

Early stages of the ‘*his* genitive’: Separated genitives in Old English

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In this paper we provide new evidence to demonstrate that the ‘*his* genitive’ or ‘separated genitive’, a grammatical phenomenon whose systematic presence dates back to the early Middle English period (c. 1250), is more deeply rooted in the English language than has been believed, as a similar construction can be attested in a considerable number of Old English texts. The arguments which negate the existence of the separated genitive in Old English are critically reviewed in the study and reassessed in the light of fresh evidence retrieved from a large corpus of texts. The results of the analysis prove that —despite its very low frequency as compared to the flexive genitive— the separated genitive was a viable grammatical option in Old English, and that the syntactic configurations that arose from it probably paved the way to the use of the ‘*his* genitive’ in the Middle Ages.

Keywords: *his* genitive; separated genitive; Old English; Middle English; possessor doubling; possessive dative; sympathetic dative; York Corpus

1. Introduction

The study of the expression of possession across the history of English has focused mainly on the development of the Old English genitive ending from a morpheme into a bound affix (Allen 1992, 1993, 1997, 2004, 2008; Janda 1980, 1981, 2001; Rosenbach 2002), in which the ‘*his* genitive’ or ‘separated genitive’ is said to have played different roles according to different theorists.¹

¹ Allen (1992, 1993, 1997, 2004, 2008) for example, suggests that the HG played virtually no role at all in the process, whereas for Janda (1980, 1981) the ‘*his* genitive’

This construction, illustrated in the examples in (1) and (2) for Middle English, is characterised by a syntactic configuration in which a noun phrase standing for the possessor is followed by a possessive pronoun² and another noun phrase standing for the possessed item or *possessum*:

- (1) þe þridde Constantinus was *Heraclius his sone*, and *Heraclioun his broþer*
 ‘the third Constantin was Heraclius’s son, and Heraclioun’s brother’
 (Polychronicon (Lumby), VI, 55.359)
- (2) Þo was in *Norweie his erþ* a king þat hehte Compert
 ‘There was in Norway’s land a king that was called Compert’
 (Brut (Brook & Leslie), 293. 5635)

Concerning the rise of this grammatical phenomenon in English, there is some consensus in recent scholarship that the ‘*his* genitive’ originated in the early Middle English period, as a result of the phonological identification of the ending *-is/-ys/-es* for genitive with the weak form of the possessive pronoun ‘his’ (originally invariable for gender and number and behaving syntactically exactly like the attached genitive). This later gave way (in the second half of the 16th century) to the reanalysis of the possessive particle into a genuine possessive pronoun requiring agreement with the possessor N. The hypothesis of a phonological origin for the ‘*his* genitive’ is as early as Wyld (1936: 314), and has been endorsed —among others— by Janda (1980, 1981),³ Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2003), and the author who has most extensively studied genitives in English: Allen (1997, 2002, 2003, 2008). According to Allen, no genuine examples of the ‘*his* genitive’ can be found prior to 1250,⁴ and all

was the main trigger of the change. Other authors such as Rosenbach (2002: 212–217) consider that the HG played just a contributory role in the transition of the genitive morpheme *-es* from inflection to clitic.

² Given the fairly diverging status of the possessive item in the different approaches to this phenomenon, it would probably be better to refer to it as ‘possessive particle’ or ‘possessive element’ rather than ‘possessive pronoun’.

³ He says, however, that “occasional uses of the periphrastic possessive adjective can be found in Old English” (Janda 1980: 249).

⁴ Allen is categorical when she asserts that she has considered, discussed and, finally, dismissed the possible Old English origins of the separated genitive (“I take it as established that there is no evidence for a possessor doubling construction in either OE or very early ME”, Allen 2008: 227). According to her, the earliest texts where the

apparent examples of separated genitives in Old English can actually be put down to other linguistic processes and are amenable to other interpretations (Allen 1997: 125–126, 2002: 3, 2008: 227). The large data gap existing between any putative examples of the separated genitive in Old English — according to her— and the first Middle English texts where its presence is systematic (c. 1250) also militates against any sort of continuity in the development of the phenomenon dating back to the Old English period. On the other hand, traditional grammarians like Jespersen (1894: 318–327), Curme (1935: 136, 1931: 71), Kellner (1956: 189–190), Mustanoja (1960: 160–162), or the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), have placed the origin of the ‘his genitive’ or ‘separated genitive’ further back in the history of English —within Old English (3)— more or less explicitly identifying it with the ‘possessor doubling’ or ‘external possessor’ construction of other Germanic languages (4).

- (3) we gesawon *enac his cynryn*
 we saw Enac his kindred
 ‘we saw Enac’s kindred’
 (Old English Heptateuch (Marsden), Numbers xiii, 29)
- (4) a. dem Mann sein Hut
 the-DAT man- DAT his hat
 ‘the man’s hat’ (German) [de Wit 1997: 89]
- b. mijn vader z’n vriend
 my father his friend
 ‘my father’s friend’ (Dutch) [de Wit 1997: 88]
- c. Valère zenen boek
 Valère his book
 ‘Valère’s book’ (West Flemish) [Haegeman 2004: 216]

presence of the ‘his genitive’ is systematic are *Genesis and Exodus* and Layamon’s *Brut* MS Cotton Otho C xviii (O), both dated around 1250. Pérez Lorigo & Casado Núñez’s (2013a, 2013b) studies of Layamon’s *Brut* MS (O) confirm the extensive use of the ‘his genitive’ in this text, with 142 instances of this construction retrieved from their search.

- d. De'n Herrn sien Naam is hillig
 the-OBL Lord-OBL his name is holy
 'the name of the lord is holy' (Low Saxon) [Allen 2008:191]
- e. mannen sit hus
 man-THE his-REFL house
 'the man's house' (Norwegian) [Allen 2002:2]

This position has been adopted by modern linguists such as Traugott (1972: 125), Ramat (1986), Fischer (1992: 230), de Wit (1997: 51–52), or Seppänen (1997: 202–203).⁵ For others, the question is simply unsettled (Rosenbach 2002: 217).

Thus, despite being quite systematically cited in reference works, articles and monographs, the question of whether the '*bis* genitive' was available or not in Old English and its continuity into Middle English is largely unanswered. One striking problem in the existing literature on the topic is that the same examples of presumed Old English '*bis* genitives' have been repeated over and over again (with the more modern accounts systematically retrieving examples from earlier sources) as no systematic, corpus-based study of the phenomenon has been carried out to the present date. One primary goal of this paper is therefore to provide a solid database of first-hand examples of separated genitives in Old English that may help researchers make decisions and build theories with stronger factual support. This has been carried out by means of the systematic search of an extensive corpus of texts (see Section 2 below), which has rendered a new set of interesting and illuminating examples, never quoted before.

