SOME SYNTACTIC INNOVATIONS
IN THE FINAL PART OF
THE PETERBOROUGH CHRONICLE

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I

About seventy miles of a bee-line from London takes us to the city of Peterborough, Northamptonshire. Historical evidence goes to show that the old monastery called Medeshamstede " Mede's homestead ", gave rise to its namesake for place only to be destroyed by the Danes, and that the new one became known as Burg " the town or borough ", later Peterborough from the dedication of the abbey.[1]

Setting aside whatever toponymic interest arising from it, here a matter of primary concern is the chronicle compiled in that monastery, hence the name of the 'Peterborough Chronicle'. The text of the annals which form part of the noted *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is now preserved as MS Laud 636 in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. The graphoanalysis of the manuscript shows that it is reducible to a threefold division, that is 1070–1121, 1122–1131 and 1132–1154. Undoubtedly historical value lies in the established fact that actual events were recorded often in the form of first-hand information by

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(1) See Eilert Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place Names* (4th ed.) (Oxford, 1966)

various scribes at the monastery during the twelfth century, and especially in terms of the history of English, it is of paramount significance that the last division (or the so-called final continuation) best illustrates the state of the language intermediate between Old and Middle English. The MS is all the more important because after the Norman Conquest it had long remained a rare specimen of the dialect that afforded a good foundation on which was to be built the standard Middle English : the language of our received text was the East Midland dialect, or the later development of Old Mercian. Granting that it is naturally impossible to find breaks in a continuous stream of speech development, yet the differentiation comes out so noticeable that the language of the first half of the annals cannot but be taken as Late OE and that of the latter half as Early ME. This unique fact bears eloquent witness to the inevitable outcome of the Norman Conquest that a wild fluctuation forced its way not merely into the national state of affairs but even into the language with which to commit it to recording. But what appears to be unsteady for some time will be often an indication of forthcoming activity. In the ultimate analysis it is to this cataclysm that the English language owes what it is today, specifically its transformation from synthetic to analytic type with the loss of inflection. Indeed our object of research is something new that was brewing in the midst of such a transitional state of the language. In the following this " something new " is to be brought into syntactic light.

II

Linguistic change in general may be gradual but, once started, it tends to be accelerated with hardly anything to hinder its course.

This is well illustrated by the one that was made in such a comparatively short space of time as from the Conquest (started in 1077) to Chaucer (born in 1340 ca.). Now, the most perceptible of all that is subjected to change in the sphere of syntax is the word-order. Since this is to some degree the reflection of human thinking process, a change, if any, means a great deal. Here it is desirable that as many instances as possible should be given so that they can reproduce diachronically the trace along which one has proceeded from another. In what follows our attention is focused on the shifting of the manner in which words are arranged to build up sentences of various patterns. It will be convenient to survey the shift from old to new types of word-order as passing through three stages, namely a) traditional or conventional, b) transitional, and c) innovative.[2]

a) As for this stage, reference has to be made to some of those manifest cases where the word-order is automatically fixed by the time-honored convention. Among these are :

i) Adverbials at the beginning of independent sentences make the inversion of V+S : certainly the most popular rule handed down since the Proto-Germanic period.[3]

> ðis gear com Henri king to þis land (= this year King Henry came to this land) —1132 / on al þis yuele time heold Martin abbot his abbotrice xx wintre (=in all these evil times, abbot Martin held his abbacy for twenty years) —1137 / þer was

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(2) The dated quotations shown below are on the authority of Cecily Clark's edition: *The Peterborough Chronicle 1070–1154* (Oxford, 1958)

(3) Cf. Hermann Hirt, *Handbuch des Urgermanischen*, Teil III (Heidelberg, 1934) S. 221

inne micel hungær (=there was great hunger or famine inside
of the city) —1140.

