

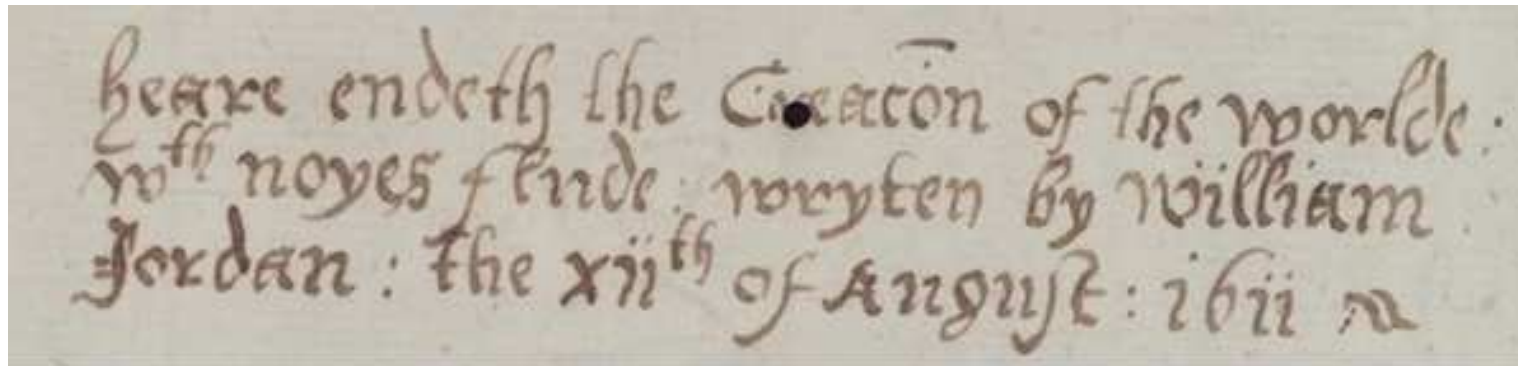
THE PROVENANCE OF
THE CORNISH MYSTERY PLAY
CREACON OF THE WORLD

Dr Ken George
2021 July 9

Editions of *CW*

- William Jordan (1611)
- John Keigwyn (1691)
- Whitley Stokes (1863)
- Robert Morton Nance (1959)
- Paula Neuss (1983)
- Retallack Hooper (1985)
- Ray Edwards (2000)
- Ken George (forthcoming)

Date of earliest text



heare endeth the Creacôn of the worlde
wth noyes flude : wryten by William
Jordan : the xiith of August : i6ii|

Did Jordan compose *CW*?

- Jenner (1904) wrote of Jordan:
“He may have been merely the transcriber”.
- Neuss (1983) wrote: “Since the manuscript is a fair copy, William Jordan was probably only the scribe”
- Williams (1995) was more certain: “He was clearly copying from an earlier exemplar”

If Jordan was not the composer, then we need to disentangle his work from that of the composer.

BORROWING

FROM *ORIGO MUNDI*

About 7% of the text of CW has been taken from that of OM.

Scenes in *CW* and *OM* (1)

Scene	Source	No. of lines	
		in CW	in OM
First five days of Creation	Genesis 1	112	48
Fall of Lucifer	Ezekiel 28; Revelation 12	222	
Creation of Adam and Eve	Genesis 2	84	100
Fall of Adam and Eve	Genesis 3	635	288
Cain and Abel	Genesis 4	338	233
Adam and Seth (1)	mostly extra-biblical	37	50
Lamech and Cain	Talmud	297	
Adam and Seth (2)	mostly extra-biblical	369	233
Translation of Enoch	Genesis 5	52	
Making of the pillars	Josephus I	65	
Noah's Flood	Genesis 6,7,8,9	320	342
Epilogue		18	22
Total		2549	1316
(other material in OM)			1530

Scenes in *CW* and *OM* (2)

☐	Number of lines☐			
☐	borrowings☐		God's part☐	
Scene☐	all☐	God☐	<i>CW</i> ☐	<i>OM</i> ☐
First five days of Creation☐	· · · 1☐	· · · 1☐	112☐	· 48☐
Fall of Lucifer☐	☐	☐	· 52☐	☐
Creation of Adam and Eve☐	· · 40☐	· · 37☐	· 63☐	· 62☐
Fall of Adam and Eve☐	· · 57☐	· · 23☐	· 57☐	· 65☐
Cain and Abel☐	· · 27☐	· · 14☐	· 19☐	· 36☐
Adam and Seth (1)☐	· · · 0☐	· · · 0☐	· 12☐	· · 6☐
Lamech and Cain☐	☐	☐	· · 0☐	☐
Adam and Seth (2)☐	· · · 3☐	· · · 0☐	· · 0☐	· · 0☐
Translation of Enoch☐	☐	☐	· 12☐	☐
Making of the pillars☐	☐	☐	· · 0☐	☐
Noah's Flood☐	· · 61☐	· · 58☐	· 99☐	136☐
Epilogue☐	· · · 1☐	· · · 0☐	· · 0☐	☐
····Total☐	· 190☐	· 133☐	426☐	353☐

God's part

Neuss (1983: xxxix) points out that of the ~180 lines imported from *OM*, “132 are among the speeches of one character, God the Father.” The remaining lines are mainly from passages just before or after God's speeches, or from scenes in which God appears. Neuss argues that an actor who had played God in *OM* orally imported pieces of this part into *CW*. Bruch (2005: 376) agrees with this hypothesis, and so do I.

Scene	Action
Creation of Adam and Eve	God invites Adam to name the creatures
Fall of Adam and Eve	God confronts Adam after the eating of the apple
Cain and Abel	God confronts Cain after the murder of Abel
Noah's Flood	God warns Noah of the flood to come

CHANGES FROM *OM* TO *CW*

OM.0069 myns vs yn tyr hag yn mor

OM.0070 warnethe kemer galloys

OM.0071 yn bysma rak dry ascor

OM.0072 ty a vew bys may fy loys

Some stanzas were
copied without altering
the pattern, but with
other changes

Changes

CW.0353 myns es in tyre hag in moer

CW.0354 warnothans kymar gallus

CW.0355 yn serten rag drỹ ascore

CW.0356 tỹ a vew maỹ fota loose

green orthographical

blue phonological

red textual

magenta grammatical

All of these changes might be due to Jordan

Insertion of two lines (1)

Here eight lines have been taken from OM,
and extended by adding two further lines.

OM.

0257 adam adam pandra wreth /
0258 prag na theth thum wolcumme /
0259 drefen ov bos noeth hep queth /
0260 ragos yth yth the gvthe /

0261 pyw a thysquethes thyso /
0262 the vos noeth corf tros ha bregth /
0263 lemyn an frut grath nath fo /
0264 mones thy dybry hep pegh /

CW.

0865 adam adam pandra wreth /
0866 prage ny theth thom welcommma /
0867 drefan ow bos nooth heb queth /
0868 ragas ytheth tha gutha /
0869 yn tellar ma /
0870 pyw a thysquethas thyso /
0871 tha vos noth tryes corf ha bregth /
0872 lemyn an frute grace navo /
0873 monas the thibbry heb peyghe /
0874 prag y wresta in della /

Insertion of two lines (2)

adam adam pandra wreth
prage ny theth thom welcommma

drefan ow bos nooth hep queth
ragas ytheth tha gutha
yn tellar ma

pyw a thysquethas thyso
tha vos noth tryes corf ha breg
lemyn an frute grace navo
monas the thibbry heb peyghe
prag ý wresta in della

ADAM

thyma ve why a rose gwreag
hona yw all tha vlamya

FATHER

Adam, Adam, what are you doing?
Why do you not come and welcome me?

ADAM

Because I am naked, without clothing,
I went to hide from thee
in this place.

FATHER

Who showed you
that you are naked, foot, body and arm?
except the fruit which you have no right
to go and eat except in sin?
Why did you do so?

Thou gavest me a wife.
She is entirely to blame.