2. Corpus, data, and data collection

The Old English data for this analysis have been drawn from twelve texts in *The York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose* (Taylor, Warner, Pintzuck & Beths 2003) plus one additional poetic work (*Paris Psalter*, in the

⁵ Some manuals and reference books like Barber (1976: 200) or Pyles & Algeo (1982: 186–187) also adhere to this hypothesis, but they all lack a real discussion on the nature of the presumed separated genitives in Old English and limit themselves to citing a few examples.

1932 edition of G.F. Krapp) and Marsden's (2008) paper edition of the Old English *Heptateuch*. The prose texts cover a wide range of genres and styles (from homiletic and philosophical to annalistic and scientific) and represent both the Alfredian tradition of the late 9th century (*Orosius*, *Cura Pastoralis*), and the later variety of Old English represented by Ælfric (*Homilies*, *Lives of Saints*). Our corpus also includes two scientific treatises from the early 11th century (Old English *Herbarium* and Old English *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*), which are rarely included in studies of this type. The prose texts amount to roughly 702,000 words, and are highly representative of the language of the period. Seven of them are translations from Latin (*Orosius* [Or.], *Cura Pastoralis* [CP], *Heptateuch* [Num], *Herbarium* [Herbar], *Quadrupedibus* [Quadru], Bede's *History of the English Church* [Bede], and Boethius' *de Consolatione Philosophiae* [Bo]), and six were originally written in Old English (Preface to the *Cura Pastoralis* [Prefcura], *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*⁶ [ChronA, ChronE, ChronC, ChronD], Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* [ÆLS], *Homilies of Ælfric* [ÆHom], *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies* (First Series) [ÆCHomI], and *Homilies of Wulfstan* [WHom]).

For the texts included in the York Corpus, data retrieval has been carried out using CorpusSearch2 (Beth Randall 2005).

The methodology of the data collection consisted of searching the corpus systematically for the configuration NP + Possessive pronoun + NP. This obviously rendered many instances of syntactic combinations not related to the separated genitive (appositions, ditransitive structures), which were discarded. The clear examples of separated genitives were recorded, and the dubious instances carefully scrutinised using any resources that might provide clarification on their meaning. This included checking up other MSs of the text (if any), resorting to the Latin original (if one), and using all the available historical sources as well as the philological information contained in the editions of the works analysed.

The corpus analysis rendered the following results as regards distribution of the separated genitive across the different texts:

⁶ Only MSS A, E, C and D of the *Chronicle* have been analysed.

- c. We ðær gesawon of ðæm entcynne *enac his bearna micelra wæstma*
 'There we saw the giants, the sons of Enac, [which come] of the giant race'
 (Old English Heptateuch (Marsden), Numbers xiii, 34)
- d. in Danai þære ie, ðær *Asia & Europe hiera landgemircu togædre licgað.*
 'in the river Don, there lie together the boundaries of Asia and Europe'
 (coorosiu,Or_1:1.8.18.105)
- e. *Affrica & Asia hiera landgemircu onginnað* of Alexandria,
 'The boundaries of Africa and Asia begin in Alexandria'
 (coorosiu,Or_1:1.9.11.113)
- f. *Nilus seo ea hire æwielme* is neh þæm clife þære readan sæs,
 'The source of river Nile is near the shore of the Red Sea'
 (coorosiu,Or_1:1.11.3.152)
- g. ...oð hie abræcan *Arcadum beora burg.*
 '...until they overcame the city of the Arcadians'
 (coorosiu,Or_3:1.55.18.1082)
- h. Her Romane *Leone þam papan his tungon* forcurfon & his eagan astungon
 'In this year the Romans cut out Pope Leo's tongue and put out his eyes'
 (cochronA-1,ChronA_[Plummer]:797.1.596)
- i. Her Romane *Leone þam papan his tungan* forcurfan & his eagan ut astungon
 'In this year the Romans cut out Pope Leo's tongue and put out his eyes'
 (cochronE,ChronE_[Plummer]:797.1.918)
- j. Wið lendena sare & gif *men his ðeoh* acen genim...
 'Against pain in the loins and if a man's thigh(s) hurt take...'
 (coherbar,Lch_I_[Herb]:1.27.113)
- k. Gif *men his wamb* sar sy genime wegbrædan seaw ðære wyrte,
 'If a man's womb is sore/painful, take...'
 (coherbar,Lch_I_[Herb]:2.2.129)

- l. Gif *men his leoðu* acen oððe ongeflogen sy genim...
 ‘If a man’s limb’s hurt or are attacked by disease, take...’
 (coherbar,Lch_I_[Herb]:3.1.227)
- m. ...and him þyrste *on þam wífe hyre geleafan*,
 ‘...and he thirsted after the woman’s faith,’
 (coaelhom, ÆHom_5:242.832)
- n. ...he het alætan ut *þone halgan Petrum his scíp* on ðære dypan.
 ‘...he commanded to let holy Peter’s ship go out into the deep.’
 (coaelhom, ÆHom_15:16.2142)
 (coaelhom, ÆHom_15:108.2190)⁷

Out of these fifteen examples, seven ((5a–f) and (5h)) have been more or less systematically quoted in the literature, but the rest represent new evidence. Thus, the OED cites (5a, 5b) and (5e, 5f), Jespersen (1894) (5e, 5f, 5g), Curme (1931) (5b),⁸ Mustanoja (1960) (5a, 5b, 5d, 5f and 5h), Pyles & Algeo (1964) (5b, 5e, 5f), Traugott (1972) (5f), de Wit (1997) (5d, 5h), Seppänen (1997) (5d), Allen (1997) (5b, 5d, 5e, 5f), Allen (2002) (5f), and Allen (2008) (5a, 5e, 5f, 5h), with the more modern accounts —as we said before— systematically retrieving examples from the earlier sources.

From a strictly numerical point of view, the sheer number of examples of presumed separated genitives in the texts (15) is obviously very low — especially if compared with the overwhelming frequency of the flexive genitive— but it is significant enough statistically so as not to count them as performance errors. Moreover, the distribution across the corpus is very relevant: separated genitives appear in texts belonging to different genres and text types (from homiletic to annalistic to scientific) and in both translations from Latin and texts written originally in Old English. The lack of evidence of the separated genitive in the formally more developed genres and styles (philosophical or religious treatises with a clear argumentative style), such as the *Boethius* or the *Cura Pastoralis*, may have to do with sociolinguistic aspects of the construction under discussion: we must remember that the ‘possessor doubling’ construction is dubbed as ‘colloquial’ and ‘typical of the spoken

⁷ This example is just a repetition of (coaelhom, ÆHom_15:16.2142).

