Freond ic gemete wið

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Perspectives on Medieval Britain; Language, Literature, Society

Edited by

Michaela Hejná, Helena Filipová,
and Helena Znojemská

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PREFACE

The present volume is the outcome of a symposium convened at Charles University in Prague in March 2012 and entitled "Freond ic gemete wið: A Student Conference on the Middle Ages in Britain". Thanks to its broadly defined field, the conference brought together a lively group of young scholars whose interests embrace linguistics, literature and social history, often in productive combination, and range across the entire medieval period, from Anglo-Saxon England to the Late Middle Ages. Several contributions also mapped the cultural interchange within the territory of the British Isles and beyond.

This stimulating methodological, temporal and geographical diversity, aside, the title of the conference also proved to have anticipated an important aspect connecting all the articles gathered in this collection – the awareness of, and often emphasis on, a specific community as users of a language and as producers and recipients of texts in that language.

In the case of linguistic analysis this is hardly surprising, as the communicative function of language makes this aspect inevitable at least as a tacit premise. Beyond this minimal presence, however, the items in this collection attempt, respectively, to chart the dynamics of the interaction of multiple linguistic communities to weigh the input of such interaction in the evolution of specific syntactic and morphological phenomena, as well as to re-evaluate the traditional methods of dealing with source texts established in scholarly textual communities.

The first contributor, Christine Wallis, demonstrates the methodological potential of exploring the diversity of manuscript evidence and the scribal tradition, using the Old English *Bede* as the basis for a detailed case study focused on phonological analysis of the extant texts. An important aspect of her research is the fact that many Old English manuscripts present layered language, which requires that special attention be paid to the interplay of geographical and chronological characteristics of scribal and scriptorial practice.

Jiřina Popelíková surveys the changes in impersonal verbal constructions throughout the Old and Middle English periods, emphasising the typological perspective. Besides providing a systematic description of their development, her analysis also offers a glimpse into the speakers'

understanding of the workings of the world around them which the changing constructions reflect.

Michaela Hejná deals with the methodological difficulties in dialectological research with a special focus on Early Middle English, this period being one of the most intricate and complex in the history of the English language with respect to regional diversity. The texts of *The Owl and the Nightingale* are used as an illustration of the circularity of arguments compiled by layers of scholarship.

In the literary section of the collection the emphasis on communal life and the functions of texts represents a dominant theme. Though the specific approach and focus of the individual papers range from close textual analysis through reading in manuscript context to gender studies and cultural history, they all prove equally sensitive to the character of the analyzed texts as – in a broad sense – foundational and/or normative narratives, establishing an imagined community with the text at its centre or offering a more or less authoritative model for an existing or emergent social structure or polity. This might not seem so surprising in new readings in texts of the established canon; however, the enquiries into less well-mapped material often trace the same line.

Rebecca Fisher analyses two Anglo-Saxon "theft charms", integrating them into the broader context of the corpus of regulatory texts concerning theft – the law codes and penitentials. Her reading of the charms themselves foregrounds elements that suggest a relation to the procedures stipulated in more official statements (such as the course adopted in the tracking of stolen livestock outlined in the law codes, or the emphasis on public disclosure in the penitentials). Her central concern is to trace the strategies through which the charm in public performance solicits the response and cooperation of the local community in restoring the stolen property whilst marking the perpetrator as outcast.

Piotr Dzięcioł's article traces developments in the discourse of virginity and chastity from Aldhelm to Ælfric and its alignment to the social position of women, as well as the evolution of ecclesiastic and monastic structures in Anglo-Saxon England.

Esther Lemmerz offers a close reading of the *Dream of the Rood*, concentrating on the distribution and combination of characteristics, actions and epithets attributed to Christ and the cross which stress, respectively, the human and the divine aspects. The interpretation underlines the poem's response to contemporary theological debate on Christ's double nature, presenting it as sharing in the concerns of the Anglo-Saxon Church to maintain doctrinal orthodoxy in the issue.

Dániel Bácsatyai extends the perspective beyond the British Isles, documenting the emergence of shared patterns of *origo gentis* narratives across Europe. Postulating Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae* as a model emulated in later histories, which provided foundational myths for the polities recently established in the peripheral parts of Europe, his article charts parallels between Geoffrey's text and the anonymous *Gesta Hungarorum*, ranging from generic aspects (the integration of romance elements in pseudo-historical account) through common strategies (the appropriation of a surviving Roman site as the polity's ancient power-centre) to shared scenes and authorial positioning.

Denise Kinsinger's article represents a re-evaluation of the evidence for editorial structuring in the earliest extant version of the *South English Legendary* preserved in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108. Focusing on the positioning and specific presentation of the *Sancta Crux* legend in this manuscript, Kinsinger reads the text in terms of the Bakhtinian chronotope as a central point which establishes a Christian community spanning the past and the present, this world and the next, as the cross becomes a real and figurative standard rallying the procession of saints and believers.

Matouš Turek's interpretation of Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls* concentrates on the presentation of the scene and the course of the birds' convocation in general, and on the use and function of the musical imagery in particular. The clear social coding of individual bird species and/or genera as well as the position of personified Nature establish the reading of the scene as both an ideal model of a hierarchically organized, socially cohesive polity in parliament (in the initial ordering of the assembly) and a critique of the pursuit of individual and class interest in the parliamentary politics of Chaucer's time (in the response to the eagles' *demande d'amour*). The musical imagery, juxtaposing harmony and discord, is seen as reinforcing the theme of ordered society in keeping with the reading of the *Parliament of Fowls* as a "great civic poem".