Insertion of two lines (3)

CW.0429-0438

Rag he[^]na oll an vengens A
a allaf tha brederye B
me a vyn goneth dewhans A
der neb for a vras envy B
nŷ wraf vrŷ w^rbyn pewa C

me a wore yma formys D
gans an tas yn dean a bry B
havall thothe ythew gwryes D
oll y gorffe in pur semblŷ B
ny allaf perthy henna C

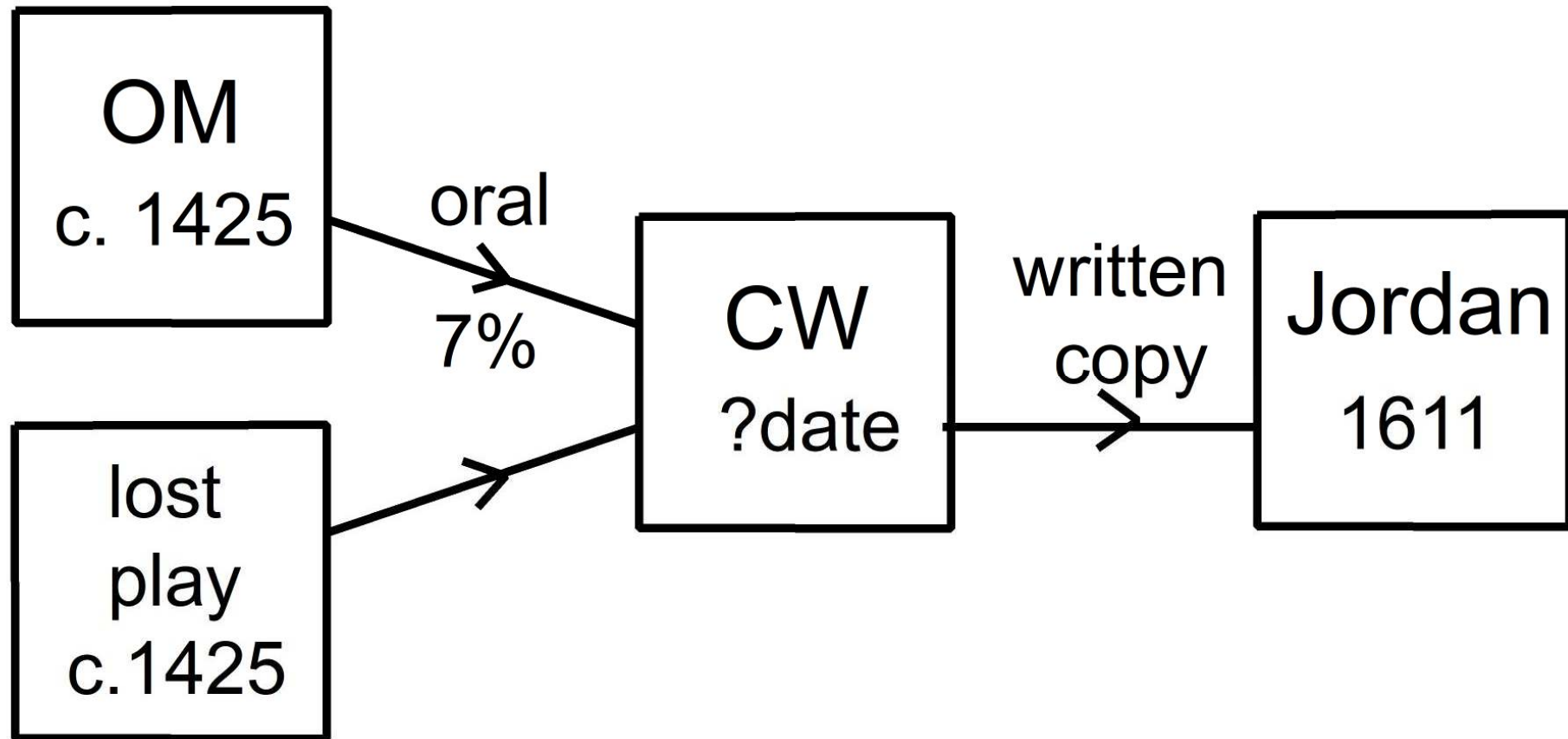
LUCIFER

Therefore all the revenge
I can think up
I will wreak at once
in some form of bitter spite.
I don't care whom it is against.

I know that there has been created
by the Father a man from clay.
He is made like him,
the whole of his person very handsome.
I cannot tolerate that.

This is a similar pattern to that found in the parts taken from *OM*, but in a different part of the play.

Hypothesis proposed independently by Pamela Neuss and Keith Bailey



VOCALIC MERGERS

AND THE

DATE OF COMPOSITION

Mergers (1)

Older sound	Older spelling	Newer sound	Newer spelling	Merging with	Central date
/ɛ/ [-ɛ]	<i>ynne</i> ‘in them’	[-a]	<i>ynna</i>	<i>ynna</i> ‘narrower’	c. 1485
/ɛC/ [-ɛC]	<i>gweles</i> ‘to see’	[-aC]	<i>gwelas</i>	<i>gwelas</i> ‘saw’	c. 1525
/ɔ/ [-ɔ]	<i>ynno</i> ‘in him’	[-a]	<i>ynna</i>	<i>ynna</i> ‘narrower’	c. 1525
/ɔ/ [-ɔC]	<i>gortos</i> ‘to wait’	[-aC]	<i>gortas</i>	<i>gortas</i> ‘waited’	c. 1525

Mergers (2)

Because of the mergers, the original rhyme-schemes in stanzas from *OM* no longer work.

OM.0057-0064

Del ony onen ha try A
tas ha map yn trynyte B
ny ad wra ty then a bry A
haval dagan face where B

ny a whyth in thy vody A
sperys [may] hylly bewē B
han bewnans pan yn kylly A
then dor ty a dreyl arte B

CW.0342-0349

Dell ony onyn ha try A
tas ha mab in trinitie B
me a wra ge dean a bry A
havall thagan face where B

hag a wheth in [th]y body A
sperys may hallas bew^a C
han bewnas pan an kelly A
ʒan doer te a dreyll art^a C

Mergers (3)

This stanza was composed
after the mergers

Rhyming word before the mergers

CW.2057-2064

gowethe	Yea Cayne hay gowetha	A
a vewe	in keth order a vewa	A
ragthe	an place ew ornas ractha	A
a-woeles	in efarn barth a wollas	<u>B</u>

thotho	hag Adam vengens thotha	A
ragtho	Lymbo ew ornys ractha	A
gowethe	da ragtha ef ha gowetha	A
bras	ny dastyans an payne bras	<u>B</u>

Mergers (4)

[-aC] < [-εC] rhyming with [-'ε:C]

Pre-merger

rhyming word CW.1902-1905

ysel	hay gwreythow than doer ysall	A
hethes	besyn effarn ow hethas	B
fall	hag ena pur wyer heb fall	A
bras	ythesa in trobell braes	B

- There are 25 examples of this type.

Mergers (5)

[-a] < [-ε] rhyming with [-'a:]

Pre-merger

rhyming word

CW.0904-0911

themptye

Serpent rag aga themptya

A

mer a bayne es thyes ornys

B

malegas es dres pub tra

A

ha dreis preif ha beast in bys

B

//////////

neffre

owne a hanas rag neffra

A

dean an gevyth prest p^b preis

B

cruppye

ha te preif a wra cruppya

A

ha slynckya war doer a heys

B

- There are 79 examples of this type.

ANALYSIS OF STANZAIC FORMS

Basic stanzaic patterns

In all of the miracle plays before CW, almost all of the stanzas have one of three basic patterns.

