

Chapter 8

Verb-initial declaratives in Old English prose: A functional analysis

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The aim of this study is to conduct a comprehensive, corpus-based analysis of verb-initial main declarative clauses in Old English prose records in order to determine their discourse functions and to establish what linguistic and/or extralinguistic factors may be responsible for the highly uneven distribution of the structure. The analysis shows that Old English verb-initial declaratives perform two main functions: narrative and descriptive, with the latter restricted to just a handful of early compositions, and the former attested as a low-frequency item in the vast majority of texts. Both patterns are analysed in context and it turns out that verb-initial declaratives with and without an overt subject share many properties and functions, and that verb-initial declaratives with personal pronoun subjects are rare, which has some important implications for the interpretation of the results.

1 Introduction

Verb-initial (V1) main declarative clauses with an overt subject are a relatively well-attested structure present in numerous Germanic languages (Walkden 2014: 94; Ringe & Taylor 2014: 408). In the Old Germanic context, V1 was quite frequent in negated declaratives (Hopper 1975), whereas non-negated V1 declaratives were a marked pattern (Lehmann 2005), usually associated with some sort of emphasis or “dramatic force” (Smith 1971: 96). The special function of V1 is directly reflected in the term “narrative inversion”, which is usually equated with a non-negated V1 declarative containing an overt subject, with the underlying assumption that the motivation behind the pattern was always to push the narration forward.



This study confirms the initial findings of Cichosz (2022), proving that in Old English (OE) this assumption is not fully confirmed by the data and V1 cannot be exclusively associated with a narrative function because there is an alternative structure, relatively frequent in early prose texts, where V1 declaratives are used to provide additional information about a known referent.

As far as other Old Germanic languages are concerned, V1 declaratives are for example attested in Old High German (OHG), where they are reported to appear in presentational and existential structures, with mutative verbs (i.e. verbs of change, including verbs of movement), passive or passive-like constructions, verbs of saying, and negated clauses (Axel 2007). Their frequency in OHG is quite robust (with the maximum at 14% in the OHG Tatian Gospel Harmony, cf. Cichosz et al. 2016: 127), while in Old Icelandic (OI) they constitute 18% of all main declaratives (Booth 2018). Most of these are classified as narrative (Booth 2018: 107), and narrative inversion, in the context of OI, is defined as “a particularly common type of V1” (Booth & Beck 2021: 41) alongside presentational structures, impersonal constructions and clauses without an overt subject. By contrast, in Old English (OE) the frequency of V1 declaratives is generally on the low side (ca. 2% in non-negated main clauses, cf. Cichosz 2020: 365), and the structure, if used, is reported to introduce a new storyline or mark some sort of transition in the narrative structure of the text (Mitchell 1985: §3933; Los 2000; Ohkado 2004; Calle-Martín & Miranda-García 2010). Its use is quite regular in OE poetry, but the pattern is very unevenly distributed in the prose records, with the frequency of V1 declaratives relatively high in just a handful of OE prose texts, for example, Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica* (Ohkado 2000, Calle-Martín & Miranda-García 2010, Cichosz 2017b).

Thanks to the availability of the syntactically annotated York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose (YCOE, Taylor et al. 2003), it is possible to conduct detailed quantitative and qualitative studies of syntactic structures, including narrative inversion. The quantitative approach, however, faces a serious problem in terms of the adequate operationalisation of the structure. As signalled in Cichosz (2022), there are two parallel constructions taking exactly the same form in the OE data, illustrated by (1) and (2):

- (1) *Wæs þa sum Godes þegen binnon þære byri*
was then some.NOM God.GEN nobleman.NOM in the.DAT city.DAT
‘There was a man of God in the city.’ [ÆCHom I, 27: 401.23–25]
- (2) *Hæfde þæt deor þrie hornas on foran heafde*
had the.NOM animal.NOM three.ACC horns.ACC on forehead.DAT
‘The animal had three horns on its forehead.’ [coalex, Alex: 20.2.229]