⁸ Curme’s (1931: 71) quotation is erroneous. He refers to example (5c) above as ‘numbers xiii, 29’, when that is actually the reference for (5b).

language' in most of the languages where it is used today,⁹ so not surprising that it should not come up in the more elaborate Old English prose texts. Finally, the absence of the separated genitive in texts where the influence of Latin is greatest (*Bede*) must have to do with the essentially Germanic nature of the construction (see Section 3.2. below).

3. Analysis

3.1. Objections to Old English separated genitives in previous approaches: The 'left-dislocation' hypothesis

One of the most critical voices against separated genitives in Old English is Allen (1997, 2002, 2008), who contends that most known examples of this construction in Old English are dubious, amenable to other analyses or simply mistakes (Allen 1997: 125, 2002: 3, 2008: 225). Her objections refer basically to two categories of examples: those where the possessor NP is in the case required by the syntax of the sentence, which according to her allow for an alternative interpretation in terms of 'left dislocation' (like (5e) and (5f) above, repeated below as (6a, 6b)), and those in which the possessor N is in the dative case, which can be explained as 'sympathetic datives' (5h). We will focus on the first type now.

- (6) a. *Affrica & Asia hiera^{pl} landgemircu onginnað of Alexandria*
 Africa and Asia their boundaries begin from Alexandria
 'The boundaries of Africa and Asia begin in Alexandria'
 (coorosiu,Or_1:1.9.11.113)
- b. *Nilus seo ea^{nom/sg/fem} hire^{fem/sg} æwielme is neh þæm clife þære*
 readan sæs
 Nile the river her source is near the shore of-the
 Red Sea
 'The source of river Nile is near the shore of the Red Sea'
 (coorosiu,Or_1:1.11.3.152)

⁹ This is so at least in German and Dutch, but not in Norwegian (see Allen 2002: 5 footnote).

These examples from the Old English *Orosius* are referred to by Allen (2008), alongside (5d) above, as instances of left dislocation, where “the first NP is mentioned to introduce the topic of the sentence and then the possessive pronoun picks up the topic” (2008: 226).¹⁰ Therefore, rough translations of the examples above would be, according to Allen, *Africa and Asia, their boundaries begin...* instead of *the boundaries of Africa and Asia begin...* and *River Nile, its source is...* rather than *the source of river Nile is...* This is particularly plausible —always according to Allen— if we take into account the text from which this example is taken, the Old English *Orosius*, where examples of undoubted left dislocations do abound, like the often quoted example (7) below.¹¹

- (7) Europe hie onginð [...] of Danai ðære ie
 Europe she begins [...] at Danube the river
 ‘Europe, it begins [...] at river Danube’

(Orosius 8, 23)

However, for an explanation in terms of left dislocation to hold successfully it is strictly necessary that the genitive construction is in absolute initial position in the sentence, and Allen (1997: 126) herself admits that “if the construction were other than left dislocation, we would expect also some comparable examples in an object position”. In our corpus, a considerable number of examples of separated genitives appear in object position (either preverbally or

¹⁰ This is apparently also the idea behind the notion ‘anacolutha’ mentioned by Jespersen (1894: §248), Mustanoja (1960: 162), and Janda (1980: 249). Even Allen (2008: 227) toys with the idea that left dislocation (a sort anacoluthon) could have been the origin of the separated genitive of the EME period, “since such examples have just the sort of ambiguity which is necessary for reanalysis”, but she eventually disregards the idea, given the lack of a continuous record of left dislocations of this sort in object position from Old to Middle English.

¹¹ But it is not less true that sentences like (7) form a minority of left dislocations in Old English. In her comprehensive study of left dislocation, Traugott (2007: 416) reports that most left-dislocated nominals in Old English are followed by an adverbial or relative clause, and only 14.1% subject object left-dislocations have no finite clause following the preposed nominal. Plus, the resumptive element is, according to Traugott (2007: 419) typically a personal pronoun in Old English (69.6% of subject left dislocations) although she admits that demonstratives and full NPs (as in the examples (6) or (8) above) also occur in her data (2007: 435).

postverbally), and even within the set of standard examples from the *Orosius* cited by Allen (1997, 2008) as left dislocation, the peripherality condition required for left-dislocated constituents is not met. Note (5d), repeated below as (8).

- (8) *ðær Asia & Europe hiera^{pl} landgemircu togædre licgað*
 there Asia and Europe their boundaries together lie
 ‘there lie together the boundaries of Asia and Europe’
 (coorosiu,Or_1:1.8.18.105)

In this example we have a presumed left-dislocated constituent (*Asia and Europe*), which is preceded by a topicalised one (*ðær*), while most theories of syntax and information structure state that topicalisation and left dislocation are incompatible (Gregory & Michaelis 2001, Szücs 2014). Thus, the cross-linguistically improbable coexistence of topicalisation and left dislocation here opens the door to considering that *Asia & Europe hiera landgemircu* form a constituent, i.e. a separated genitive construction. Other examples, such as (5k) from the Old English *Herbarium* ((9) below) as well as (5j) and (5l) above, which have NP + Poss + NP structures in initial position, could possibly admit an interpretation of the initial NP as having been left dislocated (leaving aside the important fact that the presumed dislocated nominal is in the dative case), but they have to face the shortcoming that they occur in subordinate clauses.

- (9) *Gif men^{dat/sg} his wamb sar sy genime wegbrædan seaw ðære wyrte*
 If man his womb sore be take plantain juice the herbs
 ‘If a man’s womb is sore, take the juice of the plantain herb’
 (coherbar,Lch_I_[Herb]:2.2.129)

Left dislocation is infrequent cross-linguistically in subordinate clauses,¹² and so it is in Old English. Traugott’s (2007: 422) comprehensive corpus study of

¹² Johannessen (2014: 406) mentions in her study some examples of left dislocation in subordinate clauses in Nordic languages, such as Danish (i), Swedish (ii) or Norwegian (iii) [our highlighting]:

- (i) Ved du om Merete **hun** kommer med? (Danish)
 Know you whether Merete she comes with?
 ‘Do you know whether Merete will come?’

left dislocation in Old English reports only thirty-four instances of embedded subject left dislocation examples out of a total of 283 (15.2%), and 9.6% instances of object left dislocation (5/52) (see examples below).