- S6 AABCCB easy to compose
- S8 ABABCDDC more difficult
- A8 ABABABAB most difficult

There are very many variants of these patterns,
e.g. A4 is half of an A8 stanza

Pattern S6

CW.0325	owte ellas gallaf fasowe /	A
CW.0326	ÿthesaf in tewolgowe /	A
CW.0327	nÿ allaf dos anotha /	B
CW.0328	in pyth downe ÿthof towles /	C
CW.0329	abarth in efarn kelmys /	C
CW.0330	gans chayne tane a dro thymo /	B

Pattern S8

- This pattern is found mainly in *BM* and *BK*

CW.0162	pyw henna a veth mar vold /	A	7
CW.0163	cowse gear warbyn lucyfer /	B	7
CW.0164	heare he hath unto you told /	A	7
CW.0165	that in heaven ys not his peare /	B	7
CW.0166	ha me an creyse /	C	4
CW.0167	why an gweall ow terlentry /	D	7
CW.0168	splanna es an howle devery /	D	7
CW.0169	me ath honor them del reyse /	C	7

Pattern A8

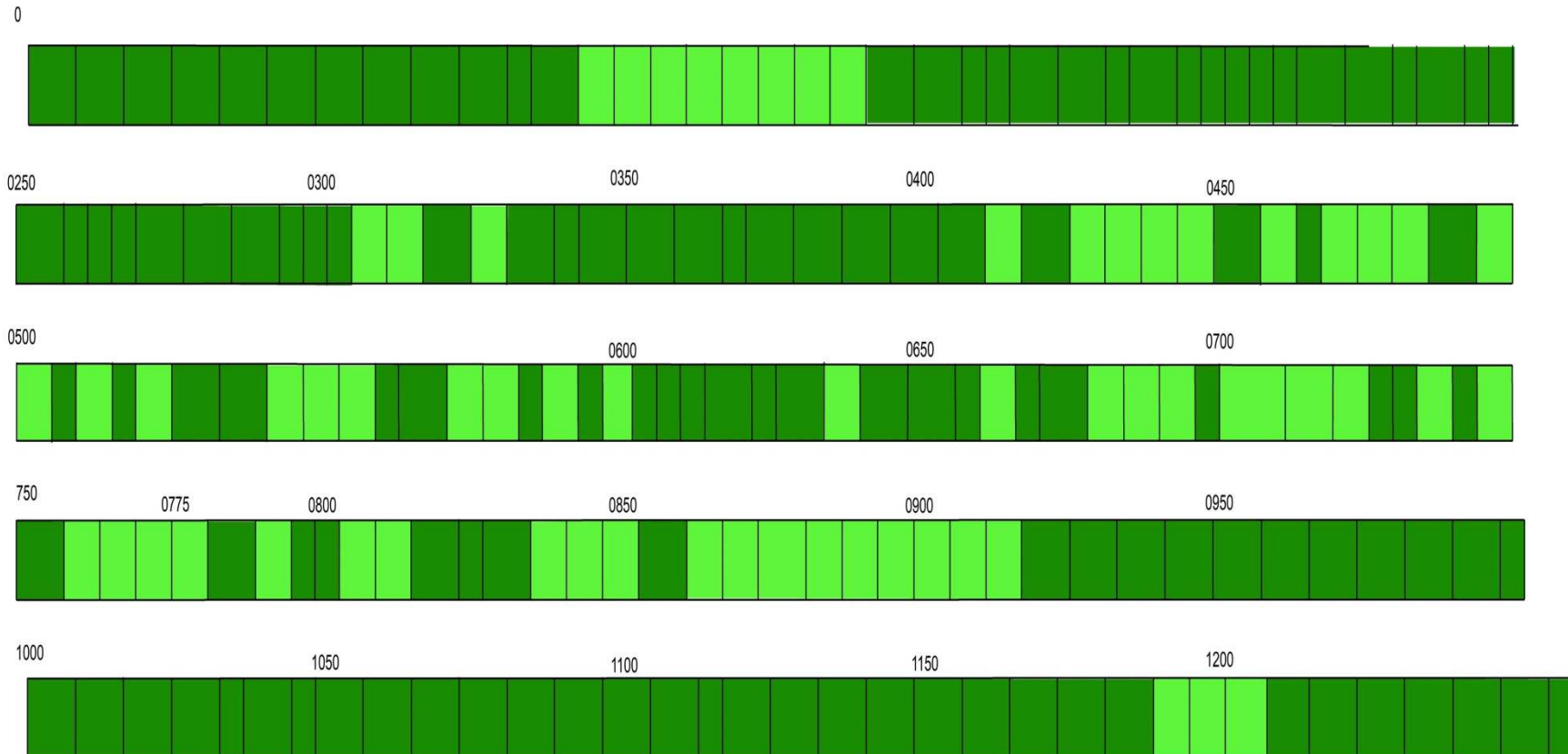
- Almost every stanza in *PA* is A8.
- The first ten stanzas in *OM* are A8.
- A8 is not found in *BK*.

CW.0105	in pypmas dyth orth ow breis /	A
CW.0106	an puskas heb falladowe /	B
CW.0107	hag oll an ethyn keffrys /	A
CW.0108	me a gwra thom falladow /	B
CW.0109	hag oll an bestas yn beyse /	A
CW.0110	gans prevas a bub sortowe /	B
CW.0111	an ryma ew oll teke gwryes /	A
CW.0112	me as sone war barth heb gowe. /	B