(1) is a classic example of narrative inversion: The clause introduces a new participant and it is used at the beginning of a story. (2), however, is quite different, providing additional information about a known referent without pushing the narration forward in any way. In Cichosz (2022), where samples from 4 different prose texts with the highest frequency of V1 declaratives are analysed, it turns out that narrative inversion is used by Ælfric (though not consistently in all of his works), while other prose texts (Bede, Vercelli Homilies and Alexander's Letter) opt for the construction shown in (2). Thus, it seems that in OE V1 declaratives cannot be equated with narrative inversion as at least some of them perform a drastically different discourse function. It is not uncommon in language for the same form to have distinct meanings or to perform different functions, but such a situation is easily missed if only aggregate numbers are taken into account. In this case, both structures involve exactly the same corpus annotation: The clause is main, non-conjunct and non-negated, the verb is indicative, and there is an overt subject in the clause. It is technically impossible to separate one from the other in any automated way: Manual analysis in context is an indispensable component of the study.

The aim of this investigation is to conduct a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative analysis of all V1 declaratives in the YCOE corpus in order to establish the actual frequency of both narrative and descriptive V1 clauses in OE prose (and, if possible, to identify other functions of V1 declaratives), seeking the main reasons for the uneven distribution of the patterns in YCOE. On a more general level, the study shows the importance of qualitative, context-based analyses, which can and should complement any data-driven corpus studies.

2 V1 declaratives in Old English

The functions of V1 declaratives in OE are usually quite broadly defined as marking some sort of transition in the narrative structure of the text (Mitchell 1985: §3933; Calle-Martín & Miranda-García 2010), which is not necessarily as exceptional as the reported markedness of the pattern would suggest. OE had a large set of clause-initial discourse-sequencing adverbs, mostly *þa* 'then' and *þonne* 'then', which could and did mark transition, with *þa* being the most frequent and neutral device used for this function in OE prose (van Kemenade & Los 2006). It has been noted that narrative inversion tends to co-occur with particularly vivid or dramatic fragments of the narration (Stockwell 1977: 291; Kiparsky 1995: 163; Los 2000), though Petrova (2006: 168) reports that in Beowulf V1 clauses "occur exactly in cases where the plot enters a new stage of development or the nar-

ration needs to be pushed forward” and according to her study, V1 and *þa*-VS clauses (at least in OE poetry) are functionally interchangeable.

Nonetheless, existing research on narrative inversion in prose still treats V1 declaratives as a special discourse device and Ohkado (2004) is most explicit in his classification of all the functions fulfilled by the structure. His analysis of V1 declaratives used in Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies I (30 clauses in total) reveals that they mark the transition to a new action, summarise a discussion, introduce a new or contrasting character or type and open a new story or paragraph. Mitchell (1985: §3930) mentions that V1 declaratives are often presentational constructions (which would probably correspond to Ohkado’s (2004) “new character” function). Allen (1995: 34) suggests that V1 serves to “emphasise the (new information) subject”, which is quite problematic since V1 clauses are known to employ personal pronoun subjects (Ringe & Taylor 2014: 408), and such constituents by definition cannot introduce new discourse referents, but Petrova (2006: 171) describes the function of V1 as “focusing not only the subject but the entire proposition”. Los (2000) finds a difference between the two on the basis of her analysis of Ælfric’s works: In her study, both V1 and *þa*-VS clauses occur at episode boundaries but the former indicate “a thematic discontinuity”, while the latter mark “the smooth flow of narrative” (Los 2000: 263).