Tomasz Wiącek's analysis of the N-Town Cycle Play "The Trial of Joseph and Mary" advances a hypothesis which identifies the two detractor figures as cross-dressed women, examining the potential resonances of the play in this new configuration with the contemporary concern with marriage as a social contract involving the welfare of the entire community and with the late medieval notions of gender and male/female cross-dressing.

Eva Bilská focuses on the rhetorical and verbal strategies used by the figures of the Vices in the play *Mankind*, especially on the elements of parody and on the subversion of clerical discourse and its confrontation

with popular idiom. This irruption of carnivalesque misrule is seen as a means of soliciting the complicity of the spectators, integrating their response in a moral message that underlines the dangers of idleness to the individual's spiritual well-being, and thus restoring the appropriate order.

Presenting this assembly of diverse, yet closely intertwining voices, the editors hope that this collection will convey the spirit of lively interdisciplinary dialogue which characterized the original conference and provide inspiration for subsequent contributors to the field of the Middle Ages in Britain.

—Helena Znojemská, Helena Filipová and Michaela Hejná

CHAPTER ONE

THE OLD ENGLISH *BEDE*: SCRIBAL STRATEGY AND INVENTION IN MS. CCCC41

CHRISTINE WALLIS

The Old English version of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* (the "Old English *Bede*") was translated from the original Latin text around the time of King Alfred.[1] The translator is unknown, and the work was attributed by William of Malmesbury to King Alfred (*Gesta Regum Anglorum*, ii: §123). Later scholarship has attributed the translation variously to an independent Mercian translator (Miller 1890, lvii–lix), King Alfred (Stenton 1971, 273), or West-Saxon writers using a Mercian gloss (Kuhn 1947). It is also possible that Alfred had nothing to do with the translation (Whitelock 1962; Bately 2009). Our only knowledge of translation work being undertaken during this period comes from Alfred's court. Therefore all these theories try to reconcile the fact that the earliest manuscripts show substantial traces of Mercian dialect, rather than the West-Saxon dialect we would expect to see if the Old English *Bede* was indeed the product of King Alfred's educational reforms.

There is no autograph copy of the translation, and we cannot be certain how many copies have intervened between this original and the extant manuscripts (Whitelock 1962, 251; 1974, 277–278). As the original translation does not survive and as we are unable to recapture the original translator's text, it is not easy to study the Old English *Bede* specifically as the work of one or more translators. However, as we have four reasonably complete manuscript witnesses, the Old English *Bede* provides an ideal opportunity to examine a text from the point of view of scribal performance. This chapter will focus on the act of writing the finished products that we can see in front of us, and to do this the response of one particular scribe, that of CCCC41, will be compared with other existing scribal performances. In addition, the chapter explores the extent to which

we can account for such scribal variation by external factors, or whether we can rely only on internal ones to account for the differences we see.

The surviving manuscripts date from the tenth and eleventh centuries, with four being nearly complete and several others in a more fragmentary state.[2] This chapter is based on a comparison of the four near-complete manuscripts. The oldest of the texts is Bodleian MS. Tanner 10 (here referred to as T, following Miller's (1890) designations), dated by Ker (1957, 428) to the first half of the tenth century. The beginning of the text up to the end of Book 1 is missing, as is the end of Book 5. Oxford, Corpus Christi College 279B pt. II (O) is about a century younger, from the beginning of the eleventh century (Ker 1957, 432), and this text also lacks the beginning of Book 1 and the end of Book 5. The latest manuscript in the corpus is Cambridge University Library Kk. 3.18 (Ca), from the second half of the eleventh century. It is complete and is most closely related to O, possibly sharing an exemplar (Ker 1957, 36).

Finally, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 41 (B) has been dated on palaeographical grounds to the first half of the eleventh century (Ker 1957, 43). The text is complete, but Miller rejected it as a supplement to T for the basis of his edition because of its West-Saxon language and the fact that "the scribe or editor of B's text has dealt very freely with his author, changing forms and words and recasting sentences" (1890, v–vi). Nevertheless, it is exactly this scribal independence which makes B such an interesting object for study. The Old English *Bede* is not B's only text. Its contents also include Latin masses with Old English rubrics, homilies, charms, and the poem *Solomon and Saturn*. The *Bede* is the manuscript's main text, and all others are written in the margins and other blank spaces.[3]

The External Evidence

We know from a donation inscription at the end of B (p. 488)[4] that the manuscript was given to Exeter Cathedral by Leofric, Bishop of Crediton and then of Exeter from 1046 to 1072. Leofric moved the see from Crediton to Exeter around 1050, and famously found the cathedral there in such a poor state that during his episcopacy he donated land, books and other treasures to restore it to glory (Treharne 2003, though see Conner 1993 for an alternative view). A list of his donations survives in the Exeter Book, although an Old English *Bede* is not among the volumes named in the account of Leofric's gifts to Exeter found in that donation list.

B is one of several Exeter manuscripts which entered the Parker Library via a bequest by Archbishop Parker in the sixteenth century.

Although none of the other bequests have inscriptions of donations made by Leofric, some of these volumes have been identified with manuscripts described in the list of Leofric's donations in the Exeter Book (Lapidge 1985, 64–69). Therefore, although we have three pieces of evidence which seem to point to an Exeter provenance for these manuscripts – donation notes, the Exeter Book list and Parker's bequest – they do not always appear to corroborate each other.

