

# Genitive Variation in Middle English *Paris and Vienne*<sup>\*1)</sup>

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## 1. Introduction

The shift from the inflectional genitive (henceforth *s*-genitive, e.g., *God's love*) to the periphrastic construction with a postnominal *of*-phrase (hereafter *of*-genitive, e.g., *love of God*)<sup>2)</sup> is a typical case of the “synthetic to analytic” transition in the history of English. Mustanoja's (1960: 74-76) fairly detailed diachronic description, which is in some measure based on even earlier studies such as Stahl (1925) and Thomas (1931), shows that the shift was a relatively slow process. He says: “We find that down to the 13th century the use of the periphrastic genitive [i.e., *of*-genitive] makes slow progress, but increases rapidly in the course of the 13th and 14th centuries” (p. 76).

Interestingly enough, the history of the variation between the *s*-genitive and the *of*-genitive is not a simple linear one but shows “rise and fall”. The rise of the *of*-genitive is clearly a marked phenomenon in the course of the Late Middle English period, but the statistics given by Rosenbach, Stein and Vezzosi (2000: 185) demonstrate that the *s*-genitive rather than the *of*-genitive rises again around 1600.<sup>3)</sup> Also, a recent rise of the *s*-genitive in contemporary English, particularly with inanimate nouns, is a well-documented phenomenon (e.g., Hundt 1997: 137-141; Mair 2006; Hinrichs and Szmrecsanyi 2007). Obviously, this trend in today's English contradicts the destined shift of English from a synthetic language to an analytic one.

The hitherto account reveals that the path of the development of English genitive constructions is not a simple and straightforward one. Even the direction moves back and forth in the history of English. The present study focuses on the first key-period in terms of the development of English genitive constructions, namely the late fifteenth century. The period is crucial, in that it is immediately after the first notable expansion of the *of*-genitive in Middle English and before the recurrent rise of *s*-genitives around 1600. Some major monographs on English genitive constructions, synchronic and/or diachronic, have been published to date, e.g., Altenberg (1982), Rosenbach (2002) and Allen (2008), all contributing to the overall description of the development of English genitive constructions from Old English to the present day, while at the same time recent corpus-based studies tend to demonstrate that

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2) Despite the inaccuracy in the use of “genitive”, we shall use this oft-used term for convenience. Quirk et al. (1985: 321) also state that the *of*-construction is “sometimes called the ‘*of*-genitive’”.

3) This is reconfirmed in Rosenbach (2002: 184-189).

the choice between the two types of the genitive fluctuates to a noticeable degree depending on the text type, suggesting that detailed analysis of different texts is still necessary. Juvonen (2010), for example, explores Late Middle to Early Modern English materials selected from the *Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Middle English* (second edition), the *Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Early Modern English* and the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence*,<sup>4)</sup> showing that differences due to genres of texts tend to be larger than chronological differences. He concludes: “In letters and history writing it is the prototypicality of the genitive relation that is the determining factor. Particularly in letters, the *s*-genitive is the natural, unmarked variant. In sermons, on the other hand, the *of*-genitive is more common. Overall, this study shows that while genre has a significant impact on genitive variation, there appears to be no patterned change over time within the period 1420 to 1640” (p. 210).

In what follows, we will investigate the Middle English text *Paris and Vienne* (1485, 1492), translated from French by William Caxton in the fifteenth century. Stahl (1925) has already examined seven texts published by Caxton together with some additional Middle English texts, demonstrating that the influence of French on the choice of the *of*-genitive is particularly noticeable in prose (pp. 18-19).<sup>5)</sup> Our task is to observe if this can be confirmed in *Paris and Vienne*, another Middle English prose text, where French influence is probable. Drawing on the findings in recent previous studies both on the genitive variation in general and on the textual tradition of *Paris and Vienne* in English and French, we intend to examine additional details on the choice of the *s*-genitive and *of*-genitive in the text, and thereby make a modest contribution to this area.

The discussion hereafter is structured as follows: Section 2 describes briefly the texts investigated in this research; Section 3 gives a short and only essential survey of some previous studies together with our methodological notes; Section 4 reports on the results of our survey and analyses of them and Section 5 concludes the discussion.