- (10) a. *ðætte ða wif ðe ða geeacnodan bearn cennað ðe ðonne*
 that those women that those conceived children conceive who then
git fulborene ne bioð, ne fillað hie no mid ðæm hus ac byrgenna
 yet full-term not are not fill they not with that houses but tombs
 ‘that those women who prematurely deliver a child they have conceived, (they) do not fill houses but tombs’
 (cocura, CP:49.383.33.2598)
- b. *þæt [...] þa^{DET} his lare and his word þe hie æt his sylfes*
 that [...] those his teachings and his words that they at his own
múpe gehyrdon, þa hie sceoldan mannum secgan.
 mouth heard those they should to-men relate
 ‘that [...] his teaching and his words that they heard from his mouth, (those) they should relate to men’
 (coblick, HomS_46_[BIHom_11]:119.67.1519)

Furthermore, the number of embedded left dislocations where the preposed nominal is immediately followed by the resumptive element, as in (9) above, is perhaps even lesser, although no statistics are provided by Traugott. Therefore, even though the possibility that (9) (as well as the analogous (5j)

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- (ii) *Jag har en känsla av att ungdomarna nu för tiden dom inte vill...* (Swedish)
 I have a feeling of that youths now for time they will not...
 ‘I have a feeling that youths nowadays do not want to...’
- (iii) *Han ville vite om bussen den stopper før motorvegen* (Norwegian)
 He wanted know if bus it stops before motorway
 ‘He wanted to know if the bus stops before the motorway’

(51)) is interpreted as left dislocation cannot be completely ruled out, the chances are in fact lean.

Notwithstanding the previous statements, the objections raised so far to the left dislocation analysis of separated genitives are not absolutely compelling, and that analysis is in fact possible for (5e) and (5f). The most important objection to the left dislocation hypothesis lies—in our opinion—in the several examples in the corpus where the presumed separated genitive is not in clause initial position but—contingently—in object position, as in (5b), (5g) and (5n), repeated here as (11a, 11b, 11c).

- (11) a. we gesawon *enac*^{nom/sg} *his cynryn*
 we saw Enac his kindred
 ‘we saw Enac’s kindred’
 (Old English Heptateuch (Marsden), Numbers xiii, 29)
- b. ...oð hie abræcan *Arcadum*^{dat-acc-gen?/pl} *heora burg*¹³

¹³ Some more context is necessary here: this fragment is a part of the sentence ... *oð bloðum on hie staledon, oð hie abræcan Arcadum heora burg* corresponding to the Latin original *speculati absentiam Arcadum, castellum eorum repentina inruptione perfringunt* ‘having speculated on the absence of the Arcadians, they broke into their city [*castellum eorum*] by surprise’. The Latin version, we believe, corroborates our hypothesis. This passage of the *Orosius* is, in turn, a very much abridged account of the strife between the Spartans and the Arcadians following the Peloponnese Wars, in which the Lacedaemonian leader Archidamus III defeated the Arcadians at Cromnus (364 BC). The broader context (*Lacedaemonie [...] wæron winnende on Thebane [...] oð bloðum on hie staledon oð hie abræcan Arcadum heora burg* ‘the Lacedaemonians [...] made war on the Thebans [...] and stole up on them with small bands until they overcame the city of the Arcadians’) refers somewhat elliptically to the alliance between the Arcadians and the Thebans, who had fought side by side since the times of the foundation of the Arcadian League (370 BC) and campaigned together during Epaminondas’s second invasion of the Peloponnese in 369. Therefore, reference to the Thebans in the discourse immediately preceding the passage we are discussing and the subsequent (quite abrupt) shift in focus from Thebans to Arcadians is not really surprising. Bately’s view on the fragment is not conclusive. She remarks in her notes that “...the translator appears to have misconstrued OH III. 1. 2. *Arcadum*, gpl. of *Arcades*, ‘the Arcadians’, as as. in apposition to *castellum eorum*” (1980: 247), pointing to a certain syntactic cohesion between *Arcadum* and *heora burg* in line with our analysis, but the presumed status of *Arcadum* as possessor NP is somewhat negated by Bately when she states that “...*Arcadum* [is] apparently taken as the name of a town”

...until they overcame Arcadians their city
 ‘...until they overcame the city of the Arcadians’
 (coorosiu,Or_3:1.55.18.1082)

c. ...he het alætan ut þone^{acc} halgan Petrum his scip on þære dypan
 ...he ordered to let out the holy Peter his ship into the sea
 ‘... he commanded to let the holy Peter’s ship go out into the sea’
 (coaelhom,ÆHom_15:16.2142)

One essential piece of evidence in our argumentation in this respect is (5m) (repeated below as (12)), where the possessive construction NP + Poss +NP is the complement of a preposition.

(12) ...and him^{dat/sg} þyrste on þam^{dat/sg} wif^{dat/sg}e hyre^{gen/fem/sg} geleafan¹⁴
 ...and to-him thirsted on the woman her faith
 ‘...and he¹⁵ thirsted after the woman’s faith’
 (coaelhom, ÆHom_5:242.832)

(1980: 409. glossary), hinting that *beora burg* is an apposition to *Arcadum*. We do not think, however, that the fragment can be interpreted as ‘.until they destroyed Arcadum, their city’ for several reasons, both grammatical and pragmatic. Firstly, the episode of the taking of Cromnus was very popular at the time, as attested by Xenophon (*Hellenica*, 7, 1, 3), so mistaking ‘Arcadum’ for ‘Cromnus’ is unlikely. Secondly, familiarity of the translator of the *Orosius* with the proper name Arcades (the Arcadians) is proven by the presence of that name referring unmistakably to that social group only two lines later (*Þa hie longe fuhton, þa cleopade Læcedemonia ealdormon to Arcadium* ‘when they had been fighting for a long time, then the Lacedaemonian leader called on the Arcadians’).

¹⁴ It is really surprising that the author should not have used the flexive genitive here (*on þæs wifes geleafan*). Note also that agreement of the possessive particle *hyre* (feminine, singular) with the antecedent possessor NP *þam wif* (neuter, singular) is made in accordance with natural gender and not with grammatical gender i.e. *þam wif* *his geleafan*. This is not too surprising taking into account the late date of the MSS in which the text was copied (11th century, according to Pope (1967: 22–26)) and the incipient shift from grammatical to natural gender that was taking place at that time in the English language.

¹⁵ This example refers to a biblical passage in which Jesus Christ sits down by a well and asks a Samaritan woman for water (John, 4), even though Jews did not associate at that time with Samaritans. For some reason, Möhlig-Falke (2012: 141) mistranslated the Old English text as ‘and he [the Devil, R.M.] desires woman’s faith’, when the anaphoric *he* actually refers to Jesus Christ.