Studies of Leofric's library demonstrate that Exeter's books came from two sources, firstly through the acquisition of already-existing volumes, and secondly through a "coherent plan of vernacular copying by staff working specifically for the bishop who, on his death, effectively disbanded" (Treharne 2003, 159; see also Hill 2005). According to Treharne, Exeter's textual production seems to have ceased and its acquisition practices seem to have changed after Leofric's episcopacy, indicating that the focus in the mid-late-eleventh-century on producing and acquiring vernacular texts was due to the influence of Leofric himself (2003, 169).

The dating of B to the first half of the eleventh century (i.e. before Leofric's episcopacy) and the fact that it is not, according to Ker (1957, 45), written in an Exeter hand, suggest that the B manuscript is one which Leofric acquired from elsewhere. This has two implications for contextualising the scribal practices we see at play in B. Firstly, we are unable to attribute any of these scribal practices to the influence of Leofric himself, or to his scriptorium. Secondly, in the absence of any other internal evidence we are unable to posit with any degree of certainty a geographical origin for this manuscript. This matters because we are therefore unable to pinpoint a geographical or dialectal area for our scribe or his scriptorium. In some ways this is problematic, as we cannot compare the behaviour of B's scribe with that of others known to have been working in a similar area and period. However, in spite of all these issues, the fact that we have other manuscript witnesses of the Old English *Bede* means that we *can* use B as evidence for scribal practice; we just need to adjust our questions. Instead of asking what this manuscript can tell us about scribes working in a particular area, we need instead to ask a different question: what can this manuscript tell us about scribes who copied the Old English *Bede*?

These issues inevitably bring us to consider the nature of manuscript production. Because we are dealing with a manuscript culture in Anglo-Saxon England, we will inevitably find variation within our manuscript texts. When a text is printed, all copies produced are identical. However, when a manuscript is copied by hand, the text is subject to both conscious

and unconscious alteration (Laing 2004). Manuscript copying was a laborious process, and was slow and expensive, not only because of the speed of handwriting the text but also because of the time needed to prepare parchment before it could be used as a writing surface. All this means that, while the scribe or his master (Lapidge, Blair and Keynes 2001, 411) could correct mistakes by referring to the exemplar while the text was being copied, any subsequent reader would not necessarily have had access to another version for comparison. If this copied text were itself to be copied, the mistakes it contained would be transmitted to the following daughter copy, along with any conscious additions, deletions, or other alterations that the next scribe made. Authors did not expect to have editorial control over their works; even the pleas of Ælfric in his preface to the *Catholic Homilies* for scribes to copy his material accurately seem to have fallen on deaf ears (Ælfric 1997, 177). For these reasons, when looking at the manuscripts we cannot really speak of studying *the* Old English *Bede* as a fixed, authorial text; it is rather the case that in the B manuscript we are looking at *an* Old English *Bede*.

The Internal Evidence

Having looked at what light the external evidence for B might be able to shed on its scribe's practices, we will turn to an examination of the manuscript's internal evidence. There are several types of variation found across the Old English *Bede* manuscripts. Some are what might be described as mechanical, such as eye skips or repetitions, while others seem to be deliberate efforts to rephrase the text, or substitutions of one lexical item for another (either by choice or through some misreading of the exemplar). This study does not deal with these types of variation; rather it focuses on a selection of features which can be categorised as dialectal or diachronic, such as phonological, morphological, and grammatical differences. Those considered here are: breaking and retraction, the presence of <o> before a nasal consonant, pronoun choices, the formation of weak class 2 past tenses, and the case governed by the preposition *mid*. The corpus is based upon selections from Book 3 of the Old English *Bede* and compares the same section of text to examine the scribal differences evident in the four manuscripts.[5]

Our first variation is between forms that show breaking before consonant clusters with <l> + consonant, and those that show retraction (Hamer 1967, 15). Given the Mercian influence on the Old English *Bede* (Whitelock 1962, 227), we would expect to see features such as retraction in words containing proto-Germanic *æl+ consonant, for example in *ald*

(retraction) rather than in *eald* (breaking) (Campbell 1959, §143). The table below shows a selection of affected words across the four manuscripts:[6]

Breaking					**Retraction**				
	T	**O**	**Ca**	**B**		**T**	**O**	**Ca**	**B**
eall-	60	72	72	86	*all-*	6	1		
eald-	3	5	5	7	*ald-*	2	1		
ealdorman	3	3	7	8	*aldormonn*	6			1
ealdor		1	1		*aldor*	3			3
ealdorlicnesse	1	5	4	1	*aldorlicnesse*	2		1	2
(*an*)*wealh*/*weald*	1	3	3	3	(*on*)*walh*/*wald*	2	1	2	1
wealhstod				1	*walhstod*	1	1	1	
cealdes		1	1	2	*caldes*	1	1		
weall		2	1	1	*wall*	2		1	

Table 1-1: Examples of breaking (on the left) and retraction (right)

Because of the nature of manuscript production, not every manuscript will contain exactly the same number of occurrences of each item. Hence *wealhstod* occurs only once (in B) and its retracted form *walhstod* once each in T, O and Ca. In contrast, the broken form *ealdor* occurs once each in O and Ca, whereas the retracted *aldor* occurs three times in each of T and B. Therefore, although for each manuscript both words show a complementary distribution in their broken and retracted forms, the fact that *ealdor* occurs less frequently in O and Ca than *aldor* does in T and B will be due either to O and Ca rewording the relevant section or to the fact that that particular piece of text is missing. As we are not always comparing like with like, the counts for each item will vary.