## 2. William Caxton's *Paris and Vienne*

As mentioned in the introduction, we shall investigate a single text translated in the fifteenth century from French, i.e., Caxton's *Paris and Vienne* (hereafter *Paris*). As this study derives from our larger project to explore the textual transmission of Caxton's publications, the main focus of the discussion below is on Gheraerd Leeu's edition of Caxton's *Paris* (1492), though Caxton's own publication of the same text (1485) will also be referred to wherever necessary.<sup>6)</sup> Leeu's English *Paris* is available in *Early English Books Online* (hereafter *EEBO*) both in the image and text formats, but we shall use our own transcription of the same text, which has been checked against the original,<sup>7)</sup> correcting errors in the *EEBO* transcription. We have made a preliminary comparative analysis between Leeu's *Paris* and Caxton's print and are convinced that the former is heavily dependent on the latter. The two are very similar, though textual differences are available here and there. This confirms the generally ac-

4) For details of these corpora, see <<https://varieng.helsinki.fi/CoRD/corpora/index.html>>.

5) Stahl's (1925: 18-19) research is intriguing not only because it shows an exceptionally frequent use of the *of*-genitive in French-related texts but also because it notes a much less common use of the *of*-genitive in *Reynard the Fox*, which Caxton translated from Dutch. The other six Caxtonian texts Stahl examined are: *The Curial*, *Four Sonnes of Aymon*, *Blanchardyn and Eglantine*, *Eneydos*, *Dialogues in French and English* and *Le Morte Darthur*.

6) British Library (C.10.b.10 = IB.55092) [ISTC: ip00113500]. <<https://data.cerl.org/istc/ip00113500>>

7) Trinity College Library Dublin (OLS 178.o. 16 no.2) [ISTC: ip00113600].

cepted view that Leeu's English text is in essence a reproduction of Caxton's print (cf. de Bruijn 2019: 103-105).

In addition to the two English versions, three French versions will be referred to when necessary. Guillaume Le Roy's ca1480 print (in Lyon)<sup>8)</sup> is supposed to be the French original of Caxton's translation (Hellings 2010: 74), while the text of Mathias Huss (Lyon, 1485-1486)<sup>9)</sup> is very similar to Leeu's French version printed (in Antwerp) in 1487.<sup>10)</sup> Cross examination of not only English but also French editions will cast some light on the complicated transmission of this popular text. Also consulted is Babbi's edition (1992) of a French manuscript, which Leach (1951: xxii-xxvi) discusses as closely related to, but not as close as to be the direct source of, Caxton's, and therefore of Leeu's English texts. We also double-checked the digitised image of the manuscript.<sup>11)</sup>

### 3. Some previous studies and methodological preliminaries

It is traditional in research into the genitive variation to explore possible factors affecting the choice of the *s*- and *of*-genitives. Despite the chronological fluctuation of the ratios of the two types, dominant factors affecting their choice seem to be fairly consistent throughout the history of English. Animacy of the possessor is by far the most salient among the possible factors that instigate the use of *s*-genitives. Concerning contemporary English, Quirk et al. (1985: 322-323) refer to this factor under the term "gender scale", according to which "'personal' nouns (particularly those referring to human beings and higher animals) and collective nouns with personal gender characteristics" (p. 323) tend to opt for the *s*-genitive. They also mention as a second factor that the "end-focus" and "end-weight" principles are operational in the choice of genitive constructions. Similarly, Rosenbach (2001) makes a detailed survey of genitive variation, consulting 56 British native speakers as informants and focusing on animacy, topicality and possessive relationship. She then reaches the conclusion: "Comparing the three conceptual factors animacy, topicality, and possessive relationship, there seems to be a rather stable ordering of their relative importance for the choice of the *s*-genitive, namely animacy > topicality > possessive relationship" (p. 286).

Historical data also reveal parallel features in genitive variation. Rosenbach, Stein and Vezzosi (2000) scrutinise the period from 1400 to 1630 and show that animacy of the possessor is the most salient factor that encourages the use of *s*-genitives, when they discuss the resurgence of *s*-genitives in the Early Modern English period.<sup>12)</sup> Altenberg's (1982: 117-150) research into seventeenth-century English also demonstrates that the *s*-genitive is the most frequent with human individuals, followed by animals, human collective nouns, inanimate abstract nouns and inanimate concrete nouns in this order, noting the significance of animacy in the choice of genitive constructions.