As mentioned in Section 1, more recently, it has been shown that V1 declaratives attested in OE prose texts have more functions, and not all of them may reasonably be covered by the umbrella term “narrative inversion” (Cichosz 2022). Attested patterns include both narration-progressing clauses as in (3) and descriptive structures giving additional information about previously introduced discourse referents shown in (4). Interestingly, the patterns are reported to show drastically different lexical preferences: While the former tend to co-occur with dynamic and punctual verbs (as in *wæs cumen* ‘was come’ in (3), the latter is associated with verbs of state (*wesan* ‘to be’ or *habban* ‘to have’ as in (4).

- (3) *þa foron forð oþ hi comon to Lundenbyrig & ða mid*
 then went forth until they.NOM came to London.DAT and then with
þam burhwarum & mid þam fultume ðe him westan
 the.DAT citizens.DAT and with the.DAT help.DAT that they.DAT from.west
com foran east to Beamfleote; Wæs ða Hæsten þær cumen mid
 came went east to Benfleet was then Hasten.NOM there come with
his herge þe ær æt Middeltune sæt
 his.DAT army.DAT which before at Middletown.DAT sat
 ‘Then they went forth until they reached London and then they went east
 to Benfleet with the citizens and with the reinforcements that came to

them from the west. **Then Hasten came there with his army, which had previously stayed at Middletown’.**

[ChronC (O’Brien_O’Keeffe): [038400 (894.35)]]

- (4) *þa eode he, ure dryhten Crist, ut beforan þa*
 then went he.NOM our.NOM lord.NOM Christ.NOM out before the.ACC
Iudeas. Hæfde he þapyrnenne coronan on his
 Jews.ACC had he.NOM the.ACcthorny.ACC crown.ACC on his.DAT
heafde, & mid þam readan hrægle gegyred wæs. þa cwæð
 head.DAT and with the.DAT red.DAT gown.DAT clothed was then said
he, Pilatus, to Iudeum: Ecce homo
 he.NOM Pilate.NOM to Jews.DAT [Latin]

‘Then he, our Lord Christ, went out before the Jews. **He had a crown of thorns on his head** and he was wearing a red robe. Then he, Pontius Pilate, said to the Jews: *Ecce homo*.’

[HomS_24_ (ScraggVerc_1): [009500 (159)]–[009700 (161)]]

This means that the same form (a non-negated V1 declarative clause with an overt subject) may represent both coordinating and subordinating discourse relations, as defined in the Segmented Discourse Representation Theory. In this theory, clauses are classified as coordinating if they belong to the main line of narrative, introducing main events and pushing the story forward, and subordinating when they are placed in a substructure of the text, presenting background, providing additional information, comments or explanations (Asher & Lascarides 2003; Asher & Vieu 2005). (4) is a clear example of elaboration or background, while (3) operates on the highest level of text hierarchy, presenting one of subsequent events in the story. In the OHG context, Hinterhölzl & Petrova (2005: 73) determine that “verb-initial structures establish coordinative discourse relations whereas verb-second clauses signal subordinating linkage to previous discourse part”, which is in line with the conclusions reached by Los (2000) for OE. However, examples such as (4) clearly diverge from this pattern as V1 declaratives are not consistently found on the main level of the narration.¹

One of the main limitations of various functional studies on OE narrative inversion is that they are predominantly based only on the output of Ælfric of

¹An example of a study applying the Segmented Discourse Representation Theory to the analysis of OE is Bech (2012), who concludes that there is no straightforward relation between a specific constituent order pattern (with the focus of the study on V-final and V-late clauses) and discourse function in OE. Thus, at least in OE, the situation seems quite complex, not only in the context of V1 declaratives.