What is immediately apparent in Table 1-1 is that none of the four manuscripts considered here uses retracted forms consistently, and often not even in the majority of cases. While T is the most likely of all the manuscripts to use variants with retraction, this is often in words which do not occur particularly often in the corpus. In a word such as *eall*, which is more common, retraction accounts for only 6 out of the 66 instances of the word. So although these scribes are working from a text that started out "Mercian" in character (though we cannot know whether the original translation used only Mercian variants or whether it was dialectally

mixed), the surviving evidence shows us that even by the time the earliest of these manuscripts was copied, around the early tenth century (Ker 1957, 428), at least one scribe (that of T) is writing and using a good number of forms with breaking.

The earliest manuscripts in our sample, T and O do show a few retracted forms, such as *all-, ald-* and *aldormon*. As T is our oldest manuscript, the early date could account for the larger proportion of Mercian retracted forms here. However, as Ca, the latest of the four manuscripts, is also ambivalent in its use of retraction, this suggests that the interplay of forms with breaking and retraction is not solely due to diachronic factors.

B's scribe not only uses broken forms in *eall-* and *eald-* but generally disfavours retracted forms. The exceptions are one instance of *onwalh*, and six instances of *aldor-* and its compounds. Interestingly, the *aldor-* compounds are also more likely to have retracted forms in B's closest relative (T) but seem to be, on the whole, disfavoured by O and Ca, the manuscripts least similar to B. Apart from this cluster, retracted forms are rare in B, other than in personal names. If we compare the types of words showing retraction in our latest two manuscripts (B and Ca), we can see a clear difference in use. Retraction in B is confined mostly to words with *aldor-*, whereas Ca's instances of retraction are more widely spread. Where retraction does appear in Ca, it rarely occurs more than once and it appears in a selection of lexically unrelated words.

The inclusion by B and Ca of fewer instances of retraction before <l> + consonant largely conforms to West-Saxon patterns. Campbell confirms that this usage is to be expected in late-West-Saxon texts; although retracted spellings in <a> are found in the early period, "in late W[est] S[axon] *ea* becomes exclusively used" (1959, §143). This sample, then, shows a continuing shift away from retracted forms towards a usage more in line with late-West-Saxon linguistic patterns.

The second phonological feature to be considered is B's use of <o> + following nasal consonant.[7] This feature, which is generally taken to be indicative of non-West-Saxon dialects, is again most commonly found in T.

In Table 1-2 we can see that, as a proportion of the total, T uses almost exclusively <o> + nasal, confirming its non-West-Saxon character. Again, the picture we get from O and Ca is mixed, with certain items occurring predominantly with an <o> spelling (e.g. *monig*), whereas others choose <a> spellings (*genom, from*) or follow no overall pattern (*mon*).

	T	O	Ca	B
hond	17 (17)	1 (17)	0 (18)	0 (18)
ond[8]	87 (87)	1 (1)	0 (6)	0 (1)
monig	40 (40)	36 (36)	35 (35)	16 (45)
mon	92 (98)	42 (85)	38 (83)	5 (101)
ealond	12 (12)	3 (15)	13 (15)	0 (15)
from	77 (78)	3 (69)	3 (68)	1 (69)
noma	12 (12)	1 (8)	0 (8)	0 (10)
(*ge*)*nom*	13 (14)	1 (14)	1 (14)	0 (13)

Table 1-2: <o> + nasal. The total number of instances of each particular lexical item is shown in brackets.

Most notably, however, B's scribe seems to be making considerable efforts to avoid these <o> forms, with *mon* accounting for only 5 out of 101 occurrences, and *from* for only 1 out of 69. Although we see a few occurrences here of *mon, monig* or *from*, as opposed to his more usual *man, manig* and *fram*, these instances form a clear minority, and the words where <o> forms do occur are the most common ones. We can also see that in items such as *hand* and *and*, where T always uses the <o> variant, B agrees with Ca and (to a slightly lesser extent) O in avoiding <o> + nasal. While each manuscript has its own pattern of usage depending on the lexical item in question, we can certainly see that B is again leaning towards West-Saxon usage. Therefore the evidence of breaking/retraction and <o> + nasal shows us that, phonologically, B's scribe uses more West-Saxon forms than any of the other scribes here.

Phonological variations are not the only differences we see in this corpus. The manuscripts of the Old English *Bede* demonstrate a number of Mercian pronouns alongside variants which are more commonly found in West-Saxon texts. These Mercian pronouns tend to cluster in the earliest two manuscripts, T and O; however, the particular Mercian pronouns used by each manuscript differ. The two areas of difference are in the third-person-plural pronoun (West-Saxon *heora*), and in the first-person-plural (West-Saxon *us*).

While every manuscript uses the variant *heora* (and T and Ca use this variant exclusively), in 25 out of 42 instances O uses *hiora*. Campbell notes that *hiora* occurs in early texts, including examples from early West Saxon, Kentish and Northumbrian (1959, §703). It is notable that O is the only manuscript to use this variant, although it does not use *hiora* all the

time. O also contains one instance of the typically late-West-Saxon form *hyra*, which also occurs in 5 out of 51 instances in B.

The manuscripts also differ markedly in their usage of first-person-plural pronouns. Where T, Ca and B consistently use *us* for the accusative, O has one instance of Mercian *usic*. O also shares with T and Ca two instances of the genitive *ussa*, while T alone uses forms such as *usse* (three times), *usser* and *usses* (once each). Although O and Ca use a mixture of Mercian and West-Saxon first-person-plural pronouns, T uses only Mercian variants in this selection, and B only West-Saxon ones (*ure, ura, ures*).

