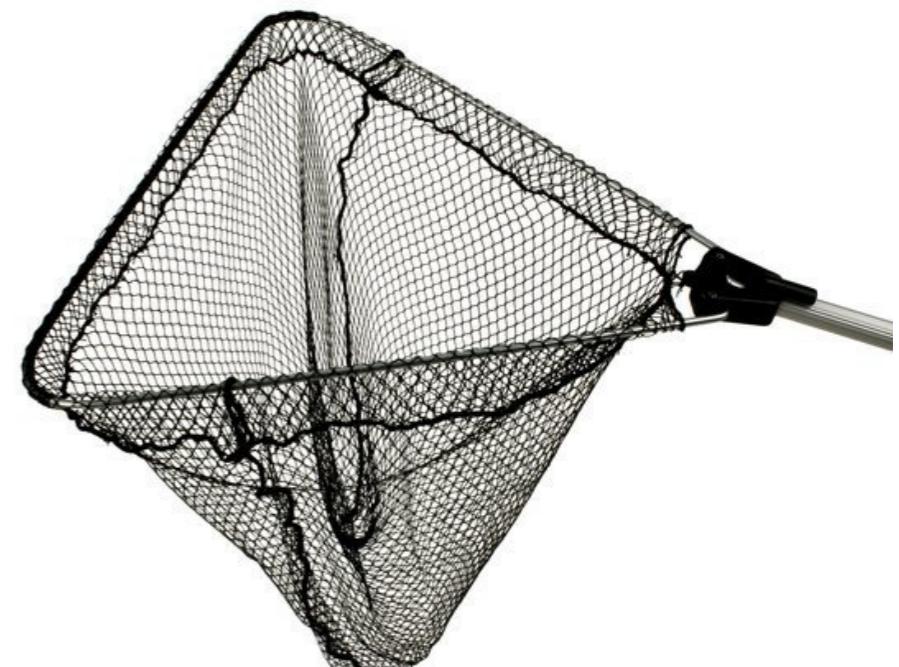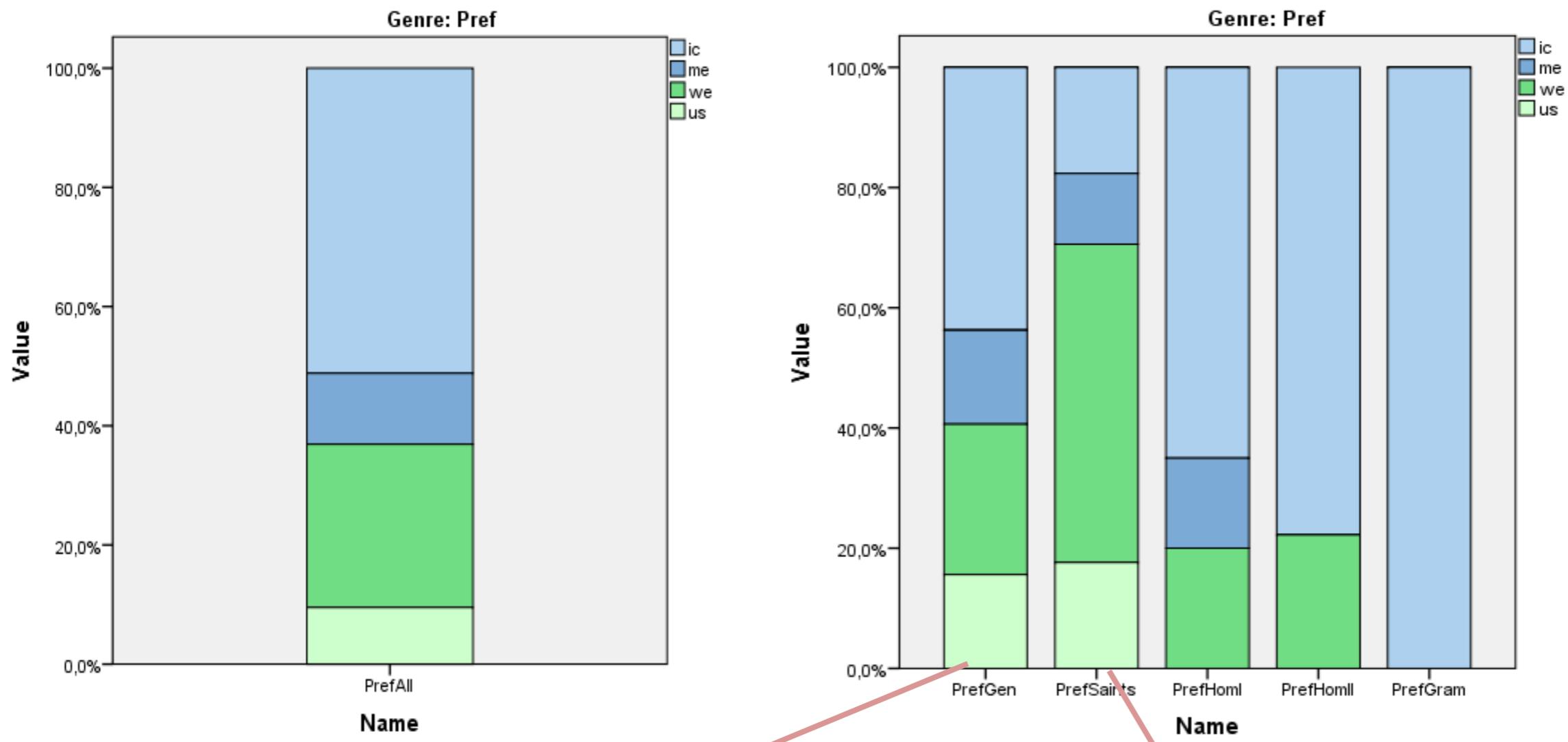
3. Results → Distribution