It should be noted that this last example, though not quoted in
NED, may represent the earliest use of the so-called "preparatory
there". This rule was the last to give way in spite of many histo-
rical vicissitudes of the language.

ii) Pronouns as direct objects frequently precede the transitive
verbs. This rule, however, was unstable already in the language
of the *Chronicle* before the predominant tendency of V+O order.

Crist *it* ne uuolde (=Christ did not wish it) —1132 / þe bis-
copes and lered men *heom* cursede æure, oc was heom naht
þarof (=the bishops and learned men cursed them forever, but
that was nothing, i. e. no use, to them) —1137.

When two different objects, direct and indirect, stand side by
side, the latter normally precedes the former.

Hi hadden *him* manred maked and athes suoren (=they had
done him homage and sworn oaths) —1137 / he uuolde iiuen
heom up Wincestre (=he wanted to give up Winchester to
them) —1140.

iii) Prepositions, as etymologically implied in the name, nor-
mally precede the item they govern, but become postpositive mainly
with pronouns. In the Final Continuation prepositions of this kind
appear only once.

Him com *togænes* Willelm eorl of Albamar (= against him
came W. the earl of Aumale, i. e. he was met by W.) —1138.

For the increased use of prepositions in proximity to the modern
value, see the section concerned.

iv) In subordinate clauses the normal word-order is S+O+V

or S+C+V, long maintained ever since the Old Germanic period. It may be here added that in the final part of our chronicle what is termed a correlative in OE grammar such as *swa . . . swa, þa . . . þa* and so forth has largely disappeared.

> [þe biscop] . . . suor hem athas ðat *he* neure ma mid te king his brother *wolde haldan* (=the bishop swore them oaths that he would never more side with the king, his brother) — 1140/the suikes undergæton ðat *he* milde man *was* and softe and god (=the traitors understood that he was a generous, gentle and good man) —1137.

b) For this section, mention has only to be made of the fluctuant state in which pronominal objects are not always subject to the old rule as stated above.

> te munekes *him* namen and bebyried *him* heglice in the minstre (=the monks took him, i. e. his body and buried him highly in the monastery church) —1137 / þe king *him* sithen nam in Hamtun . . . and dide *him* in prisun (=the king subsequently arrested him in Northampton and put him in prison) —1140.

c) This final stage sees the greater part of the traditional rules abolished and normalized in the modern sense. It is not a little surprising to find that not merely the approximation to, but even the exact counterpart of, modernism are to be met with in the documentary record written as early as the twelfth century.

i) The traditional rule of adverbials at the beginning of a sentence is here disregarded, hence the word-order Adv.+S+V as in the modern affirmative sentence.

> *þa, pohuuethere,* þat, here sandes feorden betwyx heom

(=then, notwithstanding, their ambassadors went between them) —1137/ *warese he com* he dide mare yuel þanne god (=wherever he went he did more evil than good) —1140.

ii) The old routine in which an object, if pronominal, comes before the transitive verb is also broken, hence the order V + (Pr) O.

þe eorl heold Lincol agænes þe king and *benam him* al ðat he ahte to hauen (=the earl held Lincoln against the king, and deprived him of all that he ought to have) —1140 / æfre þe mare he *iaf heom* þe wærse hi wæron him (=the more he gave them, the worse they became to him) —1140.

Note that in the former example the sequence of the two objects, indirect (pronominal) and direct, is by no means casual because it is evidently so formed on the analogy of the order S + V + O in the first half of the whole sentence, and that in the latter even with the familiar correlative phraseology the word-order itself is already fixed in the modern frame.

iii) In subordinate clauses the general tendency of S + V[+O] arrangement also gets the upper hand.

[and he] uureide þe muneces of Burch to þe king forþi ðat *he uuolde underþeden* ðat mynstre to Clunie ... (=and he accused the monks of Peterborough to the king in order he would make the monastery subject to Cluny) —1132.

The use of *uuolde* in this case may be possibly equivalent to that of the old subjunctive form though already reduced to nullity with the loss of inflectional endings, hence with no volitional sense of its own.