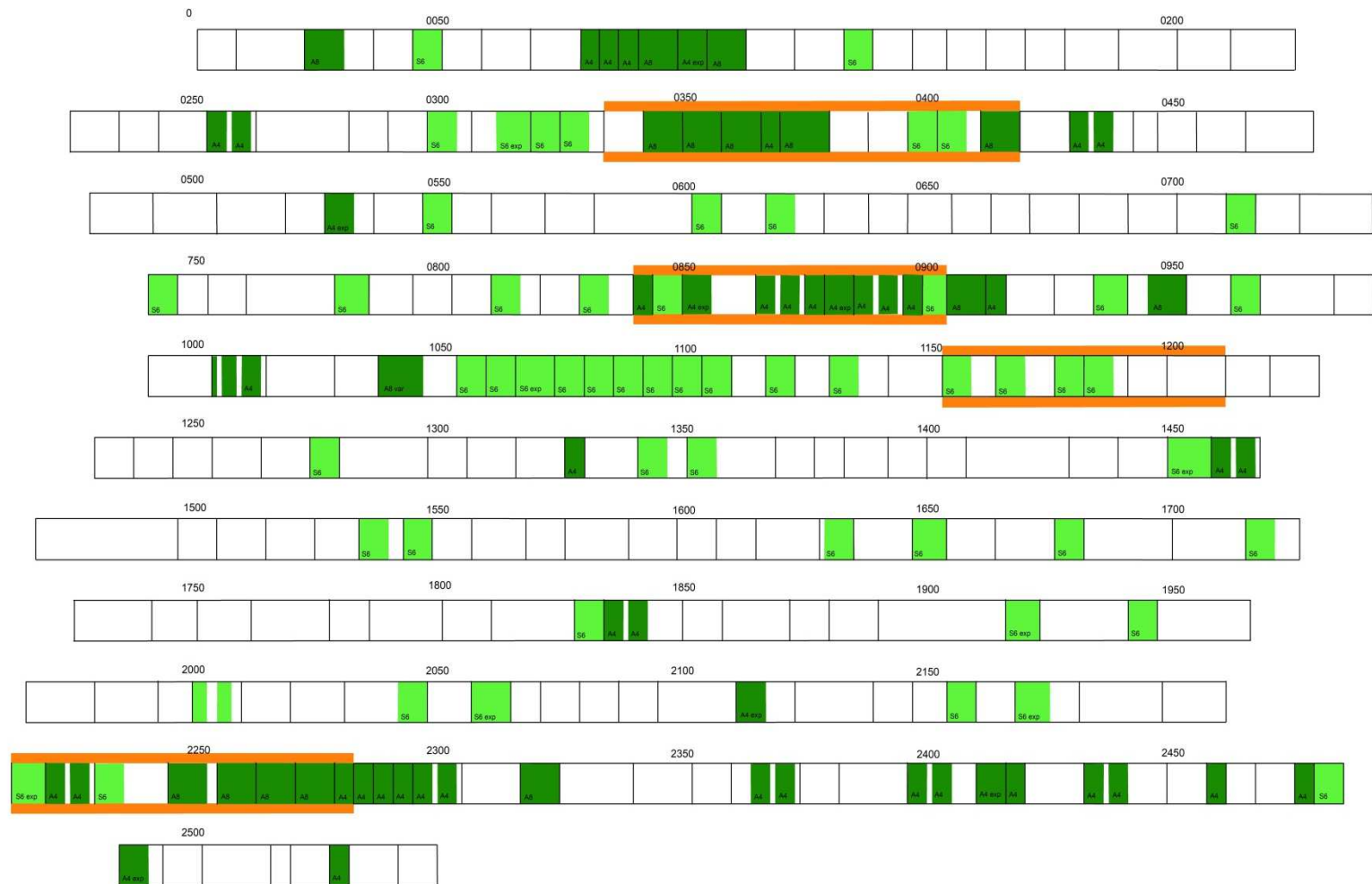
A8 and S6 in *OM.0001-1258*

A8 (including A4) = dark green

S6 = light green

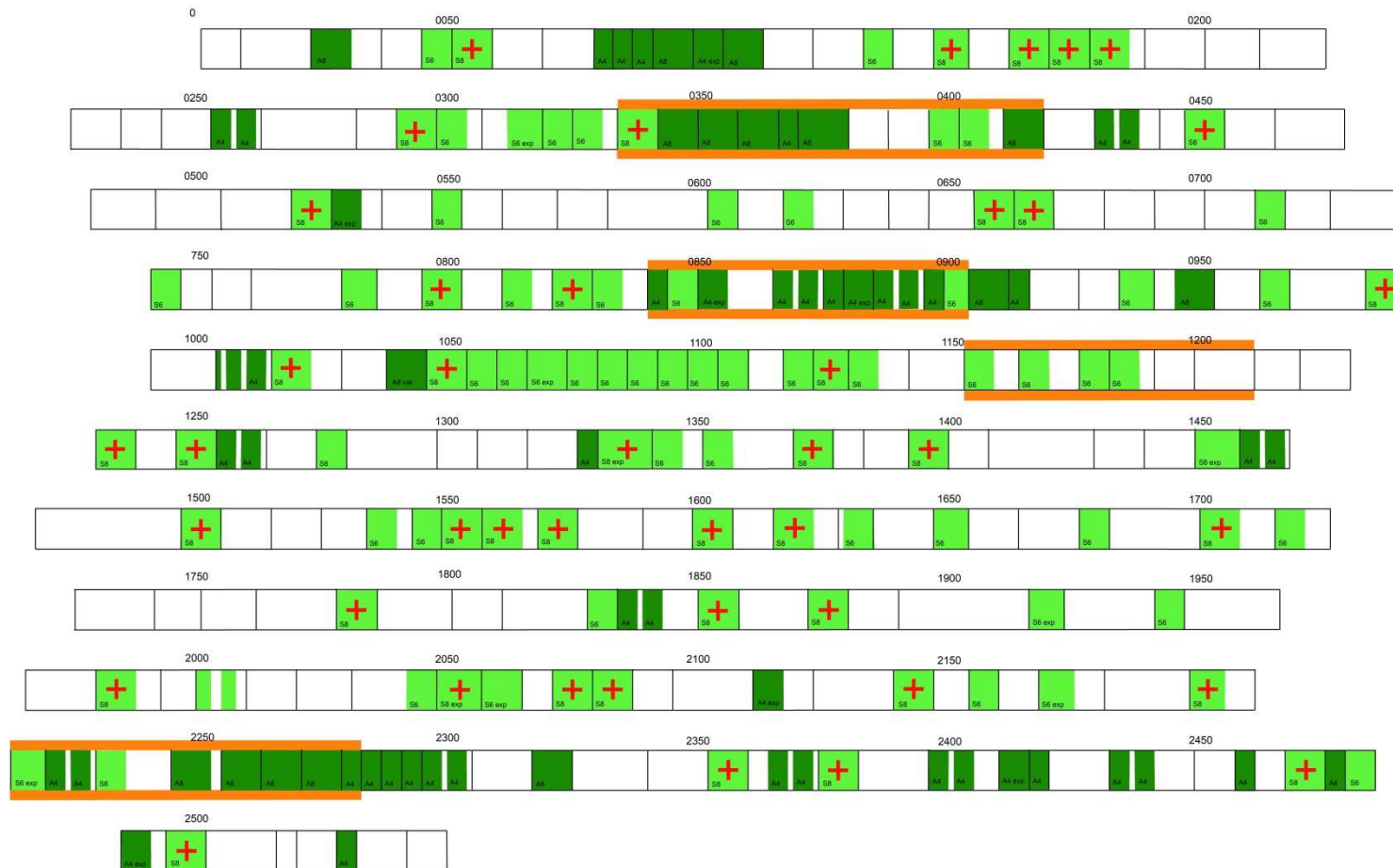


A8 and S6 yn CW



A8, S6 and S8 in CW

S8 stanzas are shown by red crosses.



Extended stanzas

The common patterns may be extended.

The commonest stanzas are:

S6+2 AABCCB**CB** (*BM*)

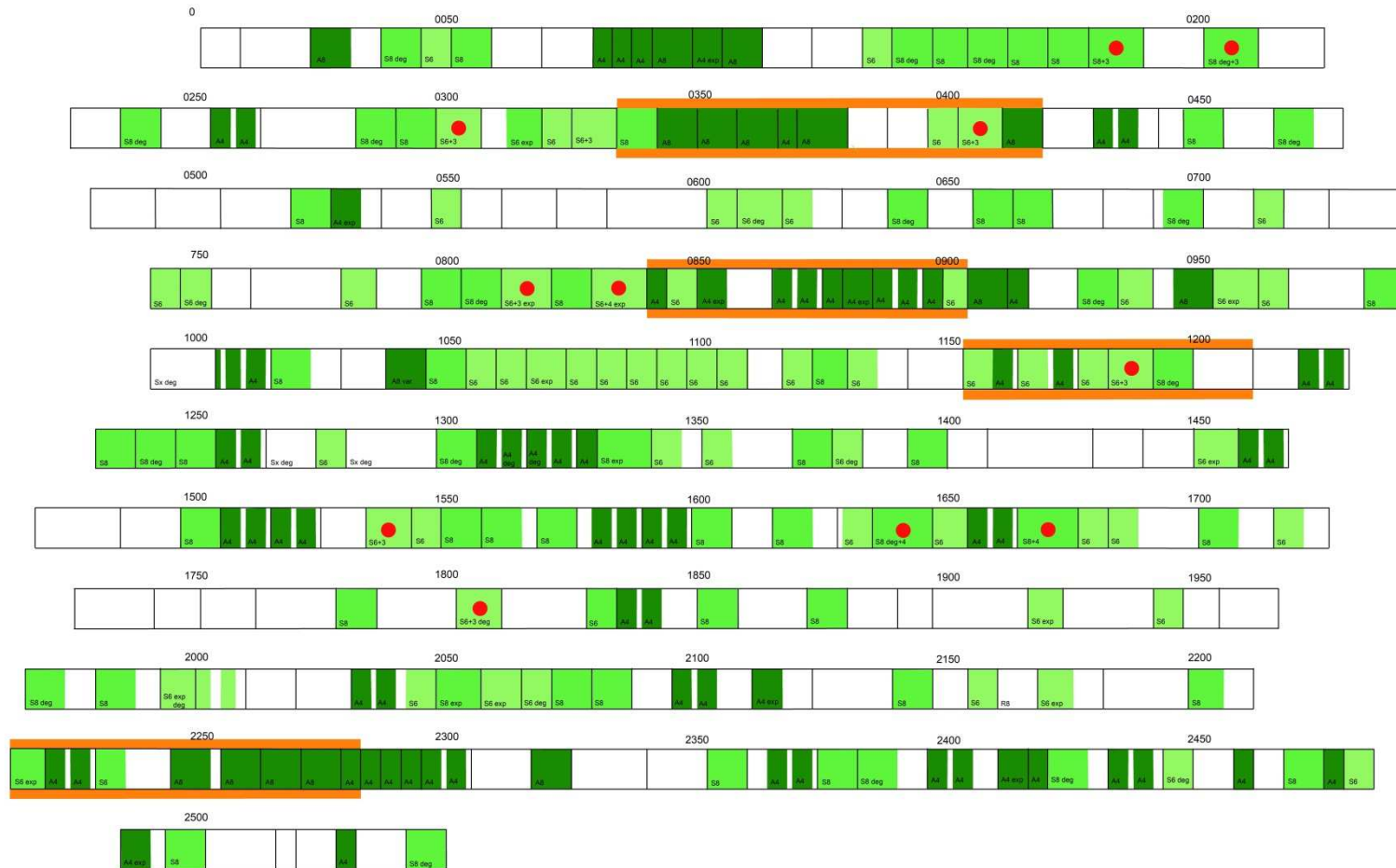
S8+2 ABABCDDC**DC** (*BM*)

S6+3 AABCCB**DDB**

S8+4 ABABCDDC**EFFE**

A8+4 ABABABAB**CDDC**

CW including extended stanzas



Degenerate stanzas

Here the word **degenerate** means ‘lacking some usual or expected property or quality’, e.g.