"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 [..]".

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	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%

	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%

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3 Results → Frequencies (raw)
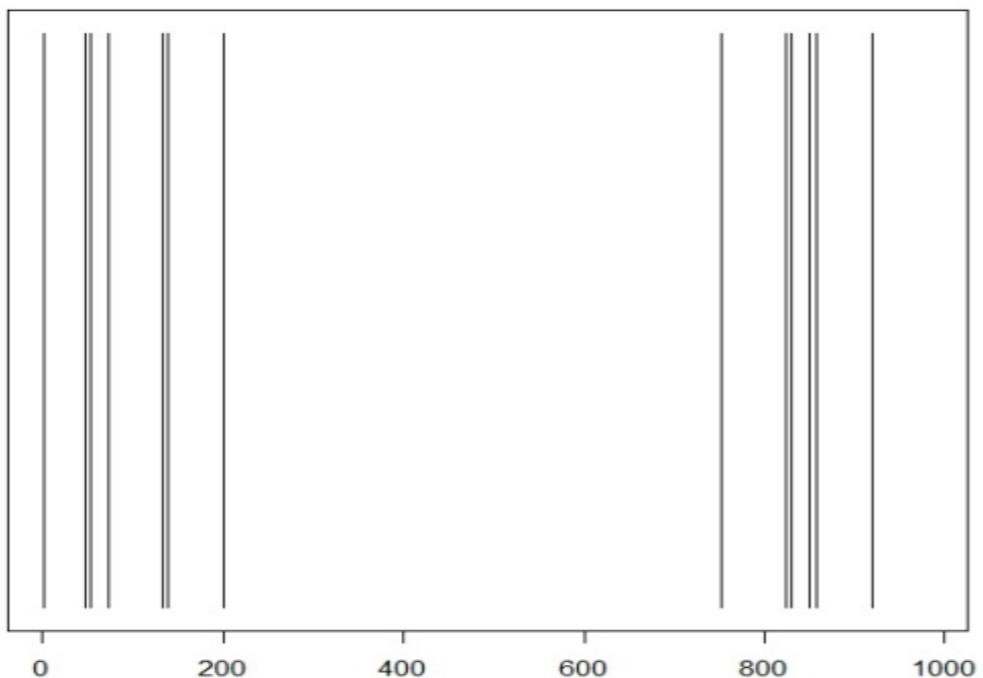
Prefaces	Word Token	ic	godes	we	hoc	god	nu	heora	hiÐ	gode
	Frequency	43	23	23	22	22	17	13	12	12