Gif twa men oþer iii comon ridend to an tun, al þe tunscipe flugæn for heom, wenden ðat *hi wæron rœueres* (=if two

or three men came riding towards a village, all the villagers fled before them, thinking that they were robbers) —1137 / Sume ieden on almes *þe waren* sum wile rice men (=some lived on alms who had been great men) —1137.

iv) As well known, the compensation for the loss of case endings was eventually made by the fixation of the word-order and here are good examples to show it in the making. It is worthy of notice that in the following the word relation in sentence is denoted exclusively by means of word-order when the use of preposition might be naturally expected. Interesting to remark moreover, that measure would have been possible from the context especially if the objects of different kinds, accusative and dative, were set apart from each other by the S+V junction.

Pais he makede *men and dœr* (=he made peace for men and beast) —1135 / . . . *alle þe þines* ðat hi diden *wrecce men* on þis land (=all the tortures that they did for the wretched men. . .) —1137.

Finally we may add two historical antecedents for the modern word-order with the only exception of morphological differences.

gif he leng moste liuen, alse he mint to don of þe horderwycan (=if he could live longer, also he intended to do for the office of chamberlain) —1137 / He makede manie munekes, and plantede winiærd, and maked mani weorkes and wende þe tun betere þan it ær was (=he admitted many monks and planted vineyards, and made many buildings and changed the town better than it was before) —1137.

Allusion has been made to the increasing employment of prepositions to make up for the levelling of case endings that was urged forward after the Norman Conquest. This section deals with every possible instance of their use at least recorded in a given limit of the chronicle. Although actual statistics have not been collected yet, we are left with an unmistakable impression that each page is full of their free workings. Only those which appear of syntactic interest or analogous to the modern usage would suffice for illustration.

> þa namen hi þa men þe hi wenden ðat ani god hefden, bathe
> *be nihtes* and *be dæies* ... (=they seized those men whom they
> thought to have any wealth, by night and by day) —1137.

Probably this may be the earliest example in which the preposition at last comes to encroach upon one of the original functions of the genitive case, namely the so-called abverbial use. So *NED* points out : " OE used in this sense the adverbial genitive *dæges and nihtes,* or *on* with dative *on dæg(e) and on niht(e)*; the early ME examples show a mixture of these and the modern form with *by* " (s. v. *by*, III, 19, b)

> Me henged up *bi* the fet and smoked heom mid ful smoke.
> Me henged *bi* þe þumbes other bi the hefed and hengen bry-
> niges on her fet (=they hung them up by the feet and smoked
> them with foul smoke. They strung them up by the thumbs
> or by the head and hung coats of mail on their feet) —1137 /
> ... þestrede þe sunne and te dæi abuten nontid dæies, þa men
> eten, ðat me lihtede candles to æten *bi* (=the sun and the light
> of day became dark about noon when they were eating, so that

they lit candles to eat by)—1140 (N. B. used postpositionally just in the modern fashion) ∥ He for to Rome, and þar wæs wæl underfangen *fram* þe Pape Eugenie (=he went to Rome and was well received there by Pope E.)—1137 ∥ In mani *of* þe castles wæron lof and grin (=in many of the castles were instruments of torture)—1137 (Such a partitive use of *of* may be probably on the French model like *beaucoup de chateaux* and others) ∥ [he is] wæl luued *of* þe king and *of* alle gode men (=he is well loved by the king and by all good men)—1154.

As for the use of *of* when introducing the agent after a passive verb, "the regular word for this is now *By*, which began to come in c. 1400; but *of* prevailed till c. 1600, and is still in literary use, as a biblical, poetic, or stylistic archaism, or by association with other constructions ... The use of *of* is most frequent after past participles expressing a continued non-physical action (as in *admired, loved, hated, ordained of* ...), or a condition resulting from a definite action (as in *abandoned, deserted, forgotten, forsaken of* ...)" (*NED*, s. v. *of*, V, 15).

> *on* þis gære for se king Henri ouer sæ æt te Lammasse (=in this year king Henry went oversea at Lammas)—1135.