Obviously, there are differences between historical and present-day datasets. It is a matter of course that the rates of *s*-genitives and *of*-genitives differ in different historical periods. Qualitative differences are also available, as Rosenbach (2001) comments: "while in Early Modern English the *s*-

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8) Microfilm (an imprint of Cengage Learning), 2002 & 2004. *Incunabula: the Printing Revolution in Europe 1455-1500*. [ip00112500]. In the following, French examples will be cited from this version, unless otherwise stated.

9) The Morgan Library and Museum (PML 75837) [ISTC: ip00112600].

10) Bibliothèque nationale de France (RES-Y2-159) [ISTC: ip00112800].

11) Bibliothèque nationale de France (ms. fr. 20044).

12) See also Rosenbach (2008), who puts a special focus on the relationship between the animacy and genitive constructions.

genitive was almost impossible with inanimate possessors, in Modern English the domain of the *s*-genitive has clearly extended to the [-animate] domain” (p. 286). The relative stability of the factors functioning in the choice of genitive forms, however, justifies our adoption of the frameworks used for the analysis of genitive variation in Present-day English as a starting point. Hence, we are much dependent on Heller and Szmrecsanyi (2019), whose research is among the most up-to-date in this field, though its focus is on different varieties of English in the contemporary period. Their multivariate analysis of various possible factors reveals that animacy and the length of the possessor and possessum are of particular significance in the choice of genitive constructions. One of the other variables considered in Heller and Szmrecsanyi (2019) is discourse accessibility (information status), which has also been shown to be relevant. Rosenbach (2001: 286), as mentioned above, places information status (topicality) as the second most relevant conceptual factor. In the examination of probable factors behind the alternation of the genitive structures in our data, we will make the practical choice of starting with the two factors, animacy and the length of the possessor and possessum, and in the following analyses of individual examples, the third factor, information status, will also be taken into consideration. The genitive in English, either synchronic or diachronic, is a very productive research area, which has been a little confused due to the availability of abundant previous studies based on different classifications of genitive functions themselves. They have adduced numerous possible factors affecting the choice of constructions, also variously defined. Considering the size of our dataset, it is perhaps wise to start with a simplified method, though we shall consider in a more qualitative manner, wherever appropriate, other factors so far raised in the previous literature. While various different factors have been commented on by a number of researchers to date, the summary by Rosenbach (2014: 232) is most succinct, which includes:

animacy / lexical class of possessor  
 definiteness / topicality of possessor  
 semantic / possessive relation  
 syntactic weight  
 final sibilancy of possessor  
 givenness of possessor / information status  
 thematicity  
 rhythm  
 persistence

The last of the above, “persistence”, may be a little difficult to understand as it is. Rosenbach (2014: 232) gives the following explanation, which makes the point explicit: “The *s*-genitive has a greater chance of occurring if an *s*-genitive has been used before in the context. Likewise, the previous occurrence of an *of*-genitive increases the likelihood of an *of*-genitive in the next choice context”.

#### 4. The *s*-genitive and *of*-genitive structures in *Paris*

##### 4.1 Overall tendencies in the choice

Leeu’s English text of *Paris* contains 30 examples of the *s*-genitive and 513 of the *of*-genitive. Thus, the *s*-genitive makes up about 5.5% in this data. Thomas (1931: 70), as often quoted in the existing

research, reports the percentages of the *s*-genitive and the *of*-genitive occurrences in fourteenth-century prose as 15.6% and 84.4%, as opposed to 68.6% and 31.4% in the first half of the preceding century. More recently, Rosenbach, Stein and Vezzosi (2000) report 8% and 92% in the fifteenth century, and 20% and 80% around 1630, respectively. When observed against these figures, Leeu's text, which was translated from French in the late fifteenth century, shows an even more skewed distribution in favour of the *of*-genitive. Our data may thus add further support to Mustanoja's (1960: 77) suggestion that "[i]t is worth noticing . . . that the genitival *of*-periphrasis is particularly common in works written under strong French influence", which is essentially in line with Stahl's (1925: 18-19) observation.

|                     | 13th century<br>(first half)<br>Thomas (1931) | 14th century<br>Thomas (1931) | 15th century<br>Rosenbach et al. (2000) | around 1630<br>Rosenbach et al. (2000) |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <i>s</i> -genitive  | 68.6%                                         | 15.6%                         | 8%                                      | 20%                                    |
| <i>of</i> -genitive | 31.4%                                         | 84.4%                         | 92%                                     | 80%                                    |