Eynsham, a famous OE writer and translator, who is single-handedly responsible for ca. 25% of OE prose records (Cichosz & Pęzik 2021). What is more, Ælfric (c. 955–1010) was active at the very end of the OE period, so his output, probably full of stylistic idiosyncrasies, represents only the later part of period. As a result, such studies do not cover early OE, which is the most probably reason why the high frequency of the structure represented by (4) has gone largely unnoticed. Moreover, the analyses are usually based on relatively small datasets, for example Ohkado (2004) analyses 30 V1 clauses from Ælfric's Catholic Homilies, Los (2000) analyses variation between V1 and *þa*-VS in clauses with the verb *onginnan/beginnan* 'to begin' in all works by Ælfric (11 V1 clauses vs. 35 *þa*-VS clauses), and Cichosz (2022) takes samples of V1 clauses with the three most frequent verbal collocates from four different YCOE texts (57 clauses in the qualitative part of the analysis). As a result, the current understanding of the functional load of V1 declaratives and the division of labour between narrative V1 and other OE discourse devices is fragmentary and calls for a comprehensive analysis.

Finally, it should be noted that there are considerable differences in the distribution of V1 declaratives in the OE textual records. The structure is relatively rare in prose but frequent in poetry (while *þa*-VS is frequent in prose and rare in poetry), although there is one prose text where the frequency of V1 declaratives is exceptionally high, namely the OE translation of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* (Mitchell 1985: §3932; Calle-Martín & Miranda-García 2010). However, Afros (2022) shows that in later manuscripts the frequency of V1 declaratives is slightly lower (15% in T as opposed to 20% in earlier witnesses), with changes into the less marked verb-second, V-late or *þa*-VS. Since the OE Bede is based on a Latin source, Ohkado (2000) concluded that it is a foreign structure, but more detailed studies by Cichosz (2017b) and Cichosz et al. (2016) show the pattern is mostly independent from the Latin original. This study investigates whether the same level of independence is visible for all the functions of V1 declaratives attested in the OE Bede.

3 Study design

The aim of the study is to conduct a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative analysis of all V1 declaratives found in the YCOE corpus (Taylor et al. 2003) and find answers to the following research questions:

- a. What are the functions of V1 declaratives in OE prose, and is the narrative function dominant?

- b. What is the actual frequency of narrative V1 and how is it distributed in the OE prose corpus?
- c. What is the relation between narrative V1 and descriptive V1 declaratives?
- d. Which OE prose texts use the identified patterns and do these compositions form a homogeneous group?
- e. Does Latin influence any particular function of V1 declaratives in the OE Bede?
- f. What is the main reason for the uneven distribution of V1 declaratives in OE prose?

Since YCOE is a syntactically annotated corpus, it was possible to extract the clauses automatically by means of the following CorpusSearch 2 (Randall 2005–13) query:

node: IP-MAT*

query: ((IP-MAT* iDomsNumber 1 finite_verb)

AND (IP-MAT* iDoms NP-NOM*)

AND (NP-NOM* iDoms ! *con**pro**exp*))

The query searched for verb-initial main clauses, which automatically excludes conjunct clauses introduced by coordinating conjunctions, since these are treated separately in studies of OE syntax because of their specific constituent order patterns, often overlapping with subordinate clauses (Mitchell 1985; van Kemenade 1987; Pintzuk 1999; Fischer et al. 2000; Ringe & Taylor 2014; Cichosz 2022). An obligatory element of the clause included in the query was an overt subject, though an additional mirror query searching specifically for clauses without overt subjects was used for the purposes of the case study described in Section 4.3. The definition file of the finite verb used in the query neither covers negated forms (negation is a known factor associated with V1 order in OE and research shows that it is not related to narrative inversion, cf. Cichosz 2020) nor subjunctive forms² since the latter were predominantly directive, representing

²The file includes the following verb labels:

RP+VBPI|RP+VBDI|RP+VBP|RP+VBD|RP+BEPi|RP+BEDI|RP+BED|RP+BEP|RP+HVPI|RP+HVDI|RP+HVP|RP+HVD|RP+AXPI|RP+AXDI|RP+AXP|RP+AXD|RP+MDPI|RP+MDDI|RP+MDP|RP+MDD|VBPI|VBDI|VBP|VBD|BEPi|BEDI|BED|BEP|HVPI|HVDI|HVP|HVD|AXPI|AXDI|AXP|AXD|MDPI|MDDI|MDP|MDD

the so-called jussive subjunctive structures. Forms that were ambiguous between indicative and subjunctive were included in order to not narrow down the sample excessively; any examples of directives were manually excluded, and so were the examples with modal verbs since a closer analysis in context revealed that all of them could be interpreted as directive. Since imperative clauses in OE (as in any Germanic language) are usually V1, morphologically indicative verbs in clauses with similar illocutionary force could follow the same pattern. Such clauses were not taken into account since their function is clearly different from narrative and descriptive V1 declaratives, which this study focuses on. (5) and (6) are examples of clauses returned by the query which were discarded at this stage.

- (5) *Weaxe ge nu*
grow you now
‘Grow now.’ [cootest, Gen:9.7.381]
- (6) *Mæg gehyran se ðe wyle be þam halgan mædene*
may hear this.NOM who will by the.DAT holy.DAT maiden.DAT
Eugenian ...
Eugenia.DAT
‘Let everyone interested hear about the holy maiden Eugenia...’
[coaelive,+ALS_[Eugenia]:1.197]

The query returned 918 examples but the manual cleanup narrowed the final number of V1 clauses included in the study down to 840.

The qualitative analysis of V1 clauses and the division into particular functions required looking at the examples in broader context, and the Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus (DOEC) was used for this purpose. As a result, when V1 clauses are presented in isolation, they are accompanied by YCOE identifiers, but when broader context is given, the examples are followed by DOEC identifiers. The functional classification was based on a bottom-to-top approach, in other words, the only pre-set category was narrative and the analysis was supposed to identify all the distinct patterns visible in the data.

The analysis of extralinguistic factors (genre, translation status, dialect) was based on YCOE metadata; texts were divided into early (o1-o2) and late OE (o3-o4) on the basis of their presumed date of composition. The analysis of the relation between source Latin clauses and their OE equivalents in the case study of Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica* (Section 4.2) was based on manual alignment of all 459 V1 declaratives from Bede to their most probable Latin sources. Since it is not certain which Latin manuscript was the direct source of the OE translation (Lemke 2015:

43) and it is very probable that this particular version of Latin Bede did not survive (Wallis 2013), the choice of the Latin edition was based on its availability in electronic form (Plummer 1896). Clauses were classified as modelled on Latin if the source clause had a clause-initial verb form (finite or non-finite); presence of the subject was not considered necessary since pronominal subjects are rarely overt in Latin. If the verb was placed later in the Latin clause, or if the OE clause was a serious paraphrase of the original fragment, the clause was classified as independent. Examples provided in Section 4.2 hopefully make this methodology transparent.

4 Results

4.1 General results

Table 1 presents YCOE texts with the highest absolute number of V1 declaratives, using 10 clauses as a cut-off point. Rather unsurprisingly, and confirming the results of numerous studies reported in Section 2, Bede takes the first position in this classification, with the highest number of clauses covering more than a half of all the OE prose examples of the structure under investigation.

Table 1: Absolute frequency of V1 declaratives in different OE prose texts

Bede's <i>History of the English Church</i>	459
Vercelli Homilies	67
Blickling Homilies	45
Alexander's <i>Letter to Aristotle</i>	42
Ælfric's Catholic Homilies I	35
Ælfric's Lives of Saints	21
Ælfric's Catholic Homilies II	20
Anglo-Saxon Chronicle D	13
Boethius' <i>Consolation of Philosophy</i>	11
Heptateuch	10
Anglo-Saxon Chronicle C	10
YCOE in total	840

What is more, it should be noted that 73% of the clauses in question come from 4 non-Ælfrician texts (Bede, Vercelli Homilies, Blickling Homilies and Alexander's Letter), while (as shown in Section 2) the only detailed and context-based