In this connection we find as many instances without the preposition *on*. They appear to be the shortened form, but in fact they are remnants of the accusative employed to denote time relation. For example:

> ðis *gære* for þe king Stephne ofer sæ to Normandi (=this year K. S. went oversea to Normandy)—1137.

> he reuede þe landes and læide micele geldes *on* (=he robbed

the lands and laid heavy taxes on them) —1140

As in this example, the omission of the object to be governed by the preposition *on* (whence adverbial), though common in the modern locution, was one of the syntactic novelties in the early period.

> þe biscop of Wincestre ... spac *wid* Rodbert eorl and *wyd* þemperice and suor heom athas ðat he neure ma *mid* te king his brother wolde haldan and cursede alle þe men þe *mid* him heoldon (=the bishop of Winchester spoke with earl Robert and with the empress, and swore them oaths that he never more hold (or side) with the king and cursed all the men who sided with him) —1140.

In the above, note the use of prepositions *mid* and *with* at the same time for almost the same denotation. " The word [*mid*] became obsolete before the end of the 14th c., and supplanted by *with.* It had approximately all the modern senses of *with*, except that of opposition (as in *fight with*), which was the prominent sense of *wið* in OE. In OE *mid* and *with* were sometimes opposed (*OE Chron.,* 837 : Æþelhelm ealdorman gefeaht *wið* þa Deniscan on Port *mid* Dorsætum = ' A. fought against the Danes at Portland with the men of Dorset ') ... our ' with the stream ' was in OE *mid stréame,* while *wið stréame* meant ' against the stream ' (*NED,* s. v. *mid*)". Two more examples of *wid* from our chronicle in its semantic contrast :

> [hi] fuhten *mid* heom (=they fought against them) —1138 ‖
> [hi] sæhtleden *wyd* þemperice (=they were reconciled with the empress) —1140.

IV

The overwhelming tendency for the earlier English to get to an

analytical stage involves in its course the origination of a number of collocations largely characterized by prepositions and, to a lesser degree, by adverbs. Obviously this section has much to do with what has been just observed in the above. Some of the following ' phrases ', so called if possible, are still in use, and others out of use except in certain dialects.

> Hi læiden gældes on the tunes *œure um wile* (=they laid taxes on the towns again and again) —1137

This phrase is to some extent the modification by the Old Norse influence of the original *œfre embe stunde* as seen in *The Battle of Maldon* ; see the following section for function words from ON.

> þa wiste þe king ðat he *feorde mid* suicdom (=then the king knew that he was acting treacherously) —1132

This is evidently on the model of ON *fara með* as in *fara með rán* ' to deal in robbery ' and the like.

> And fylden þe land *ful of* castles (=and they filled the land full of castles) —1137

Here the preposition *of* replaces the old genitive. Also note such a redundant locution as in this sentence.

> þa þe castles uuaren maked, þa *fylden* hi *mid* deoules and yuele men (=when the castles were made, then they filled them with devils and wicked men) —1135 // te king...dide him *gyuen up* ðat abbotrice (=the king ... made him give up the abbacy) —1132 / [he] dide alle in prisun til hi *iafen up* here castles (=he put all in prison till they gave up their castles) — 1137 // he helde him for fader and he him for sune (=he regarded him, i. e. the king, as father, and he, i. e. the king, him as son) —1140 (*holden ... for* ' to think ', consider ... as, for,' treated

as obsolete in *NED*, s. v. *hold*, II, d) ‖ sume *helden mid* te king, and sume *mid* þemperice (=some held with the king and others with the empress) —1140 (*holden with* ‘ to maintain allegiance to, to side with, be of the party of ’ etc., and modern colloq. ‘ to agree with or approve of ’ : see *NED, hold,* 21, arch.) ‖ Me *let* hire *dun* on niht of þe tur mid rapes (=men let her down from the tower by ropes at night) —1140 (the earliest example of *let down* quoted in *NED*) ‖ ... that me sculde *leten ut* þe king of prisun (= ... that men should let the king out of prison) —1140 (also the oldest example of *let out of* given by *NED*) ‖ Eustace ... *nam* þe kinges suster of France *to wife* (=E. took the sister of the king of France to wife) —1140 / scæ com to þe iunge eorl Henri, and he *toc* hire *to wiue* (=she came to the young Henry, and he took her to wife) —1140