**Table 1** Distribution of the *s*-genitive and the *of*-genitive in percentages  
[Based on Thomas (1931) and Rosenbach, Stein and Vezzosi (2000)]

|                     |             |
|---------------------|-------------|
| <i>s</i> -genitive  | 30 (5.5%)   |
| <i>of</i> -genitive | 513 (94.5%) |

**Table 2** Distribution of the *s*-genitive and the *of*-genitive in Leeu's *Paris*

Before proceeding to a detailed examination, a brief explanation of what was not included in our data is due. The basic criterion is we focus on the examples that are “interchangeable” or “paraphrasable” using the other genitive structure. The *of*-phrase in *the dukes sone of bourgoigne* in (1), for example, cannot be paraphrased into the *s*-genitive, due to the syntactic structure it occurs in.

- (1) How the dukes sone of bourgoigne cam to haue vyenne in mariage (d2v-a, 1-2)

With this specific case, therefore, we collected it as an instance of the *s*-genitive structure with its possessor *the duke of bourgoigne* and the possessum *sone*, but did not collect the part *of vyennoys* as one of the *of*-genitive structure, since the latter is not “interchangeable” in this phrasal structure. This form of genitive is referred to as the “split genitive”, which we will discuss further in Subsection 4.5. The other types that are not included are: fixed expressions, appositive genitives, partitive genitives, descriptive or classifying genitives and dates.<sup>13)</sup>

- (2) i shold do smite **of** his hede [fixed expression] (c2r-a, 26-27)  
 (3) whan he wanne the prys at the ioustes in cyte **of** Vyenue [appositive] (b5v-a, 7-9)  
 (4) the most parte **of** the knightes & gentylmen [partitive] (a5r-b, 5-6)  
 (5) for lothe I were to see yow bycome a man **of** relygyon [descriptive, classifying] (a7r-b, 28-29)

13) Heller and Szmrecsanyi (2019) also exclude instances of the double genitive (e.g., *a painting of Pete's*) (p. 318). In our data, where the use of apostrophe is not yet established, however, it is impossible to tell the difference between a case of the double genitive and one of the *of*-genitive with a possessor noun that happens to end with an *s*. No clear examples of the double genitive were found in our data.

(6) they assembled al at parijs the xiiij. day **of** septembre [dates] (a8v-a, 16-17)

Also excluded are the second or third *of*-phrases found in syntactic coordination. In (7), for instance, only the first *of*-genitive *of Englund* was collected.

(7) for there were the most hye princes and barons of Englund **of** Fraunce & **of** Normandye [second and third items in coordination] (a8r-a, 7-9)

4.2 Animacy of possesor as a factor behind the choice

As mentioned in Section 3, we start with the two factors—animacy of the possessor and the length of the possessor and possessum noun phrases—pointed out by Heller and Szmrecsanyi (2019) to be among the most relevant in the alternation between the genitive structures. The first of the two, possessor animacy is determined as one of the five levels: animate, collective, locative, temporal and inanimate. Heller and Szmrecsanyi give a typical example to each level: *doctor* for animate, *family* for collective, *London* for locative, *today* for temporal and *table* for inanimate (p. 319).

Tables 3 and 4 show the distribution by possessor animacy among the examples of the *s*-genitive and *of*-genitive structures found in Leeu’s *Paris*. All 30 *s*-genitives occur with an animate possessor. Among 513 examples of the *of*-genitive, on the other hand, we observe more variation. While as many as 245 (47.8%) have animate possessors, one (0.2%) collective, 184 (35.9%) examples are found with a locative possessor and the remaining 83 (16.2%) an inanimate.

| Animacy of possessor |            |          |          |           |
|----------------------|------------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Animate              | Collective | Locative | Temporal | Inanimate |
| 30                   | 0          | 0        | 0        | 0         |

Table 3 Classification by animacy of 30 examples of the *s*-genitive in Leeu’s *Paris*

| Animacy of possessor |            |             |          |            |
|----------------------|------------|-------------|----------|------------|
| Animate              | Collective | Locative    | Temporal | Inanimate  |
| 245 (47.8%)          | 1 (0.2%)   | 184 (35.9%) | 0        | 83 (16.2%) |

Table 4 Classification by animacy of 513 examples of the *of*-genitive in Leeu’s *Paris*

The tendency we observe here—the *s*-genitive only used with animate possessor—conforms remarkably well to the existing research reviewed in Section 3. The *s*-genitive structure favours animate possessors through the history of English. It allows to varied degrees, however, inanimate, collective, locative or temporal possessors, depending on the time in history, regional varieties, mode (written / spoken) and genres. It is also worth noting that our 30 possessors of the *s*-genitive are all human, which is regarded as the most animate class in the animacy scales proposed in the previous literature.