Lives of Saints	Word Token	ic	cwæÐ	god	þu	heora	godes	we	halgan	wearÐ
	Frequency	583	539	492	432	427	399	386	384	355
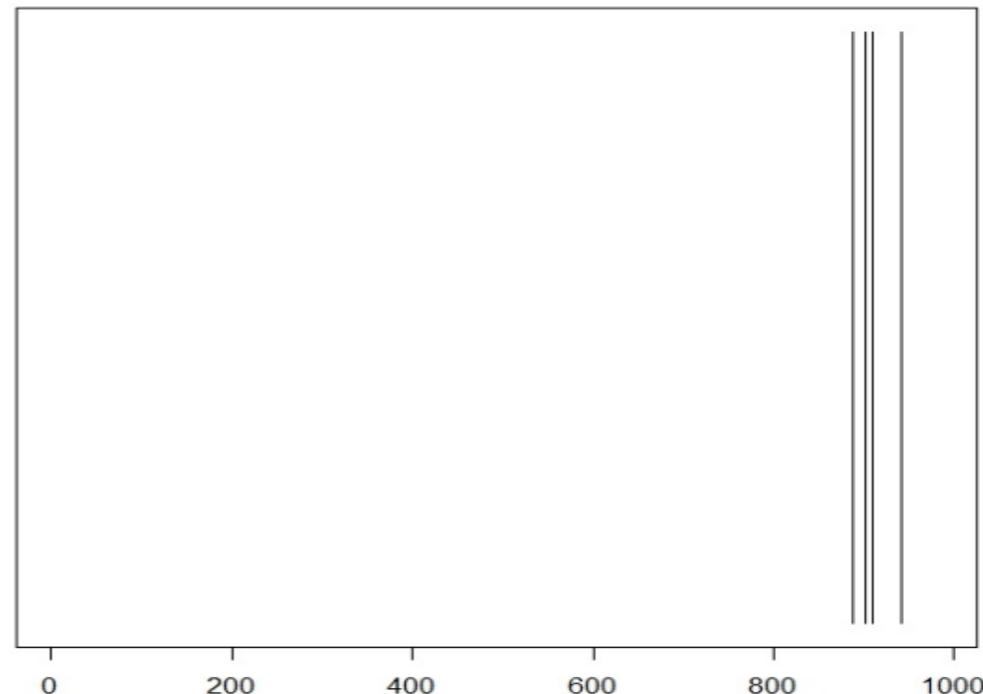
3. Results → Frequencies (**relative**)