This example can hardly be explained as anything but a separated genitive, and its presence in the local context of a prepositional phrase is significant, as it, firstly, renders the analysis in terms of left dislocation absolutely untenable, and secondly, provides evidence for the constituent status of the string NP + Poss + NP. This hints at a certain grammaticalisation of the structure, and somehow detaches it conceptually from the ‘possessive dative’ or ‘sympathetic dative’ construction, which does not require strict adjacency between the possessor NP and the NP corresponding to the *possessum* (see Section 3.2. below).

Returning to (11a, 11b, 11c), some doubts have been cast by Allen (1997) on the true function of ‘his’ as external possessor or pleonastic element in (11a) *we gesawon enac his cynryn* (translation of Latin *stirpem enac vidimus*). According to her (1997: 125), *enac his cynryn* should not be treated as an example of “noun + dependent third person possessive construction but as a Latin genitive form”, following Bately (1980: 156). It is interesting to note that if we accept this hypothesis, the example could be considered an ancestral instance of the early Middle English ‘his genitive’ in which the separated possessive particle would have originated as a ‘detached’ genitive morpheme (albeit a Latin one!) by confusion or near homophony between the ending *-is* and the weak form of the pronoun *his*. Another possibility is that Allen is simply referring to a scribal rearrangement of the lexeme *Enac(h)is*¹⁶ as two separate words in the spelling. Evidence of the orthographic division of inflected words into two separate items in the Old English scribal tradition is scanty, so we must give some room to the ‘metanalysis’ hypothesis. Variation in the spelling between *Enac his* and *Enachis/Enachus* in the different MSS where the Old English *Heptateuch* was copied somehow bears out this hypothesis: MS British Library, Cotton Claudius B iv and Lincoln Cathedral Library 298 have *enachus cynryn*, and Allen (1997: 126) herself mentions — once more quoting Bately (1980: 157)— the Bosworth-Toller *Supplement* (1921), where the line reads *enachis* rather than *enac his*. Bodleian Library, Laud Misc. 509 has, however, *enac his*. We reproduce that fragment of the MS below by kind permission of the Bodleian Library, Oxford (Figure 1).¹⁷

¹⁶ Regarding the ‘h’ in *Enoc(h)*, Maetzner (1874) remarks that the forms *Enoc* and *Enoch* interchanged in *Cædmon* and other Anglo-Saxon writers.

¹⁷ Marsden (2008: 145), who used this MS as the main source of his edition, amazingly corrected the fragment to *Enachis*, as he did to *Enachis bearna* (our example

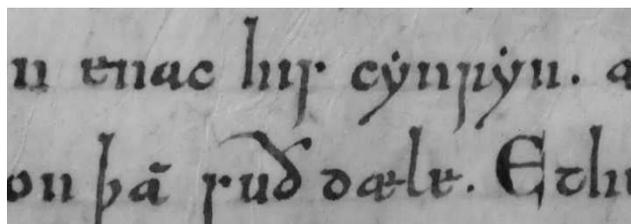


Figure 1. Fragment of *MS Laud Misc. 509*, Bodleian Library, Oxford

Let's remember in any case that the kind of metanalysis we are talking about, based as it is on perceptual, hearer-oriented strategies, could well have operated in both directions i.e. from *Enachis* into *Enac his* and from *Enac his* into *Enachis*, so the variation in the spelling mentioned above does not necessarily rule out the possibility that 'his' in (11a) is a possessive pronoun part of a separated genitive structure.

If we focus now on (11c) *he het alætan ut þone halgan Petrum his scip on þære dypan*, it is obvious that we have opted for an interpretation of causative *hatan* in this example as a monotransitive infinitival verb controlling the complement *alætan ut þone halgan Petrum his scip on þære dypan* ('he commanded to let the holy Peter's ship go out into the sea') [V+I],¹⁸ rather than as a ditransitive control verb ('he told the holy Peter to steer his ship out into the sea') [VOSI]. The Latin version (*Ut cessavit autem loci, dixit ad Simonem: duc in altum*) and the situational context of the action (Jesus Christ and Peter on their own and the former addressing the latter) seems to argue for the second interpretation (this is the option taken apparently by Van Kemenade, Milicev & Baaven 2008: 9). However, we believe that there are strong syntactic reasons for considering that *þone halgan Petrum his scip* in (11c) is a single constituent forming a separated genitive and not part of a ditransitive control structure. These reasons refer mainly to the restrictions that exist in Old English on the position of the verb *hatan* and its

(5c) above), where the manuscript clearly reads *enac his bearna*. We can hardly find an explanation for that.

¹⁸ We follow Denison (1993: 165) in referring to 'Verb + Infinitive' and 'Verb + Object/Subject + Infinitive' combinations as V+I and VOSI respectively. Other authors such as Timofeeva (2010) use the traditional ACI ('Accusative cum Infinitive') label to refer to the former.

complements—including particles—in VOSI constructions. In her study of causative *batan*, Timofeeva (2010: 116) remarks that the prevailing word order in the VOSI construction in Old English is *battan*-Acc/Subj-V, and *batan*-Acc/Subj-O-V when there is a transitive infinitive involved. These patterns amount to more than 50% of the instances in her survey:

- (13) a. Se cyng het þone arcebisceop Wulfstan þærto boc settan
 the king made the archbishop Wulfstan to-this a charter prepare
 ‘and the king made archbishop Wulfstan prepare a charter to this end’
 (codocu3, Ch_1460_Rob_83]: 8.126)
 [Example from Timofeeva (2010: 166)]
- b. ac he het his agene men hine sændan on ðone sæ
 but he made his own men him throw into the sea
 ‘but he made his own men throw him into the sea’
 (comart3,Mar_5_[Kotxor]: Ja19,A.21.176)
 [Example from Timofeeva (2010: 116)]

Timofeeva adds that patterns in which *batan* immediately precedes the infinitive are rare (only three occurrences in her entire corpus).¹⁹ Therefore, the interpretation of (11c) as VOSI would be unlikely in that respect. And it is even more unlikely if we take into account the position of the particle *ut*. As is well known (Pintzuck 1991, Fischer *et al.* 2000), the position of particles in Old English has been used as a test for verb movement and underlying structure, where determining the position of the particle with respect to two verbal forms (finite + non-finite) was crucial. From these analyses it has been suggested that the presence of particles following the combination finite + non-finite verb may represent a linguistic innovation:

¹⁹ Lowrey (2013: 23) cites (i) below, where the infinitive is immediately preceded by a causative other than *batan* (*letan*):