Rosenbach and Vezzosi (2000: 297) report the distribution of two genitive structures according to the animacy (+animate *vs* -animate) of the possessor in their data from the fifteenth century and the sixteenth century. Table 5 represents the fifteenth-century distribution extracted from their table.

|                     | 1400-1449   |             | 1450-1499   |             |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                     | “Animate”   | “Inanimate” | “Animate”   | “Inanimate” |
| <i>s</i> -genitive  | 110 (21.6%) | 8 (1.1%)    | 344 (31.9%) | 25 (2.3%)   |
| <i>of</i> -genitive | 398 (78.4%) | 732 (98.9%) | 735 (68.1%) | 108 (97.7%) |

**Table 5** Distribution of the *s*-genitive and *of*-genitive according to possessor animacy (Cited from Rosenbach and Vezzosi 2000: 297)<sup>14)</sup>

|                     | “Animate”   | “Inanimate” |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------|
| <i>s</i> -genitive  | 30 (10.9%)  | 0           |
| <i>of</i> -genitive | 246 (89.1%) | 267 (100%)  |

**Table 6** Distribution of the *s*-genitive and *of*-genitive according to possessor animacy in Leeu’s *Paris*<sup>15)</sup>

When we look at the distribution in Leeu’s text (Table 6) against the general tendency reported by Rosenbach and Vezzosi (2000), stronger skew towards the *of*-genitive is observed again.

### 4.3 Length of possessor and possessum as a factor behind the choice

Now we turn to the second factor: the length of the possessor and possessum noun phrases. We compare the weight (the number of the constituent words) of the possessor and possessum noun phrases. Although Heller and Szmrecsanyi (2019) treat the length of the possessor and that of the possessum as two independent factors, we employ an even simpler method: classification depending on relative weight, i.e., whether the possessor noun phrase has a larger number of constituent words; the possessor and possessum comprise the same number of words; or the possessum noun phrase has more words. Tables 7 and 8 show the general distribution. In 26 of the 30 instances of the *s*-genitive, the possessor comprises a larger number of words than the possessum. The remaining four cases have their possessor and possessum in the same length. The 513 examples of the *of*-genitive show more variation, as shown in Table 8.

| Length of possessor and possessum (Number of constituent words) |                       |                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Possessor > Possessum                                           | Possessor = Possessum | Possessor < Possessum |
| 26                                                              | 4                     | 0                     |

**Table 7** Classification by relative length of 30 examples of the *s*-genitive in Leeu’s *Paris*

| Length of possessor and possessum (Number of constituent words) |                       |                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Possessor > Possessum                                           | Possessor = Possessum | Possessor < Possessum |
| 162 (31.6%)                                                     | 134 (26.1%)           | 217 (42.3%)           |

**Table 8** Classification by relative length of 513 examples of the *of*-genitive in Leeu’s *Paris*

The distribution of the two genitive structures according to the relative length (Tables 7 and 8

14) Their data is mainly taken from the *Helsinki Corpus*. Their category “animate” includes [+human] and [+animal]. For further details, refer to pp. 288-289. Similar examination is presented by Stahl (1925), as cited in Mustanoja (1960: 75).

15) Our single example of “collective”, *bothe partyes* (b8v-b, 15-16), is counted here as that of “animate”, since it refers to human entities.

above) does not appear to provide much support for any hypotheses proposed in the existing literature. The “end-focus” and “end-weight” principles pointed out by Quirk et al. (1985) predict that the *s*-genitive, which places the possessor before and the possessum after, would be more likely to occur in the “possessor < possessum” situation, as illustrated in (8), while the *of*-genitive would prefer the “possessor > possessum” situation, as in (9).