Normal

Degenerate

S8

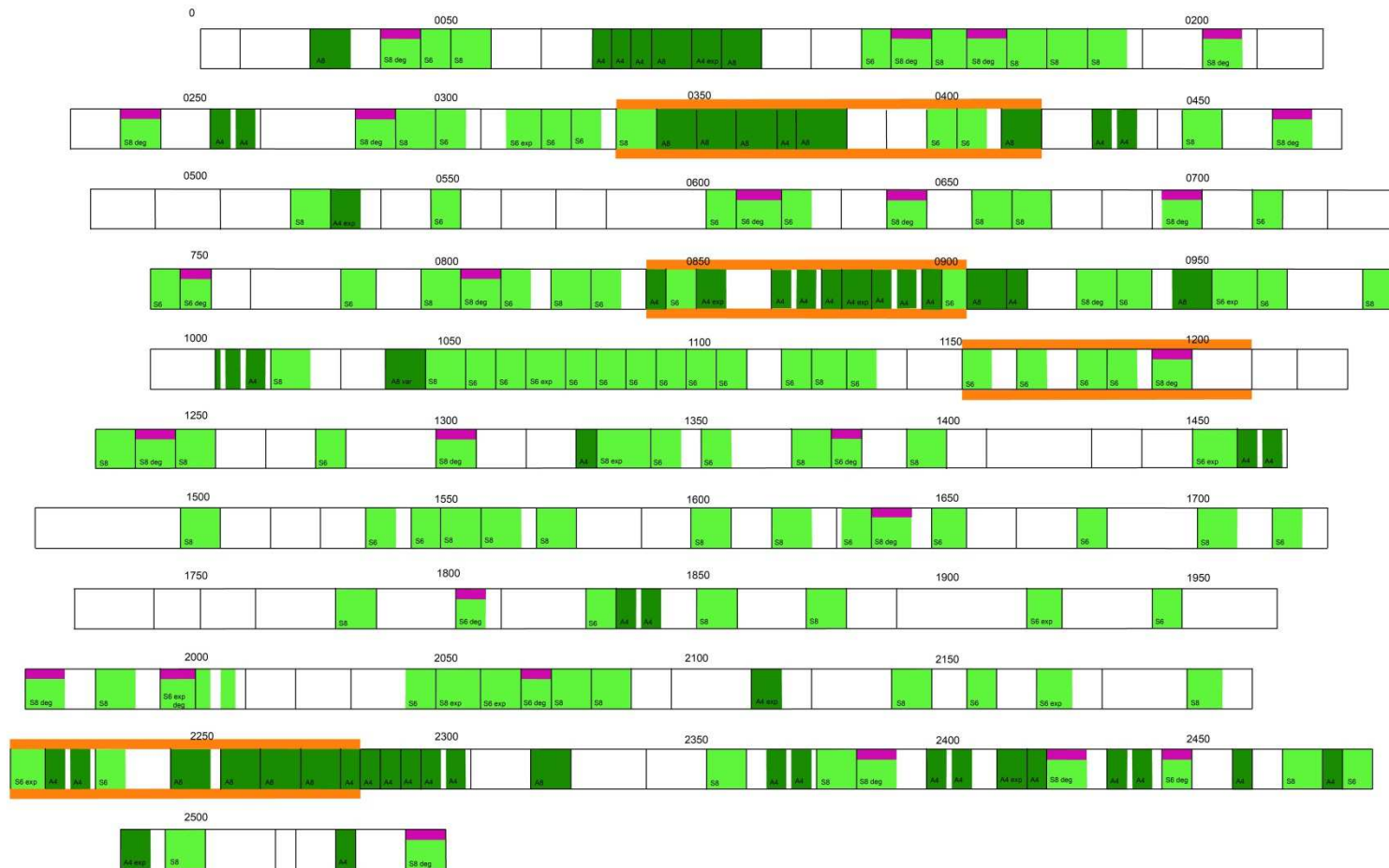
ABABCDDC

ABABBCCB

ABABAAAA

These stanzas arise because of the mergers.

CW including degenerate stanzas



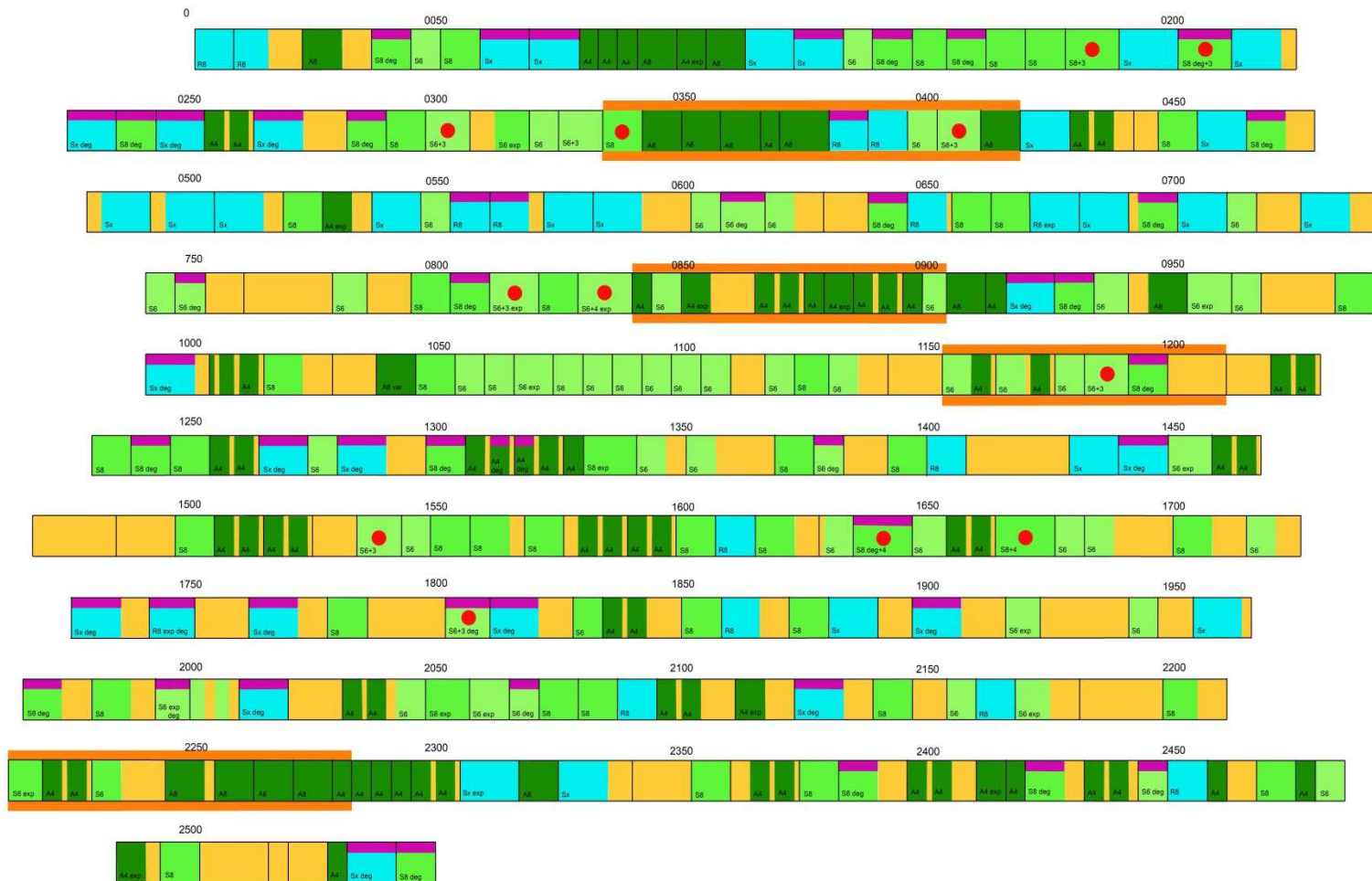
NEW PATTERNS IN *CW*

Two essentially new patterns
are found in *CW*:

- S_x $ABABC\underline{}|DEDEC\underline{}|$
- R_8 $AAB\underline{}|CDCDB\underline{}|$

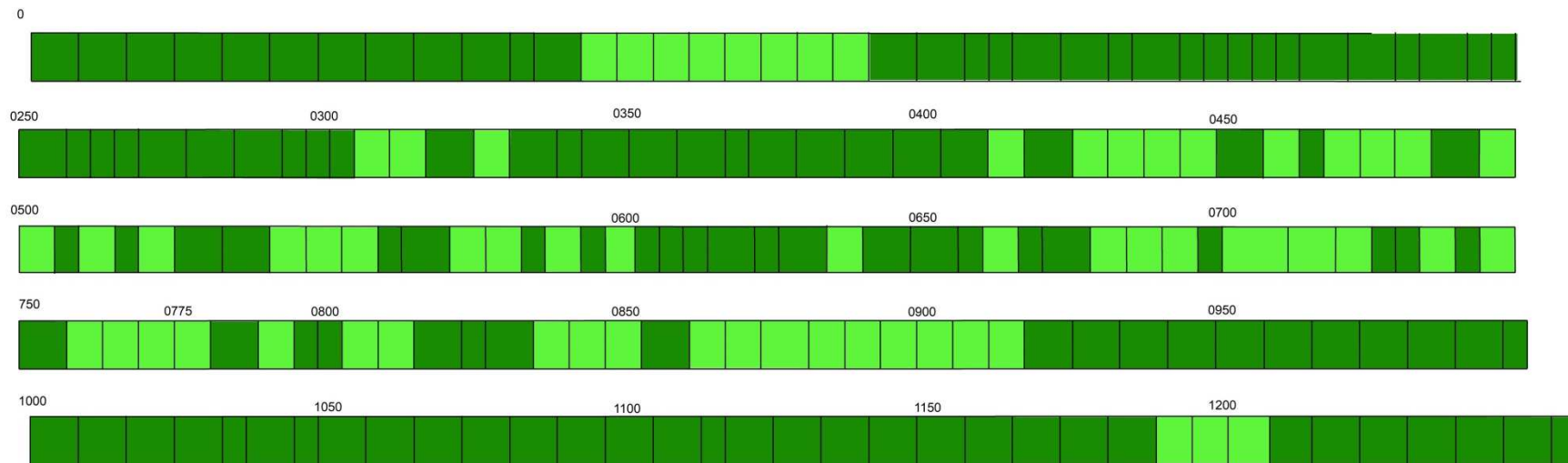
Stanza patterns in CW

Sections in yellow are unclassified,
i.e. do not fit the conventional patterns

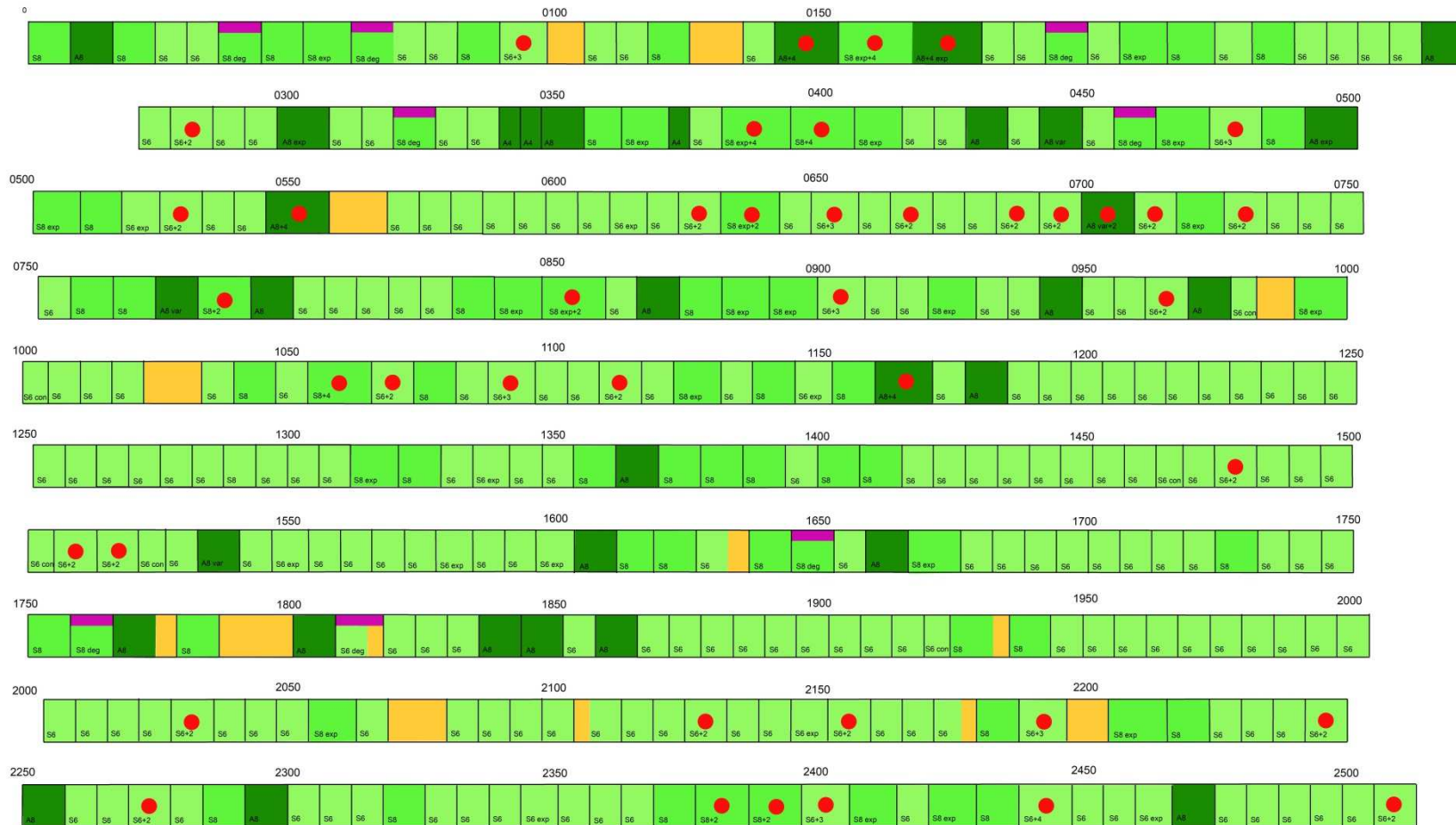


Patterns in *OM.0001-1255*

The patterns are A8 (A4) and S6 only
There are no S8, no extension, no degeneracy



Patterns in *BM* day 1



Patterns in *BK* day 1

Almost all of the stanzas are S6 and S8

Page 9 is damaged

There are no cases of A8

There are three cases of Sx



Stanzaic features compared

	OM	BM	BK	CW
A8 stanzas	common	rare	absent	rare
S6 stanzas	common	common	common	common
S8 stanzas	absent	common	common	common
extensions	absent	common	rare	rare
Sx stanzas	very rare	absent	rare	common
R8 stanzas	very rare	absent	absent	common
degeneracy	absent	rare	absent	common
unclassified	very rare	rare	very rare	common

Layout of A8 stanzas

OM lines 0949 to 0956

rag henna fystyn ke gura • gorhel a blankos playnyys

hag ynno lues trygva • romes y a vyth gylwys

aves hag agy ynta • gans pek bethens stanchvrys

ha tryhans keuelyn da • an lester a vyth a hys

CW lines 2255 to 2262

rag henna fysten ke gwra / gorthell a planckes playnyes

hag vnna leas trigva / rowmys y a vythe henwys

a veas hag agy inta / gans peyke bethance stanche gwryes

ha try cans kevellyn da / an lysster a vythe in heys

Layout of S6 stanzas (1)