What is most important is that no manuscript is consistent in its use of these non-West-Saxon pronouns, and (apart from *hiora*) they are often used in a minority of instances. B continues its trend in the particular use of certain variants while avoiding others. None of the Mercian/early-West-Saxon forms appear in the selection from B, which prefers standard late-West-Saxon usage in its pronouns. The inclusion of Mercian variants in Ca shows that the reason for B's pronounced West-Saxon pronoun selection is unlikely to be a purely diachronic consideration, given Ca's later date.[9]

Morphological differences between the manuscripts can be found in the past tenses of class 2 weak verbs. Specifically, Anglian texts use an <a> before the past tense dental suffix (e.g. *lufade* "loved"), whereas West-Saxon uses an <o> (*lufode*).

	T	O	Ca	B
-ad-	89	107	38	11
-od-	67	31	106	144
-ed-	32	40	76	39

Table 1-3: Past tenses of class 2 weak verbs[10]

The two manuscripts which have so far exhibited most Mercian traits, T and O, continue this trend, with their high number of *lufad*-type past tenses (89 out of 188, and 107 out of 178 instances respectively). In contrast, Ca has only 38 instances of the <a> variant out of a total of 220, while B is notable for its particularly low reading of 11 instances from a total of 194.

However, in the manuscripts of the Old English *Bede* we are not dealing with only two dialectal variants. Of the remaining class 2 weak verbs, the majority show the <od> variant, but we can also see a number

of verbs with <ed> (e.g. *lufede*). These forms in <ed> appear in all manuscripts (T has 32 instances, O 40, Ca 76, and B 39), which is unsurprising, given that this variant has no specific dialectal restriction (Campbell 1959, §757 and 385). What is interesting, though, is that forms in <ed> increase in frequency in the latest manuscript, Ca, where we see the highest number of <ed> forms. We can therefore see that diachronic developments, as well as geographical or "dialectal" ones, are influencing some of these scribal performances.

It is notable that while all manuscripts show a mixed usage, the majority of B's examples use the <od> variant (144 instances). This is to be expected, given that <od> "heavily predominates in W[est] S[axon]" (Campbell 1959, §757). However, we can also clearly see that in a good majority of cases B's scribe prefers to write past tenses in <od>. B's less frequent use of <ad> forms conforms to other aspects of the scribal behaviour evident in this manuscript, in that the scribe has attempted to reduce non-West-Saxon features, in contrast with its nearest contemporary, O.

Finally, there is a marked difference across the four manuscripts as regards which case is governed by the preposition *mid* ("with"):

	T	**O**	**Ca**	**B**
mid + acc.	16	24	22	1
mid + dat.	132	124	127	160
mid + inst.	38	29	37	36
uncertain case[11]	13	14	12	12

Table 1-4: Cases governed by the preposition *mid*

As can be seen, all manuscripts favour use of *mid* + dative. However, T, O and Ca also have a substantial number of instances where the accusative is used, whereas B shows only one instance of this. What is most notable is that these manuscripts contain a number of phrases with *mid* + accusative personal pronouns such as *mid hine* (acc.), whereas B nearly always uses *mid him* (dat.). Although Bosworth and Toller state that the accusative, dative or instrumental can be used with *mid*, Mitchell (1985, 505) says that "*mid* with the accusative is generally agreed to be Anglian" and Miller (1890, xlvii) states that "*mid* with the accusative is excluded from Wessex". Given this apparent dialectal split in usage for *mid*, these results agree with the evidence we have seen so far in

supporting the fact that on the whole B's scribe tries to avoid non-West-Saxon usage.

Conclusion

We have seen that in the case of the B manuscript of the Old English *Bede* an examination of the external evidence is not very useful in accounting for the linguistic forms we see. This chapter has tried to demonstrate a way of dealing with manuscripts which have complex dialectal and/or diachronic linguistic features, in the absence of any clear evidence of their geographical origin. Although we have evidence for B's presence in the library of Exeter Cathedral at some point before Leofric's death in 1072, the fact that the manuscript was written before this time, and probably at another monastic centre, means that we cannot attribute this scribe's linguistic forms or other scribal behaviour to Exeter or to Leofric's influence. In the absence of a proven Exeter – or any other geographical – origin, we should be wary of using any centre-specific knowledge of Anglo-Saxon scribal practices to shed light on the behaviour of B's main scribe. In the case of manuscript B, then, we must fall back on the internal evidence and on a comparison of these patterns with other manuscripts of the Old English *Bede* in order to account for what we see.

We have observed that B's scribe favours breaking rather than retraction, <a> before a nasal consonant, West-Saxon pronouns, weak class 2 verbs in <od>, and the dative case after *mid* and, in this sense, could be described as having a very definite idea of the language usage he thinks appropriate in this text.[12] On the basis of the evidence examined here, the performance of B's scribe shows the most consistency among the *Bede* scribes. As well as amending phonological and morphological features as we have discussed, he also rewords sections. This suggests that as he wrote, the scribe was amending his copy in several ways. His rigid approach to copying can be compared with that of O's scribe, who is far less consistent in the linguistic forms he chooses,[13] and so we might think of B's scribe as having an agenda. In contrast to the other scribes of the Old English *Bede*, he exhibits a more consistent orthographical and grammatical practice which follows usage patterns found in late West Saxon. It is this comparative consistency which sets him apart from the other *Bede* scribes; despite the varying degrees of West-Saxon usage evident in each of the other manuscripts, none of their scribes employs West-Saxon variants as consistently and over so many different types of variant. While it is not necessarily surprising that we can see the Mercian forms in these texts disappear over time, what is remarkable is that B's

scribe seems to have attempted to cleanse his text fairly thoroughly – not just phonologically, but also morphologically – of a wide range of non-West-Saxon features. This scribe has a fixed idea of what he thinks his writing should look like, orthographically, morphologically and grammatically.