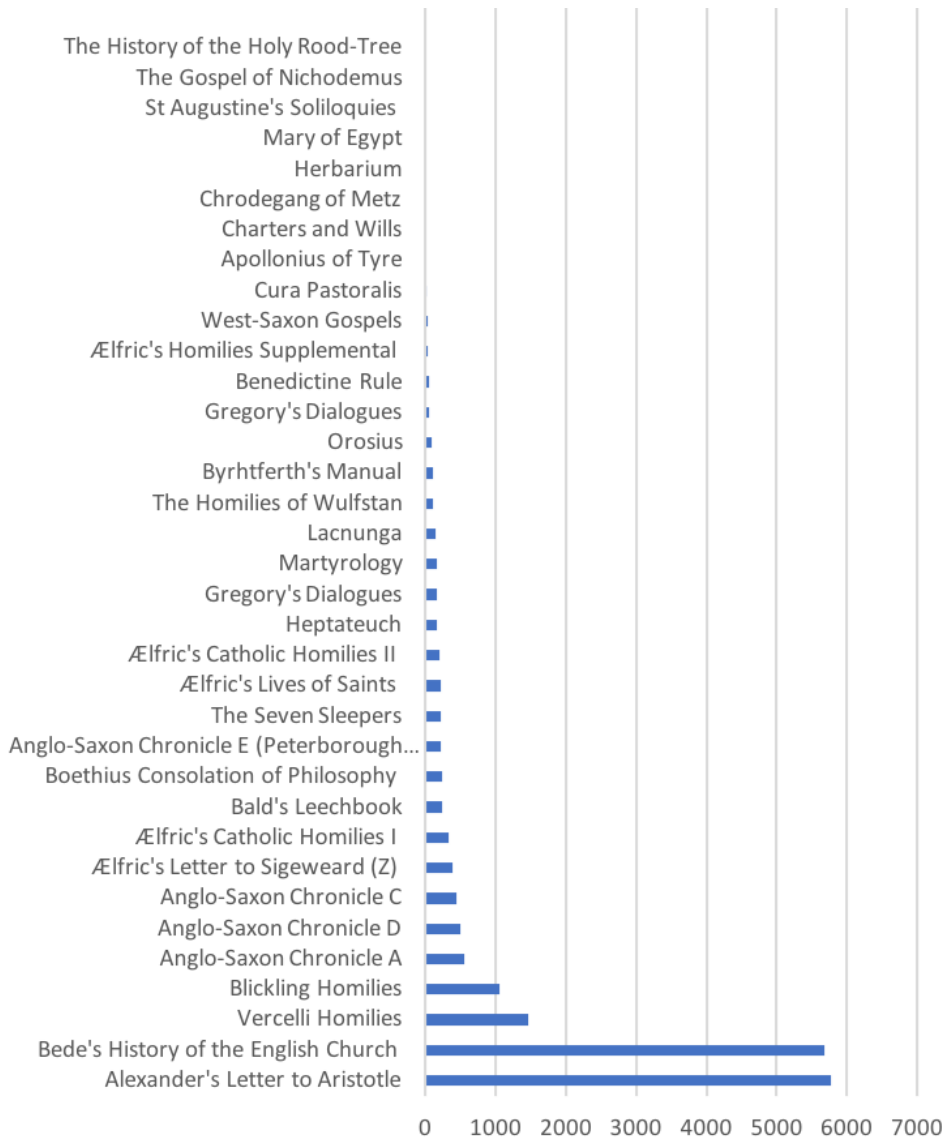


Figure 1: Normalised frequencies of V1 declaratives per 1,000,000 words in the longest YCOE texts

functional studies of the structure in OE prose are primarily based on the output of Ælfric.

When normalised frequencies are taken into account, the difference between individual texts becomes even more conspicuous, and it is actually Alexander's

Letter, not Bede, which turns out to have the highest frequency of V1 declaratives in YCOE. Nevertheless, the top four remains the same (Bede, Alexander's Letter, Vercelli Homilies and Blickling Homilies) and Ælfric's compositions show very low results, which indicates that functional studies of non-Ælfrician texts are needed to understand the function of V1 declaratives in OE prose.