- (i) Se mildheorta Drihten, ðe *let scinan* his sunnan ofer ða rihtwisan and unrihtwisan gelice...
 ‘The merciful Lord, who lets/makes his sun shine over the righteous and unrighteous alike...’
 (Homilies, 406: 28)

- (14) a. He *wolde adraefan ut* anne æþeling
 He wanted drive out a prince
 ‘He wanted to drive out a prince’
 (ChronB 82.18–19 (755))
 [Example from Fischer *et al.* (2000: 196)]
- b. Hw synd ða lytlan ðe he *wolde habban up*²⁰ to his rice?
 what are the little which he wanted have up to his kingdom
 ‘Who are the little (ones) he wanted to raise up to his kingdom?’
 (ÆCHom I, 9.138.6)
 [Example from Fischer *et al.* (2000: 196)]

We can say, therefore, that the pattern Finite verb + Infinitive + Particle is not characteristically Old English (rather, it is indicative of Middle English word order). In the VOSI constructions we are dealing with, which involve an infinitival verb, an accusative subject controller and an oblique object, particles occur very rarely (only nine tokens in the entire York Corpus, according to Pintzuk (p.c.)).²¹ Moreover, the only examples of the accusative controller plus the accusative object appearing *after* the infinitive plus particle would be the dubious (11c) and its *verbatim* repetition in line 108 of the Pope (1968) edition of Ælfric’s *Homilies*. In the rest of cases (see below), the accusative subject controller immediately follows the verb *batan*, with the accusative object of the infinitive either preceding (15) or following (16) it, and the particle following both.²²

²⁰ Let’s remember that in Fischer *et al.*’s (2000) analysis the particle *up* in this example is considered a modifier of the PP, so the clause would not involve a particle as such but a modified PP.

²¹ Thanks are due to Susan Pintzuk for pointing this out to us and for kindly searching the York Corpus in search of the relevant evidence.

²² If we consider just intransitive infinitives, the distribution that we get for VOSI structures involving particles in Old English is this:

1) The accusative controller follows *battan/letan* and is followed by the infinitive + particle:

- (i) ...and heton **me gan forth** oðþæt we becoman þær se cyning wæs
 ...and made me go forth until we arrived where the king was
 ‘...and made me go forth until we arrived where the king was’
 (coelive,LS[Agnes]: 358.1965)

- (15) a. **het us ærest adon** ure dyrnan unðeawas and yfelan hatunge fram
 ure
 made us first expel our secret vices and evil hatred from
 our
 heortan *aweg*...
 hearts away...
 '(he) made us first expel our secret vices and evil hatred from our hearts'
 (coaelhom, ÆHom_14:175.2097)
- b. ...het **heora ælcne geniman** anne æmtige sester oððe anne
 wæterbuc
 ...made each of them take an empty jar or a
 pitcher
 to þam gewinne *forð*
 to the battle forth
 '...commanded each of them to take forth an empty jar or a pitcher to
 the battle'
 (cootest, Judg:7.16.5694)

2) The infinitive follows *hatan/letan* and precedes the combination accusative controller + particle:

- (ii) Gif hær to þicce sie genim swealwan [...] ahsan [...] & læt **sceadan þa ahsan on**.
 if hair too thick is take swallow ashes and let scatter
 the ashes on.
 'If hair is too thick, take swallow ashes and spread them on.'
 (colaece, Lch_II_[1]: 87.3.1.2076)

3) The infinitive follows *hatan/letan* and is followed by a particle, as in the VOSI interpretation of (11c) above. Note however that in this example the control verb is *letan*, not *hatan*, and that —crucially— the infinitive is intransitive:

- (iii) læt **yrnan ofer þone rec**
 let run over the smoke
 'let the smoke run over'
 (colacnu, Med_3_[Grattan-Singer]: 145.1.714)

- (16) and het **oðerne munuc** awurpan ut þæt glæsere fæt mid ele
 and made the other monk throw out the glass plate with oil
 ‘and made the other monk throw away the glass plate with oil’
 (cocathom2, ÆCHom_II, 11:104.422.2227)

In [V+I] constructions, however, the combination *batan* + Infinitive + Particle can be found in Old English. See the example below from Visser (1963–1973: §1227):

- (17) þa sende se cyng hider to lande & het abeodan ut xx
 þusendra
 Then sent the king hither to land and ordered to call up 20
 thousand
 englisra manna.
 of-English men
 ‘Then the king sent hither to this country and ordered twenty thousand
 Englishmen to be called up’
 (Peterborough Chronicle. an. 1094)

Therefore, we find it suspicious that (11c) should be *the only* VOSI construction in the whole of the York Corpus with the word order *batan* + Infinitive + Particle + acc/subj + obj, especially when there is another interpretation whose syntactic structure is clearly attested in the Old English language, i.e. V+I. Timofeeva (p.c.) has suggested that the Latin original and the fact that the text is written in Ælfric’s rhythmical prose (which might do away with any syntactic restrictions on the positions of verbs and particles) argue for the ditransitive control interpretation of the fragment, but it is a proven fact (see Pope (1967: 105) and more recently Pascual (2014)) that the influence of poetic diction on the syntax of Ælfric’s writings is much lesser than it has been assumed. The absolute syntactic exceptionality of (11c) as a ditransitive control structure, therefore, makes us think that the interpretation of (11c) as a separated genitive —though impossible to guarantee— is a very likely option.

Summarising this section, although some of the examples of presumed separated genitives in our corpus can in fact be analysed as left dislocation, we believe that the remarkable presence of periphrastic genitive constructions in object position and as prepositional complements is proof of the idiomaticity of the separated genitive in Old English. To what extent it can compare with

the Germanic ‘possessor doubling’ construction and what relation it bears to the ‘possessive dative’ or ‘sympathetic dative’ is something we will discuss now.