So, finally, how can we account for B's behaviour? It seems reasonable to state that chronology alone is not wholly responsible for the changes we see; Ca is the latest of the four manuscripts in this study, and yet it displays a far more mixed set of characteristics than B does. Having said this, it is also evident that diachronic factors do account for some features of Ca, such as its more frequent use of <ed> endings in its past tenses of class 2 weak verbs. Clearly, geographical variation does play a part in the linguistic variations in Old English *Bede* manuscripts. The Mercian origins of the translation show through in places, even in a text like B, whose scribe has taken such pains to rid his text of features which do not conform to his idea of what his *Bede* should look like. However, having seen the interaction of these different linguistic forms across four manuscripts, we should be wary of attributing such differences solely to the written or spoken dialects of the scribes themselves. Perhaps we should be looking more towards matters of scribal training and practice as a way of explaining how these written features interact.

Scribal training is attractive as a possible explanation for B's rigidity of language. As we do not have any evidence for where the manuscript was copied, or for the identity or origin of the scribe, it is difficult to test this theory. However, a comparison of B's first and second scribes may be able to throw more light on this topic. The second scribe's usage does differ from that displayed by the first scribe, and further research including a comparison of the two will allow us to compare the responses of two scribes working simultaneously at the same monastic centre. This will allow us to build a more detailed picture of just how much similarity – or difference – we should expect to see in the work of two scribes working so closely together.

Notes

1 Miller (1890) provides a text and translation based on T, and the same manuscript is printed in facsimile in Bately (1992).

2 Manuscripts not used in this study are British Library MS. Cotton Otho B.xi, which is too fire-damaged to make a feasible comparison; British Library MS. Cotton Domitian ix f.11, which is a single leaf with three extracts from the Old English *Bede*, none of which come from Book 3 (the source of the corpus used in the present study); and British Library Additional MS. 43703, Laurence Nowell's 1562 copy of BL MS. Cotton Otho B.xi, which does not always provide an accurate record of the original scribe's spellings (Grant 1974).

3 Two scribes are discernible in B's *Bede* text: the first, whom we are concerned with here, is responsible for the text from the beginning to p. 190; scribe 2 writes the second half of the manuscript. A third hand is responsible for the marginalia, but this does not appear to be contemporary with hands 1 and 2 (Ker 1957, 45). For the marginalia see Bredehoft (2006).

4 References made specifically to the text of B are to the manuscript pages, as no recent edition of the B text exists; while T, O and Ca manuscripts are foliated, B is paginated.

5 The selected text corresponds to that part of Book 3 copied by B's first scribe (Ker 1957, 45), i.e. up to page 190, line 19 of the manuscript (p. 240 in Miller's edition). For consistency, the selection from each of the other manuscripts has been cut off at this same point.

6 In each case the tables show a selection of the most common items displaying the feature under consideration.

7 Although the <o> + nasal variant occurs in various texts and cannot, therefore, be pinned down with any certainty to a particular dialect, a more consistent use of <a> + nasal does appear to be a late-West-Saxon phenomenon. Hogg states that "in later texts there is a more clear-cut division between S[outhern] texts, where <a> predominates, and the Angl[ian] texts, where <o> predominates" (1992, §5.5). See also Campbell (1959, §130, fn 2) for the development of this sound and its dialectal/textual variation.

8 The count for *ond/and* varies substantially as instances where the scribe uses the Tironian nota, which could signify either spelling, have not been included.

9 Although it is outside the scope of this chapter, we might also question the extent to which dialect influences scribal behaviour in Ca; Ca's provenance is Worcester (Ker 1957, 37) and, at least in the choice of pronouns, dialect does not seem to be a player in that particular text in the way we might expect.

10 Although this table covers 78 different verbs, only nine verbs occur more than five times: *bodian*, *fulwian*, *gemyndgian*, *gesomnian*, *halgian*, *leornian*, *timbrian*, *wilnian* and *wunian*.

11 This includes instances of *mid* plus a weak noun, where it is impossible to distinguish case.

12 The use of a masculine pronoun here should not be taken as an assumption that the scribe is necessarily male. While evidence for female scribes does exist

(Fell 1984, 114), the gender of the scribes is not the focus in this particular chapter, and in any case it is probably not distinguishable in these texts.

13 Taken as a whole, the evidence from O suggests that its main scribe was not experienced, given the number of errors and interventions in his script. This may account for the comparative lack of consistency when he is compared with apparently more assured scribes like those of T and B.

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CHAPTER TWO

IMPERSONAL VERBS IN OLD AND MIDDLE ENGLISH: A TYPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

JIŘINA POPELÍKOVÁ

Introduction

In the context of Indo-European language systems, impersonal constructions represent a specific group of grammatical structures which form a part of an intricate linguistico-psychological phenomenon. Characterised by a set of peculiar syntactic and semantic features, these structures are perceived as unique in their ability to convey vital pieces of information connected to common occurrences in everyday life while expressing the speaker's emotional attitude towards the matter at hand (Goebel 1889, 113–120).

Dead relics of the past as far as Modern English is concerned, impersonal constructions may be observed to have fulfilled numerous purposes throughout the course of both the Old and the Middle English period, ranging from descriptions of objectively identifiable natural phenomena to complex inner thoughts and feelings of human beings. Among the various grammatical changes that have occurred in the English language during the long centuries of its historical development, the gradual marginalisation and eventual loss of these constructions is certainly not, therefore, among the least remarkable. In this chapter, the author tries to describe and analyse the role of impersonal constructions and the verbs occurring within them, along with examining various methods of compensation for their disappearance in the present-day language.