OM lines 0577 to 0582

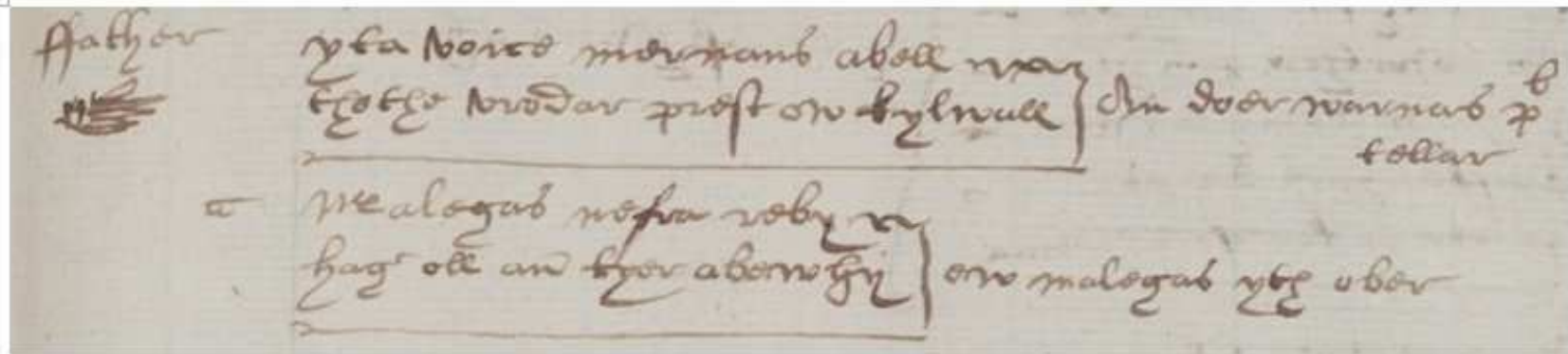
AABCCB

Otte voys mernans abel A
the vroder prest ov kelwel A

an dor warnaf pup teller B
yv mylleges yth ober B

mylleges nefre re by C
hag ol an tyr a bywfy C

Layout of S6 stanzas (2)



CW.1153-1158

<u>ffather</u>	<u>yfa voice mernans abell</u>	
	<u>thethe vrodar prest ow kylwall</u>	<u>an doer warnas p^b</u>
		<u>tellar</u>
	<u>malegas nefra reby</u>	
	<u>hag oll an tyer a bewhy</u>	<u>ew malegas yth ober</u>

Layout of S8 stanzas

In *CW*, two columns are used;
the rhymes are ABABCC|DDCC|

CW.0334-0341

gallas lucifer droke preve **A**

mes an nef tha dewolgowe **B**

ha lemyn vn y lea ef **A**

me a vyn heb falladowe **B**

vn dean formya **C**

in valy ebron devery **D**

rag collenwall aredy **D**

an le may teth anotha **C**

Summary of layouts

A8	PA, Ord, BM, CW		CW
	A•B A•B A•B A•B		$\left. \begin{array}{l} A/B \\ A/B \\ A/B \\ A/B \end{array} \right $
S6	Ord, BM, BK		CW
	$\left. \begin{array}{l} A \\ A \end{array} \right\} \left. \begin{array}{l} B \\ B \end{array} \right\}$ $\left. \begin{array}{l} C \\ C \end{array} \right\} \left. \begin{array}{l} B \\ B \end{array} \right\}$		$\left. \begin{array}{l} A \\ A \\ C \\ C \end{array} \right\} B$ $\left. \begin{array}{l} C \\ C \end{array} \right\} B$
S8	OM, PC, BK	BM	CW
	$\left. \begin{array}{l} A•B \\ A•B \end{array} \right\} \left. \begin{array}{l} C \\ C \end{array} \right\}$ $\left. \begin{array}{l} D \\ D \end{array} \right\} \left. \begin{array}{l} C \\ C \end{array} \right\}$	$\left. \begin{array}{l} A \\ B \\ A \\ B \end{array} \right\} \left. \begin{array}{l} C \\ C \end{array} \right\}$ $\left. \begin{array}{l} D \\ D \end{array} \right\} \left. \begin{array}{l} C \\ C \end{array} \right\}$	$\left. \begin{array}{l} A \\ B \\ A \\ B \end{array} \right\} C$ $\left. \begin{array}{l} D \\ D \end{array} \right\} C$

- For S6 and S8, *Ord*, *BM* and *BK* use brackets.
- *CW* sets out the material in two columns.
- It appears that the author of *CW* never saw the text of other plays.
- This suggests that *CW* was composed after the closure of Glasney in 1549.

SEGMENTS IN *CW*

- The material in *CW* is not laid out as in the other plays.
- It is laid out in **segments**.
- Body-rhymes are in the left column and tail-rhymes in the right column.
- An analysis using these segments is more successful than using stanzas.

Types of segment

There are three distinct types:

ABAB, AAB and ABABC

When combined, they form stanzas:

- ABAB = A4 ABAB + ABAB = A8
- AAB + AAB = S6 ABABC + DDC = S8
- AAB + CDCDB = R8
- ABABC + DEDEC = Sx

Opening of the play

Ego sum Alpha et Omega	A	han noore a wollas in wethe	E
heb dallath na dowethva	A	Scon worthe compas av ^t gwryes	F
pur wyre me ew	<u>B</u>	ho [^] na ow skavall droose a vythe	E
A O [^] ma avy than clowdes	C	rag ow pleasure vy pub preyse	F
B w ^r face an dower in sertan	D	ha thom honor maga ta	<u>D</u>
A Try person yn idn dewges	C	-----	
B ow kys raynya bys vickan	D	o [^] ma neve ew genaf gwryes	A
C in mere honor ha vertew	<u>B</u>	orthe ow devges in serten	B
-----		hag yn ^y y fythe gorrys	A
D me hawe mabe han spiris sans	A	neb am gorth gans io ^y e ha cane	B
D Try ython in vn substance	A	naw order elath gloryes	A
C comprehendys in vdn dew	<u>B</u>	y ^y a vythe ryall ha splan	B
-----		canhasawe them danvenys	A
me ew henwis dew an tase	C	rage ow servia bys vickan	B
ol gollousacke dres p ^b dra	D	me a vyn may fons nevra	<u>D</u>
Skon y fythe gwrys der ow rase	C	-----	
neve place ryall thom trigva	D	Lemyn pub order thy se	D
hawe thron setha owe bothe ewe	<u>B</u>	me a vyn may fo gorrys	A
may fo he [^] na	<u>D</u>	ha pub onyn thy thecree	D
-----		a vyth gorris thom service	
		pan vidnaf ve comandya	<u>D</u>

Chains of tail-rhymes

ew	vertew	dew	ewe		
0003	0008	0011	0016		
		henna	ta	nevra	commandya
		0017	0022	0031	0036

dyth	vyth				
1730	1735				
negys	paradice	kevys			
1736	1741	1744			
		ma	ena	tra	
		1745	1746	1755	
				ena	awartha
				1756	1761

AABB|CCB|DDB and AABB|CCBD|BBD

CW.0298-0306

Dewne w^rbarth an nawe order A
hellyn yn mes Lucyfer A
a thesempys mes an nef B

Ty chet gwraf tha examnya C
prage ẏ fyn dew ow damnya C
ha me mar gollowe ha creif B