Prefaces	Word Token	ic	godes	we	hoc	god	nu	heora	hið	gode
	Relative Frequency	1.3174020	0.7046569	0.7046569	0.6740196	0.6740196	0.5208333	0.3982843	0.3676471	0.3676471
The Lives of Saints	Word Token	ic	cwæð	god	þu	heora	godes	we	halgan	wearð
	Relative Frequency	0.5799322	0.5361613	0.4894110	0.4297267	0.4247531	0.3969004	0.3839688	0.3819793	0.3531319
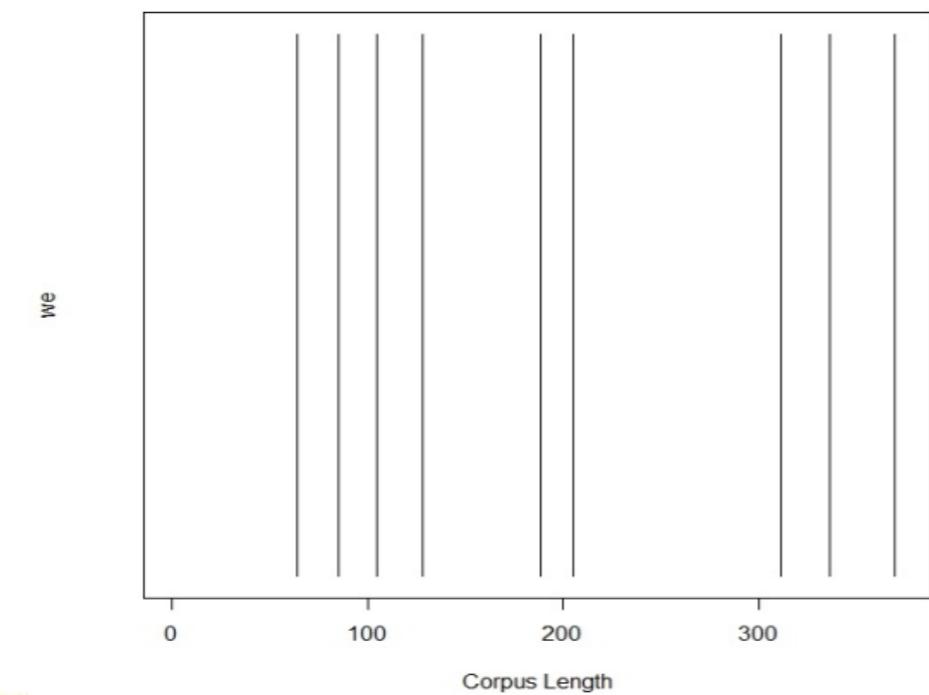
Dispersion plot of 'ic' in Preface of Homl
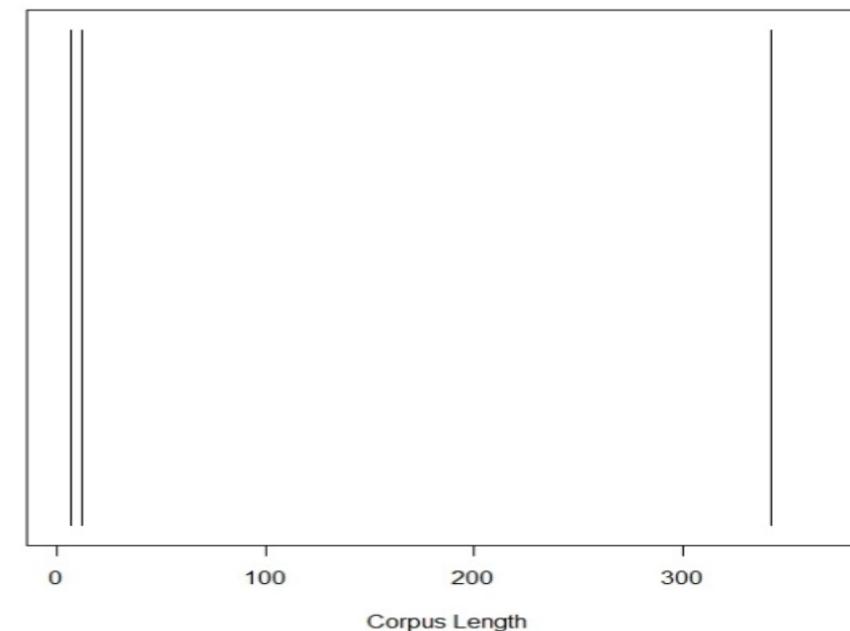
Dispersion plot of 'we' in Preface of Homl

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" "oþþe"		"witodlice"	"maria"
[10] "sylfum" "butan"		"naman"	"bec"	"casere"	"moyses"	"oðre" "swaþeah"		"lichaman"	"syððan"

	Pref_Gram	Pref_Gram	Pref_HomI	Pref_HomI	Pref_HomII	Pref_HomII	Pref_Saints	Pref_Saints
[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

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Los, Bettelou*,* Onginnan/beginnan with bare and to-infinitive in AElfric.
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Questions?