Preliminaries

Despite widespread agreement on some of the aspects of grammatical impersonality, attempts at a precise definition of this structural type are a matter of some discord in the linguistic community (Denison 1993, 61; Ogura 1986, 17). In general there seems to be a consensus that the word "impersonal" may be appropriately applied to any construction in which the verb form is that of a third-person-singular and which lacks a nominative noun phrase capable of controlling the verb concord. In other words, the subject, or, more specifically a logical subject, is not present. Consider, for example, "*swylc her ær beforan sæde*" (*Or* 1 8.40.23), "such as was said here before", "*gif on sæternesdæg geðunrað*" (*Prog* 1.2, Foerst, 7), "if it thunders on a Saturday", etc.[1] Any verb which may, but need not necessarily, appear in this type of construction is then also usually given the epithet of "impersonal" (Denison 1993, 62).

From a broader perspective, impersonal constructions also encompass those cases in which the animate participant, or "experiencer", is assigned the role not of the grammatical subject but of a dative or, less usually, accusative object. Some impersonal constructions may be generated with the purely formal subject *it* or *hit*, as in "*on lencten hit grewð & on hærvest hit wealwað*" (*Bo* 21 49.18), "in spring things grow and in autumn they fade". In this function *(h)it*, usually called "empty" or "dummy", does not exhibit any of the nominative participant semantics, nor is its function fully pronominal; it cannot be identified as clearly anaphoric or cataphoric (Traugott 1972, 216). The uniqueness of these constructions lies in the fact that the verbs which may use them do not demonstrate an obligatory need for a direct argument (Fischer 1992, 236–238).

Upon closer inspection of the impersonal verbs, it is possible to trace not only a common grammatical basis but also a number of shared semantic characteristics. In particular, it is the presence of an "immanent domain", inside of which the experiencer of the action "suffers or undergoes some physiological or psychological change" (Sabatini 1979, 151). Fischer and Van der Leek (1983, 346) speak of it as of a "physical or mental/cognitive experience" involving a particular "goal" towards which a given action tends. In this respect, Sabatini (1979, 152–153) likens the function of the impersonals to that of the Old Greek medio-passive and Latin deponents, a similarity further substantiated by the fact that many of the impersonal verbs frequently appear in glosses of classical texts (Ogura 1990, 43–44).

In comparison with later developmental stages, Old English, as a highly inflectional language, presented the most felicitous environment for

these types of verbs. Due to its syntactic nature, the language of this period posed neither grammatical requirements for a strict linear arrangement of clausal elements within a sentence nor a structural obligation for the grammatical subject to be present in fully-formed clauses.[2] The situation began to change due to the gradual loss of formal distinctions between different declinational word forms, which led to the grammaticalisation of word order (Traugott 1992, 233–234). The impersonal constructions thus began to lose some of their pivotal morpho-syntactic anchors, their survival in the language resting on their not easily dismissible functions as well as being additionally supported by an influx of lexical borrowings from French and Norse, many verbs from among which were of an impersonal or reflexive nature (Traugott 1992, 237; Mustanoja 1960, 434).

From approximately the fourteenth century the growing syntactic pressure connected with the changing role of word order resulted in the slow demise of these syntactic structures, with Early Modern English retaining only a small number of fixed expressions which remained in common use due to their high frequency, such as *methinks* or *meseems* (Ogura 1990, 43; Traugott 1972, 130–131). The loss of impersonal constructions is usually interpreted as a result of reanalysis, i.e. a shift in grammatical interpretation of particular clausal elements, in which originally non-nominative noun phrases began to be regarded as both notional and grammatical subjects. Some researchers nevertheless maintain that, rather than as a reinterpretation, the phenomenon should be viewed as the demise of just one possible surface structure available for a given verb. In this theoretical approach, impersonal verbs might have appeared in one of three basic types of permissible syntactic construction; preserved in Modern English, however, are only those that complied with the newly established syntactic rules, i.e. that subscribed the role of the subject to an animate experiencer or to a cause/stimulus that governed the given action.[3]

Methodology

The aim of the research behind the present chapter was to attempt to compile a list of the most frequent Old and Middle English impersonal verbs, which would include their basic meanings as well as the nature of the constructions they were attested to appear in and to trace the major developmental tendencies in their usage. The results are based on the analysis of data retrieved from two basic sources. The *Dictionary* of the "Middle English Compendium"[4] was used both as a primary reference for the Middle English period and as a supplement to the data obtained

through the search of the electronic version of Bosworth and Toller's *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*[5] (available through the "Germanic Lexicon Project"), which served as a key source for the older stages of the language. The dictionaries were each searched for verb entries containing examples of clauses displaying general impersonal features as described above. The extracted verbs were then analysed for their form, meaning and, in the case of Middle English, etymological origin. In order that a relatively simple, yet systematically satisfying typological description of the impersonals might be achieved, two basic criteria were taken into account: the relationship between the personal and impersonal forms of a verb in regard to their usage, and the grammatical nature of the attested syntactic structures.