Rag ẏ bosta melagas D
hag in golan re othys D
der reson thys me a breif B

CW.1341-1350

A Cayme te a fylles mear A
rag gwethell an keth obar A
ragtha ythos malegas B

agen tase ha mam eva C
lower ẏ mowns ẏ ow murnya C
ganssy ny vyth ankevys B

an murder bys venarẏ D

kebmys ew ganssy murnys B
aga holan ew terrys B
rag cavow methaf ẏ dy D



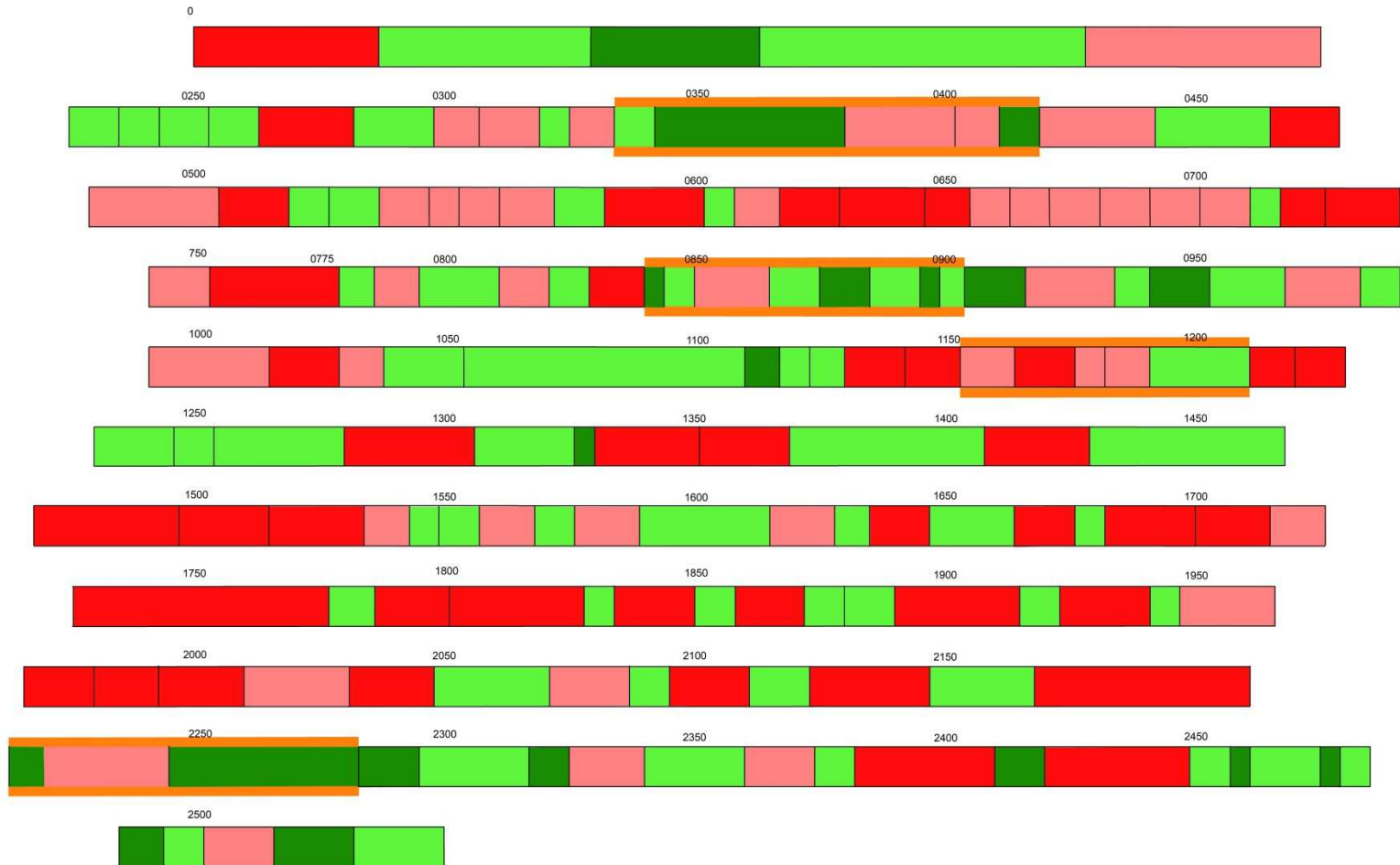
Styles in *CW* (1)

Every stanza in *CW* (and in the other plays)
may be placed in one of four styles

	Style	Segments	Tail-rhymes	Link-rhymes	Stanzas
	alternating	one	nil	nil	A8, A4
	two brackets	two	Two	nil	S6, S8, R8, Sx
	many tail-rhymes	three or more	three or more	nil	
	catenary	two or more	two or more	one or more	

Styles in *CW* (2)

All the material may be classified



JORDAN'S CONTRIBUTION

Jordan made mistakes (1)

Alle gant over on berlentij n
i tgepaf heb dorre m tafe
Sphuma ed an horele dobaue
why a yll w bawge groelab } Oro kofif ftayn p prayse

Key Nanaß outg dale na moy
doe tgem statma monab mo a } gona or on tgeule
dabouy
~~Alle gant over on berlentij~~
maga brub doe aboll dorre
mo a gomamnd ro but forw } mynt ed yu nort
tgem groetgeu

Jordan made mistakes (2)

End of page 2r

Oll gans ower ow terlentry
ȳ thesaf heb dowte in case
splanna es an howle deverye
why a yll w^rbarthe gwelas

ow bosaf sertayn p^b preyse

Start of page 2v

Ny va[^]na^f orth eale na
dos thom statma menas me

henna ew ow thowle
devery

~~Oll gans ower ow terlentry~~
maga vras ove avele dew
me a gomannd w^r bub tew

myns es yn neif
thom gworthya

Jordan's text does not fit the rhyme

There are about 45 cases where Jordan did not respect the rhyme of the composer. He rewrote the text according to his own pronunciation.

Here are some of those cases:

Rhyme	First rhyming word	2nd rhyming word as it was composed	English	2nd rhyming word written by Jordan
<i>Ra</i>	oma	*calla	if I can	callaf
<i>Ra</i>	omma	*thotha	to him	thoʒo
<i>Rys</i>	ankevys	*mylygys	cursed (ptcpl.)	malegas
<i>Ran</i>	gwethan	*a van	above	a vadm
<i>Ram</i>	Adam	*cam	crooked	cabm
<i>Ras</i>	warnas	*lavaras	said	leverys

If *CW* was not composed in 1611, when was it composed?

- after c.1525, according to the mergers
- after 1549 (closure of Glasney college)
according to the layout
- I believe that it was composed in the reign of Queen Mary (1553-1559), i.e. at about the same time as Tregear's Homilies.

CW is different

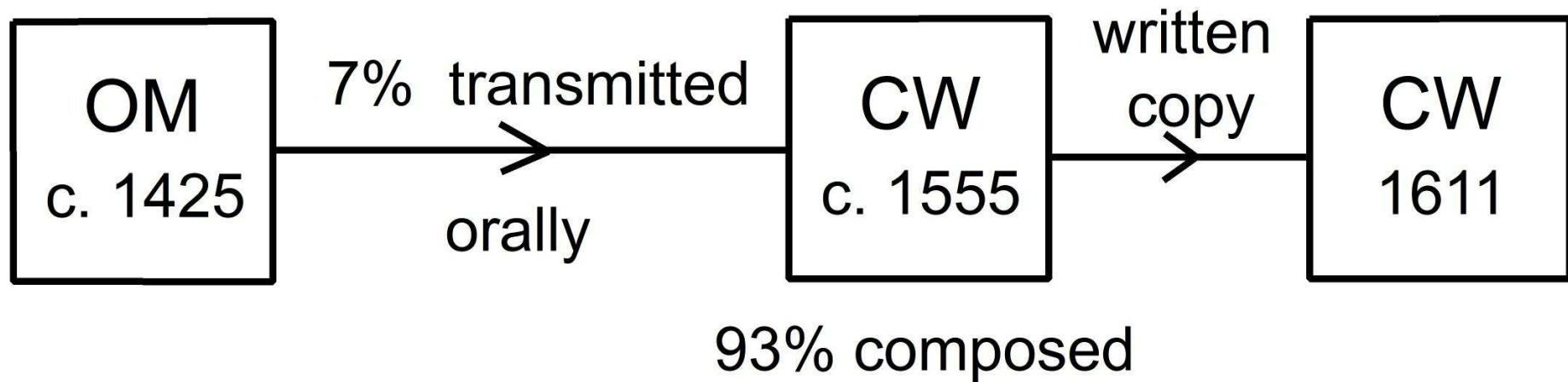
Other plays

- Composed before 1549
- Linked to Glasney
- Stage directions in Latin
- > 90% A8, A4, S6, S8
- Sx and R8 are rare
and specialized
- Degeneracy is rare
- Laid out in stanzas

Creacon of the World

- Composed after 1549
- Composed after Glasney
- Stage directions in English
- 30% A8, A4, S6, S8
- Sx and R8 are common
- Degeneracy is common
- Laid out in segments

Proposed provenance



CONCLUSIONS

- An actor who had played God in *OM* brought ~180 lines to *CW*.
- It is likely that the same actor composed the rest of *CW*.
- He was unaware of the traditional way of formatting verse; his knowledge was oral.
- He composed the play *circa* 1555.
- Jordan copied the play in 1611, with changes.

With thanks to

- **Keith Bailey**, who inspired me to study *Creacon of the World* in the first place.
- **Ben Bruch**, who gave me a copy of his doctoral thesis;
- **You**, my patient listeners