Linguistic instability is also to be seen here in the fact that the OE verb *nimen* and the borrowed form *taken* from ON are interchangeable still in the twelfth century, although the former was afterwards replaced by the latter ; both being the earliest examples of the phrase not shown in *NED*.

te king was welneh bepaht and *sende efter* þe munekes (=the king was well-nigh deceived and sent for the monks) —1132 ‖ wrecce men *sturuen of* hungær (=wretched men died of hunger) —1137 ‖ te eorl of Angæu wærd ded, and his sune Henri *toc to* þe rice (=the count of Anjou was dead and his son Henry succeeded to the country) —1140 (*taken to* ‘ to undertake, take in hand, take in charge of ’, obsolete except in dialect. *NED, take,* 74, a) ‖ Dauid king of Scotland *toc to*

uuerien him (=David, king of Scotland, began to make war upon him) —1135

This phrase was most probably adapted from ON *taka at+* infinitive ' to begin to ...', as in *nú taka öll húsin at loga* ' now the whole house began to blaze ', *þú tók at lœgja veðrit* ' then the wind began to fall ' etc.

sume flugen *ut of* lande (=some fled out of the country) —1137

" In OE as in OS and the Scandinavian languages *ut of* (OS, ON *ut af*, Sw. *ut af*) became the regular equivalent of Lat. *ex*, Gr. *ek* (while German and Dutch used the adv. itself as a preposition). *Out of* has thus acquired a unity of sense and also of pronunciation, which entitle it to separate treatment " (*NED*, s. v. *out*)

V

Our final section deals with some native innovations or ON loans in the function words at the time when the last part of the chronicle was in compilation. In the following we shall find some rare exceptions to the linguistic truism that grammatical words in general are least subject to foreign influence.

þa namen hi þa men þe hi wenden ðat ani god hefden, *bathe* be nihtes *and* be dæies (=they seized those men whom they thought to have any wealth, by night and by day) —1137 (the first example known of this phrase borrowed from ON and which replaced OE *œgðer ge ... ge*) / [þe king] ... ther wes underfangen, *forþi ðat* hi uuenden ðat he sculde be alsuic alse the eom wes, and *for* he hadde get his tresor (=the king was welcomed there because they thought that he would be all such as his uncle was, and because he had yet his royal

treasure) —1137

This passage is of historical interest in that the full (or old) and the shortened (or new) forms of the conjunction which is now quite common are shown side by side.

he besæt heom *til* hi aiauen up here castles (=he besieged them until they gave up their castles) —1140

This familiar conjunction was the abbreviation of *til þat* directly formed on the ON model *til þess*.

warese he com he dide mare yuel þanne god (=wheresoever he went, he did more evil than good) —1140

This compound relative was the shortened form for OE *swá hwær swá* but perhaps partly influenced by ON *hvars* (<*hvar* 'where'+*es* relative particle).

war sæ me tilede þe erthe ne bar nan corn (=wherever the earth was cultivated it bore no corn) —1137 (a variation of the above) ∥ Nu we willen sægen sum del *wat* belamp on Stephnes kinges time (=now we wish to say something of what happened in King Stephen's time) —1137

The use of *wat* 'what' as compound relative in this example is certainly earlier than the one given by *NED* which is dated c. 1200.

[hi]... makede ðat sahte ðat te king sculde ben lauerd and king *wile* he liued (=they made the reconciliation that King should be lord and King while he lived) (the abbreviated form of *þe while þat*<OE *þa hwile þe* 'during the time that...')

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