3.2. Separated genitives, ‘possessor doubling’ and the ‘possessive dative’ construction

The discussion of separated genitives in Old English presents some terminological and conceptual fuzziness as regards the ‘possessive dative’ or ‘sympathetic dative’ and its connection with the Germanic ‘external possessor’.²³ Allen (2008: 228–229) denies Old English presumed separated genitives the status of syntactically autonomous structure purported for the Germanic ‘possessor doubling’ construction, alleging that a structure like (5h) above —reproduced here as (18)— should be better analysed as two separate NPs in which the dative phrase is a ‘sympathetic dative’ and *his tungon* the direct object of the verb.²⁴

- (18) Her Romane Leone^{dat/sg/masc} þæm^{dat/sg/masc} papan^{dat/sg/masc} his tungon
 forcurfon
 Here Romans to-Leo-the-pope his tongue
 cut out
 ‘In this year the Romans cut out Pope Leo’s tongue and put out his eyes’
 (cochronA-1,ChronA_[Plummer]:797.1.596)

She suggests that “such a string would be liable to reanalysis as a single NomP in which the original ethic dative was interpreted as a possessor” (Allen 2008: 228), but alludes to the paucity of instances of this particular construction to negate that such reanalysis had effectively operated within Old English. She also comments that there exist in Old English examples where we find the necessary juxtaposition between possessor and *possessum* NPs to cause the

²³ Traditionally, the term ‘possessive dative’ has been used indistinctly for constructions involving the ‘sympathetic’ or ‘ethic’ dative and the ‘possessor doubling’ construction of Germanic languages (see for example Mustanoja 1960: 161). We will keep them as separate notions for the reasons mentioned above.

²⁴ According to Allen (2008: 228), the translation ‘cut his tongue to Pope Leo’ —though not idiomatic in PDE— would represent better the syntax of the fragment than the translation ‘cut out Pope Leo’s tongue’.

structural ambiguity to produce the reanalysis as a single NomP (19 below), but that those examples have a determiner rather than a possessive pronoun.

- (19) Her Offa Miercna cyning het *Æþelbryhte*^{dat} *rex*^{nom/?} *þæt*^{acc} *heafod*
 ofaslean
 Here Offa of-Mercia king ordered Æþelberht king the head
 strike off
 ‘In this year Offa, king of Mercia, ordered Æþelberht’s head to be struck off’
 (ChronA, 792)²⁵

We believe, however, that there is ample evidence in the examples from the corpus to suggest that the combination $Np^{dat} + Poss + NP$ forms a constituent with a highly cohesive, grammaticalised structure, comparable to the ‘possessor doubling’ construction of other Germanic languages. The first piece of evidence comes from the fact that the aforementioned syntactic combination may appear as the complement of a preposition (a traditional test for constituency), as in (5m), which we repeat again:

- (20) ...and him^{dat/sg} þyrste on þam^{dat/sg} wif^{dat/sg} hre^{gen/fem/sg} geleafan
 ...and to-him thirsted on the woman her faith
 ‘...and he thirsted after the woman’s faith’
 (coaelhom, ÆHom_5:242.832)

In addition to this, example (5k) from the *Herbarium* —repeated below as (21a)— contains the string *men his wamb*, which appears in MS British Library, Harley 6258 B (dated c. 1150) as *mannes wambe*, with the inflected genitive replacing the dative construction. This points clearly to an interpretation of the pronoun ‘his’ in (21a) as syntactically dependent on the preceding noun.

- (21) a. Gif *men*^{dat/masc/sing} *his wamb* sar sy genime...
 If man his womb painful is take...
 ‘If a man’s womb is painful, take...’
 (coherbar, Lch_I_[Herb]:2.2.129)

²⁵ Other MSS of the Chronicle also have a determiner between both NPs:

- (i) Her Offa Myrcena cinig het Æþelbrihte þ heafod of slean (ChronE, 792)
 (ii) Her Offa cing het Æþelberhte ‘cinge’ rex þ heauod ofaslean (ChronF, 792)

- b. Gif mannes^{gen/sg/masc} wambe sor si nime...
 If of-a-man womb painful is take...
 'If a man's womb is painful, take...'
 (*The Old English Herbarium (de Vriend)*, 39: 4)

So, what is actually the relationship between the Old English separated genitive and the 'possessive / sympathetic dative'? It is difficult to say with the limited amount of evidence available, but both constructions are probably related and it would not be at all surprising that the former had evolved from the latter. Hübler's (1998) study of the 'possessive dative' in Old English states that it had an essentially expressive function (as opposed to other possessive-marking devices) and that by using the dative "the speaker sets a focus on the person-possessor and expresses his/her attachment to him/her" (1998: 40). He also mentions that the dative is ambiguous in its function as possessive: "it is adverbial and adnominal at the same time, i.e. it contracts a grammatical relationship with the verb and enters into a relationship of inherent possession with the noun" (1998: 24). This is the reason why in the Old English 'possessive dative' construction the possessor NP and the *possessum* need not be adjacent:

- (22) a. *Him*^{dat} stod stincende steam of ðam muðe
 To-him came stinking odour from the mouth
 'Stinking odour came forth from his mouth'
 (*Ælfric Catholic Homilies*, p. 86)
- b. hæfde *Abrahame*^{dat} metod moncynnes breost geblissad
 had Abraham destiny of-mankind breast delighted
 'the destiny of mankind had delighted Abraham's breast'
 (Caedmon, *Genesis* 2922)
 [Examples from Hübler (1998: 19)]

Hübler (1998) also mentions that Old English speakers had the choice between two form classes expressing possessivity: a possessive pronoun or genitive ending on the one hand, and a possessive dative on the other. Both—he remarks—could even be used together, as in the following example:

- (23) & let *him*^{dat} pytan ut *his eagan* & ceorfan of *his handa*
 and let to-him gouge out his eyes & cut off his hands
 ‘and let his eyes gouge out and his hand cut off’

(ChronF, 796)

[Example from Hübler (1998: 24)]

Yuxtaposition of the possessor N and the NP containing the possessive pronoun probably provided the reanalysis scenario proposed by Allen (2008: 227–228) to give rise to a ‘possessor doubling’ construction in Old English. This configuration is well attested in the early stages of other Germanic languages, as Burridge (1996) notes for dative constructions involving body parts in Middle Dutch:

- (24) a. Als ghi dat werct soe seldi *den*^{dat} *sieken*^{dat} *sin oren* stoppen
 when you that work so shall:you to-the-patient his ears stuff
 met catoene
 with cotton
 ‘When you operate that (the drill), then you shall stuff the patient’s ears’

- b. Wanneer een mensche in arbeyt is, soe is *hem*^{dat} *sijn herte* moere
 whenever a person at work is, so is to-him his heart tired
 ‘So whenever a person works, then his heart is tired’

[Examples from Burridge (1998: 684/696)]

The same serialization structure (possessor NP^{dat} + possessive pronoun + *possessum* NP) is found in 10th-century German ((25) below):

- (25) du uuart *demo*^{dat} *Balderes uuolon* *sin uuot* birenkit
 then was to-the Balder’s colt his foot wrenched
 ‘then Baldur’s colt wrenched his hoof’

(Merseburger Zauberspruch)

[Example cited from Allen (2008: 188)]