(8) a friend’s arrival which had been expected for several weeks (Quirk et al. 1985: 1281)

(9) the arrival of a friend who had been studying for a year at a German university (Quirk et al. 1985: 1282)

Among Leeu’s *of*-genitive occurrences, the “possessor > possessum” is not even the commonest, let alone the major case. As stated above, Leeu’s English text has only 30 instances of the *s*-genitive, which is 5.5% of all the genitive instances. This means, in this text, the default choice is the *of*-genitive, even more so than in other texts of the same period. It is therefore a sound decision to scrutinise more closely the infrequent occurrences of the less common structure.

#### 4.4 Information structure and other potential factors

Out of our 30 instances of the *s*-genitive, twelve are in the form of the split genitive, where the post-modifying portion of the possessor noun phrase is extraposed after the possessum noun phrase: e.g., *the dukes sone of bourgoigne*.<sup>16)</sup> In this example, the possessor noun *the duke of bourgoigne* is split apart, with the extraposed part adding end-weight.<sup>17)</sup> The existence of the substantial number of this type may blur the general tendency of distribution reported and examined in the previous subsection. When we exclude the instances of the split genitive, all but one possessor noun phrases in the *s*-genitive examples refer to the main characters of the story: *Daulphin* (six out of eighteen), *Paris* (three), *mother* | *father* | *daughter* preceded by *my* | *his* | *her* (seven) and *the chapelain* (one). They are short (one or two words) and are all to be located high in the scales of definiteness (topicality) or thematicity, and, according to the previous literature, are most likely to be allowed as the possessor in the *s*-structure.<sup>18)</sup>

Let us now look into the French versions. All twelve cases of split genitives have the *de*- or *à*-genitive counterparts in at least one French version. These are the typical examples:

(10) E: the kinges systre of englond (a8v-a, 1-2)

F: seur **du** roy dangleterre (b3r-a, 26-27)

(11) E: the kinges court of Fraunce (e4v-a, 25)

F: la court **du** roy de france (g7r-b, 26-27)

16) Here we do not presuppose or state that there is any syntactic movement involved. We use “extraposed” to describe the position that is not ordinary.

17) We will examine examples of the split genitive structure in the following subsection.

18) The only exceptional case is: *and anone vyenne & ysabeau cladde them in mannes araye* (c3r-a, 9-11). The corresponding French passage in Le Roy (d5r-b, 1-3) is: *Si se vestirent vienne et ysabeau en guise domme*, and almost the same in Leeu (1487) and Huss (1485-1486) *en guyse dhomme*; while in the manuscript, *Vienne et Ysabel sortirent comme hommes*, which lacks the corresponding word for *araye*. Caxton uses the word *araye*, not the direct French loan *gise*. The possessor here comprises one word, *mannes*. All the eighteen cases, including this, are expressed in the *s*-genitive structure with the same possessor noun in Caxton’s version.

- (12) E: the kinges sone of Englonde (a6r-b, 16-17)  
 F: le filz **au** roy dangleterre (a7r-a, 16-17)

In thirteen examples out of the other eighteen examples, we can find corresponding structures using *de* or *à*, as exemplified by (13) and (14).

- (13) E: hyr faders hous (c4v-a, 37)  
 F: lostel **de** son pere (d7r-b, 3-4)  
 (14) E: at the daulphins table (a5v-b, 3-4)  
 F: a table **au** dauphin (a6r-b, 2-3)

In the remaining five cases, some are expressed in a different structure, as in (15); others are added to prevent misunderstanding, as in (16) and (17).

- (15) E: his doughters wordes (a4r-a, 2)  
 F: ces parolles que sa fille disoit ‘the words his daughter said’ (a3r-b, 25-26)  
 (16) E: alle the daulphins londe (a2r-b, 9)  
 F: tout le dauphine ‘all the dauphine’ (a1v-a, 4-5)  
 (17) E: Paris fader sayd to the dolphin (e7v-b, 15-16)  
 F: il dit au dauphin ‘he said to the dolphin’ (h4r-b, 11-12)

The possessors in these five *s*-genitive occurrences that may thus be considered to be the translator’s own choice are *Daulphin* (four cases) and *Paris* (one), again, the most strong candidates for the *s*-genitives.