In the former case, the primary emphasis was placed on the questions of whether or not the verb shows the capacity for occurring both personally as well as impersonally and whether this possibility affects its semantic field in any considerable way. In the latter, the basic concern was with what types of impersonal construction seem to be available for the verb; in other words, whether the verb tends to occur in isolation or in combination with some other words capable of filling noun-phrase roles: the semantically empty formal subject, an indirect argument in the form of an oblique experiencer, or both of those. Where the possibility of more than one combination was found to exist, these combinations were once again further tested for potential influence over the verb's semantics.[6] The aim of this approach was to produce a sufficient amount of data that would enable a conjoint description of the impersonal verbs on both the semantic and the grammatical level while at the same time allowing for a panoramic comparison of the general characteristics of these verbs from the chronological point of view.

Grammatical Features

The initial dictionary search gave 165 verbs for the Middle and 112 for the Old English period. For analysis of the grammatical features, the verbs were divided into different subgroups according to what kind of argument they were perceived to take. In approximately 15% of cases the noun-phrase role was found not to display any kind of obligation to be filled at all; the constructions in such cases consist merely of the impersonal verb in the third-person-singular form. Very often these include predicates connected with weather conditions and natural phenomena or some kind of non-material transmission of customs, news and regulations, such as "*sciēnþ"* (*Past*. 14, 6), "the sun is shining", "*þénaþ*" (*Hpt*. *Gl*. 451, 57), "it

is being administered", "*swutelað on þisum gewrite*" (*C.D*. IV 86, 7), "it is manifested in this piece of writing", etc. Other verbs of similar use include e.g. *swerian*, "to swear an oath", *spyrian*, "to inquire", or *trucian*, "to end". In the majority of cases, however, the noun-phrase role is taken either by a non-nominative experiencer or by a subject-like substitute. This function appears to be reserved predominantly for *(h)it*, especially during the later Middle English period, although instances were also found of sentences featuring a non-adverbial *there* in constructions almost identical to Present-Day English existential *there*-clauses, cf. e.g. "*þer failede of ten dawes*" (*Glo. Chron. A*, Clg A.11, 6669), "there were ten days left".

Several verbs were perceived to be capable of filling their noun roles in different ways according to the context. Without being fixed to a particular argument, they were found to occur in two, sometimes even up to four, variations. This ability to switch between different kinds of noun-phrase fillers appears to be, at least in some cases, motivated partially by the necessity to differentiate between two more or less distinct nuances of meaning. An example might be seen in the Modern English translational variants of the verb *shāpen*, which encompasses both the meanings of "to happen" in combination with simple *(h)it* and "to be destined" when accompanied by an experiencer; cf. "*hit schop so*" (*Ld.Troy*, LdMisc 595, 18599), "so it happened", and "*now is me shape eternally to dwelle / noght in purgatorie but in helle*" (Chaucer, *CT. Kn.*, Manly-Rickert, A.1225), "now I am forced eternally to dwell / not in purgatory, but in hell". Such occurrences, nevertheless, prove to be relatively scarce, for they comprise less than 10% of all the entries. Moreover, with the exception of merely one Old English verb represented by *weorþan*, "to become", these instances are restricted almost exclusively to the Middle English period.

Also characteristic of the Middle English era is an extremely rapid increase in the frequency of *(h)it* in the argument function,[7] including a considerable spread of constructions which feature both *(h)it* and the experiencer in combination. These include examples such as "*it schuld hem iuel atsit*" (*Arth. & M.,* Auch, 1796), "they should suffer misfortune", or rather "it should go badly for them". The two-argument co-occurrence is peculiar in that it supplies the verb with yet another noun-phrase role, which, however, is equally incapable of qualifying as a fully-fledged subject. As the above-cited example shows, Modern English may even prove capable of supplying two different translational variants in such cases, depending on to which of the noun phrases it chooses to assign the subject role. Thus, instead of subsuming these cases under the category of constructions which take either the experiencer or *(h)it* as their argument, it would rather seem appropriate to treat them as instances of clauses in

which the subject role has been split into the grammatically formal part represented by *(h)it* and the contextually significant experiencer in the form of a pronoun or noun phrase.

Nevertheless, the mere presence of this separative tendency seems to suggest that, besides treating the impersonal verbs as being capable of merely taking one or, occasionally, two indirect arguments, the constructions they appear in might be described as being built upon three basic pillars: the verb itself; the semantically empty, purely formal subject substitute, i.e. *(h)it* or *there*; and the notionally significant experiencer. A graphical representation of this model may be seen in Table 2-1:[8]

semantically empty subject substitute (optional)	**impersonal verb** (obligatory)	**experiencer** (optional)
(h)it	3 sg.	noun / pronoun
there		

Table 2-1: Basic structure of impersonal constructions

For the majority of impersonal verbs it was assumed that they may freely occur both in active as well as in passive voice, except for those instances where the semantics of the verb would not allow it. Certain verbs, however, such as *iseien*, "to say", *messen*, "to celebrate mass", *seilen,* "to sail" or *swēren*, "to swear" were found to exhibit impersonal features only if in the passive, being otherwise incapable of participating in an impersonal construction. In other cases, e.g. in the verbs *suppōsen*, "to suppose" or *tellen*, "to tell", the passive constructions appeared to have been capable of taking a different type of argument than were their active counterparts: cf. the obligatory *(h)it* with the active form of *telleth* in "*(h)it tellith aftir*" (Malory, *Wks.*, Win-C, 82/21), "it is then later told", with the passive construction of "*als tald es are*", (*Cursor*, Vsp A.3, 22356), "as it is foretold". These types of verbs are, once again, especially common in Middle English.

Semantic Features

Concerning the semantic nature of impersonal verbs, a relatively large variety appears to exist. As a group, the impersonals prove capable of covering a considerably broad scope of activities and states, some of which are only loosely connected to the others. The overall panoramic picture which presents itself in the retrieved data therefore appears to