Therefore, even though the ‘possessive dative’ or ‘sympathetic dative’ may have played a role in the development of the Old English separated genitive (as it

probably did in other Germanic languages),²⁶ we consider the latter a construction of its own, characterised by a high level of syntactic bondedness and cohesion, and with a clear constituent status. The similarity of the Old English separated genitive with the Germanic 'possessor doubling' construction is also patent if we observe that all undisputable examples of separated genitives in the corpus (this is, excluding those explicable as left dislocation or otherwise) have a possessor NP in the dative case regardless of the case required by the syntax of the clause (subject in (5j), (5k), (5l); object in (5a),²⁷ (5g),²⁸ (5h), (5i) and object of a preposition in (5m)).²⁹ Interestingly, in many of those examples the possessor N is a very common noun such as *god* in (5a), *man* in (5j, 5k, 5l) or *wyf* in (5m), whose inflection for genitive case was standard and unproblematical. This runs afoul of the hypothesis so often put forward (Jespersen 1894: 320, Kellner 1956: 189, Mustanoja 1960: 160, Pyles & Algeo 1964: 187, Traugott 1972: 125, Fischer 1992: 230, Seppänen 1997: 202) that the separated genitive was a marked grammatical option used in Old English when the possessor N was an indeclinable noun or with substantives of a foreign origin, whose genitive morpheme would be difficult to handle by scribes.

Concerning those examples of possessive structures in object position in which the possessor NP is not in the dative case but in the nominative ((5b) *we gesawon enac his cynryn*), or accusative ((5n) *he het aletan ut þone halgan Petrum his scip*), we think that they might represent a step forward in the

²⁶ In any case, it is not proved cross-linguistically that the doubling construction of Germanic languages had necessarily emerged from the reanalysis of a juxtaposed *dative* NP and one beginning with a possessor pronoun. Allen (2008) —quoting Ramat (1986)— says that there is the possibility

that in languages with impoverished case marking the possessor is a sort of 'nominativus pendens', a nominative having no syntactic connection with the possessee, and [...] that this type may be very old, belonging originally to spoken rather than written language. (Allen 2008: 206)

²⁷ We find Allen's (2008: 226) explanation of *Gode his naman* as involving the instrumental case for *Gode* in a ditransitive construction whose translation would be 'called out his name to God' far-fetched and unconvincing.

²⁸ We assume that the inflection of the possessor N in *Arcadum beora burg* is the default dative plural in *-um* used in Old English. It is very improbable that it represented the Latin third-stem genitive plural *-um* (*Arcades-Arcadum*).

²⁹ Obviously, in this example (*on þam wife hyre geleafan*) the dative case is 'non-diagnostic', as it is the case required by the preposition *on*.

development of the separated genitive in Old English —closer in form to and perhaps antedating the medieval ‘*his* genitive’—, where the original case-marking requirements for the possessor NP would be blurred.³⁰ This is obviously just a tentative explanation, and we cannot forget that all these examples allow —more or less marginally— for other interpretations apart from separated genitives.

From what has been exposed so far we think we can conclude that the separated genitive existed *de facto* in Old English, and that it essentially shared the characteristics of the Germanic ‘possessor doubling’ construction. However, the very low frequency of the phenomenon in the corpus in absolute terms (much below the average incidence of the medieval ‘*his* genitive’) and the large data gap existing between the last attested instances of the separated genitive in Old English (mid-11th century) and the first examples of the systematic use of the medieval ‘*his* genitive’ (mid-13th century) makes us think—in line with Allen (2008)— that it is highly improbable that the Old English ‘possessor doubling’ construction was the origin of the medieval ‘*his* genitive’.³¹ Nonetheless, we consider that the Old English separated genitive played an important role in the development of the ‘*his* genitive’ from the point of view of language acquisition as it made the English speakers familiar with the syntactic configuration NP + Possessive pronoun + NP which would later arise due to the independently motivated process of phonological identification of the morpheme *-es* with the weak form of *his*. When more texts and more periods of the history of English (especially the 12th century) are studied we will probably be able to assess with more precision the role of the Old English separated genitive in the process of reanalysis of the morpheme *-es* into the detached possessive marker ‘his’.

³⁰ Both texts from which these examples are taken were copied in fairly late manuscripts dating from the second half of the 11th century. Moreover, it is interesting to note that example (51) above (*Gif men his leoðu acen oððe ongeflogen sy genim...*) from MS British Library; Cotton Vitellius C III (dated mid-11th century) appears in MS British Library, Harley 6258 B (dated about a hundred years later) as *Gif man his liðu acen* (de Vriend 1984, 43: 13), with the possessor N in the nominative case.

³¹ The hypothesis of the phonological origin of the ‘*his* genitive’ in the Middle Ages due to homophony between the morpheme *-es* and the weak pronoun ‘his’ is confirmed by the findings in the case studies of Layamon’s *Brut* MS O in Casado Núñez (2013) and Pérez Lorido & Casado Núñez (2013a, 2013b).

4. Conclusions

Though the sheer number of examples of separated genitives in Old English is very low if compared with the inflected genitive, their incidence and distribution across the corpus is significant enough as not to rule them out as performance errors. Separated genitives occur in Old English in all positions in the clause, including post-verbal object position and as prepositional complements, which rules out their analysis in terms of 'left dislocation', a major argument in Allen's (2008) approach. Moreover, the statistical frequency and extent of the separated genitive in Old English provides some basis to establish a certain continuity (in strict terms of syntactic configurations) with the examples of the genuine '*his* genitive' which are found in the late 13th century English texts. We propose that familiarity of speakers with the syntactic configuration NP + Poss + NP resulting from the use of the separated genitive in Old English paved the way for the use of the '*his* genitive' in the Middle Ages, which —though instantiated by a completely different trigger (of a phonological nature)— produced essentially the same syntactic structure.

Finally, we think that there are reasons to believe that the Old English separated genitive was originally very similar to the 'possessor doubling' or 'external possessor' construction of other Germanic languages. Although related to the 'possessive dative' or 'sympathetic dative', from which it possibly evolved, we consider that the Old English separated genitive is a structure of its own, with a high level of bondedness and cohesion, and the same status of grammaticalised structure as the 'doubling construction' of its Germanic relatives. The presence in the corpus of some sporadic examples of possessor NPs in cases other than dative (this is, in the case required by the syntax of the clause and not by the syntax of the 'doubling construction') could be seen as a step ahead in the history of the construction in English and as a natural link between the older separated genitives (closer morphologically and syntactically to the Germanic 'doubling construction') and the medieval '*his* genitive', where the possessor NP is usually unmarked for case.

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