It is also worth noting that as many as five of the thirteen examples of the *s*-genitive that have the *de*- counterpart in the French text (and not of the split genitive) have the possessum *house*, as in (13): *his faders hous* (b6v-b, 13), *hyr faders hous* (c4v-a, 37), *the chapelayns hous* (c5v-b, 16-17), *hyr faders hous* (c6r-a, 17-c6r-b, 1) and *my faders hous* (d1r-a, 9). In their French counterparts, the possessum is invariably *l’hôtel*. The translator chose the native word *house* for the French *hôtel* and changed the phrasal structure from the *de*- to the *s*-genitive. When we compare this to the distribution of the examples with a possessum *chamber*, a French loan, the contrast is obvious. In the examples of *chamber*, all but one keep the parallel *of*-structure.

| Possessum noun      | <i>house</i> | <i>chamber</i> |
|---------------------|--------------|----------------|
| <i>s</i> -genitive  | 5            | 1              |
| <i>of</i> -genitive | 3            | 5              |

**Table 9** Examples of the *s*- and *of*-genitive structures with the possessum *house* or *chamber* in Leeu’s *Paris*

When the translator changes the head noun (representing the possessum) of the phrase into the word of his own, and not the loan, there is more chance that the possessive structure is altered to the *s*-variety at the same time. This tendency may not be directly related to Rosenbach’s concept of “persistence” (2014: 232) but could be considered in a similar vein, in that the choice appears to be influenced by what the writer retains in his memory while working.

4.5 Split genitive

Allen (2013), in her discussion of the split genitive (e.g., *the king's daughter of France*) and the group genitive (e.g., *the king of France's daughter*), concludes that the use of the split genitive “decreased sharply, in writing at least, between the m3 [1350-1419] and m4 [1420-1499] periods”. The split genitive structure makes it possible to place the possessive marker to the head noun, as opposed to the case of the group genitive structure (p. 33).

In the text of Leeu's *Paris*, we found twelve examples of the split genitive. All but one represent kinship relations, e.g., *sone* ‘son’ in *the kinges sone of Englund*. Other terms representing kinship other than *sone* (five instances) are *daughter* (three), *kynrede* (one) and *syster/sister* (two). The sole example representing non-kinship relation is *the kinges court of Fraunce*.<sup>19)</sup> Our next questions here are, whether this structure is the favoured pattern in Leeu's text, and, whether, in such textual situations, the split *s*-genitive is more favoured than in other types of textual situations. The first is problematic, since Allen (2008, 2013) among others compares split genitives with group genitives, not with *of*-genitives. All we can do is observe the distribution of the two genitive structures of our concern in textual situations where they could occur either as the split *s*-genitive or as the *of*-genitive. To extract the relevant examples, we searched for the instances that match the pattern of “[kinship term | *court*] *of* [human] *of* [locative]”. Our text yielded 53 examples of this type. This number might look large, compared to twelve of the split *s*-genitives. When embedded in the overall distribution of examples with an animate possessor, however, the split *s*-genitive (e.g., *the dukes sone of bourgoigne*) is significantly more likely to occur than the *of*- counterpart (e.g., *the sone of the duke of bourgoigne*).

|                      | <i>the dukes sone of bourgoigne</i> or <i>the sone of the duke of bourgoigne</i> situations | Other situations with animate possessors |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <i>s</i> -genitives  | 12 ↑                                                                                        | 18 ↓                                     |
| <i>of</i> -genitives | 53 ↓                                                                                        | 192 ↑                                    |

( $p < 0.05$ )

**Table 10** Distribution of split *s*-genitives and *of*-genitives where the possessor is “[human] *of* [locative]” and the possessum is either a kinship term or *court*, in comparison with the other situations with animate possessors

The split genitive had seen a sharp decrease but was still in use when Caxton translated the French original into English (see above), and our text does show the preference. The group genitive was starting to be used but still “considerably less common” (Allen 2013: 3) than the split counterpart. Our text does not contain examples of the group genitive with a possessor noun phrase in the form of “Noun *of* Noun”. The split genitive fulfills two contradictory motivations: placing the genitive marker directly to the head noun of the possessor; and placing the possessum noun phrase as close as possible (Allen 2013). Also, to be noted is what Hinrichs and Szmrecsanyi (2007: 456) call “nested genitives”. When the possessor or the possessum noun phrase (= nested components) contains an *s*- or *of*-genitive in them, the other structure (i.e., that is not used within the component NP) is likely to be chosen. This could possibly motivate the use of the split *s*-genitive, too. It is also worth repeating that the split genitive structure shifts the weight backward, contributing to the “end-focus” and “end-weight” principles. In chivalric romances such as *Paris*, where daughters, sons and cousins of kings,

19) Caxton's 1485 version has eleven of them in the same structure. It lacks the section header where the other occurs in Leeu's version.

dukes and earls have roles to play, the split genitive structure offers a handy and beneficial option to take when referring to these characters.

## 5. Conclusion

We have hitherto discussed the choice between the *s*-genitive and *of*-genitive in Leeu's *Paris* (1492) and shown that the latter is dominantly attested in the text. While this may be a pure reflection of the linguistic environment in the late fifteenth century, the influence of the original text in French cannot be overlooked. In the period, the *of*-genitive was indeed on the increase, whereas the recurrent rise of the *s*-genitive was not yet conspicuous. In *Paris*, however, *of*-genitives are markedly frequent even for the period, accounting for nearly 95% of the possible cases. This may have resulted from the influence of the French original, where corresponding sentences tend to yield *de* or *à*. We did not comprehensively investigate the French structures that correspond to English *of*-genitives, but a quick analysis of the possessum nouns *house* and *chamber* has given a promising result: *of*-genitives are more likely to take place when the latter noun, which is originally French, is involved. The translator may have been unawares encouraged to opt for *of*-genitives to a larger extent when French influence is available elsewhere in the context.

Due to the overall dominance of *of*-genitives in the text, conditions related to the possessor animacy and the length of possessor and possessum are applicable only to a limited extent. All 30 examples of the *s*-genitive in Leeu's *Paris* indeed involve animate possessors, but even with the *of*-genitive, animate possessors are common, accounting for nearly half of the relevant examples. As for the relative length of the possessor and possessum, the applicability of the “end-weight” principle is observed even to a lesser extent. The 30 examples of the *s*-genitive include 26 cases where the possessor noun phrase is longer than the possessum (according to our definition of the length), violating the “end-weight” principle. It does not seem to be necessarily functional in the *of*-genitive, either, in our text.

Further qualitative research has revealed that the limited number of *s*-genitives are largely reserved for some restricted collocational patterns in Leeu's *Paris*. As many as twelve of the 30 examples of the *s*-genitive are attested as part of split genitive constructions and the remaining examples are more or less reserved for main characters such as *Daulphin*, *Paris*, *mother* and *father* as the possessor. This fact itself is in accord with the ongoing marginalisation of the *s*-genitive in the Late Middle English period, as it indicates that the use of *s*-genitives is already restricted to specific contexts. The occurrence of the *s*-genitive with main characters may be explicable from the perspective of the thematicity, though, as they are informationally more accessible than other entities.

The relatively common occurrence of the split genitive is also interesting: on the one hand, it is an old construction, which goes back to Old English and which is to disappear together with the rise of group genitives from Middle to Modern English, while on the other hand, this seems to be where linguistic conditions generally related to the choice between two genitive forms are operational in a certain way. It allows the *of*-phrase attached to the possessor to move to the position after the possessum, contributing to the fulfillment of the “end-weight” principle. It also allows the possessor noun to occur in the *s*-genitive, hence avoiding the repetition of *of*-phrases. Still, the frequent involvement of kinship relations in this construction in *Paris* may be indicative of its relative fixedness in collocation, hinting again how restricted the use of the *s*-genitive is in the language of English *Paris*.

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## Genitive Variation in Middle English *Paris and Vienne*

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### ABSTRACT

The variation between the *s*-genitive (e.g., *God's love*) and the *of*-genitive (e.g., *love of God*) in English has been studied extensively, both from synchronic and diachronic perspectives. This study investigates how the two competing structures are employed in a single Middle English text, *Paris and Vienne*, which was translated from French and printed by William Caxton (1485), and right after his death, reprinted by Gheraerd Leeu in Antwerp (1492). Leeu's text shows remarkable preference for the *of*-genitive over the *s*-genitive, even considering the general distributional tendency of the time—in the ratio of about nine to one—reported in the existing studies. The use of the *s*-genitive is observed in fairly restricted contexts, two typical cases of which are: where the possessor is not only animate, but also highly topical, being one of the main characters of the story; and where the *s*-genitive comprises so-called split genitives (e.g., *the king's daughter of France*), which in most cases represent kinship relations. In this specific text, the *of*-genitive is so dominant that the length of the possessor and possessum nouns, which is often regarded as one of the major factors behind the alternation, does not appear to have significant influence over the choice of the structure.

**Key Words:** genitive variation, Middle English, translation