Functionally speaking, it is necessary to analyse the clauses in a larger context to get a clear idea of what a V1 clause does in a particular place in discourse. As explained in Section 3, this study followed a bottom-to-top approach, which made it possible to identify four clear patterns in the data, with some interrelations between them. A typical context for a V1 declarative (in bold) is shown in (7).

- (7) *Da wæs sum þegen annanias gehaten. & his*
 then was some.NOM nobleman.NOM Ananias called and his.NOM
wif saphira hi cwædon him betweonan þæt
 wife.NOM Saphira.NOM they.NOM said them.DAT between that
hi woldon bugan to þæra apostola geferrædene namon
 they.NOM would turn to the.GEN apostles.GEN fellowship.DAT took
þa to ræde þæt him wærligor wære þæt hi
 then to counsel.DAT that them.DAT wiser were that they.NOM
sumne dæl heora landes wurpes æthæfdon weald hu
 some.ACC part.ACC their.GEN land.GEN worth.GEN withhold in case
him. getimode Com þa se þegen mid feo
 them.DAT befell came then the.NOM nobleman.NOM with riches.DAT
to þam apostolum. *Da cwæð petrus: annania: deofol*
 to the.DAT apostles.DAT then said Peter.NOM Ananias.NOM devil.NOM
bepæhte þine heortan. & þu hæfst alogen þam halgan
 deceived your.ACC heart.ACC and you.NOM have lied the.DAT holy.DAT
gast.
 ghost.DAT

'There was some nobleman called Ananias and his wife Saphira. They said to each other that they wanted to turn to the apostles' fellowship. (They) agreed that it would be better for them to withhold some part of their land's worth in case something happened to them. **Then the nobleman came with riches to the apostles.** Then Peter said: Ananias, devil deceived your heart and you have lied to the Holy Ghost.'

[ÆCHom I, 22, [004000 (357.88–92)]]

As can be seen, the V1 declarative is surrounded by *þa*-VS clauses (and there is also a V1 clause without an overt subject, *namon þa ...*, which may be an important part of the whole picture, cf. 4.3), so narrative V1 seems to be one of many tools OE writers had at their disposal when presenting a story. The clause *Com þa se þegen* undoubtedly introduces a subsequent event in the narration.³ Whether this clause is more “dramatic” than the following *Da cwæð petrus* is perhaps less clear, but the narrative function of the clause in bold is certain.

The next pattern, related to the general narrative function and potentially a subtype of it, is the presentational structure, illustrated by (8).

- (8) *Mid þy ic ða wolde geornlicor þa þing geseon &*
 when I.NOM then wanted more carefully the.ACC things.ACC see and
furðor eode þa geseah ic gylденne wingearд trumlicne &
 further went then saw I.NOM golden.ACC vine.ACC strong.ACC and
fæstlicne, & þa twigo his hongodon geond þa
 firm.ACC and the.NOM twigs.NOM his.NOM hang over the.ACC
columnnan Ða wundrode ic þæs swiðe. Wæron in þæm
 columns.ACC then wondered I.NOM this.GEN very were in the.DAT
wingearde gylденu leaf & his hon &
 vinebush.DAT golden.NOM leaves.NOM and his.NOM tendrils.NOM and
his wæstmas wæron cristallum & smaragdus, eac þæt
 his.NOM fruit.NOM were crystal.NOM and emeralds.NOM also the.NOM
gimcyn mid þæm cristallum ingemong hongode.
 gem.NOM with the.DAT crystals.DAT among hang
 ‘When I wanted to see these things more carefully and went further, then
 I saw a golden vine, strong and firm, and the twigs were hanging over the
 columns. Then I wondered at this very much. **There were golden leaves
 in the vine bush** and the vine’s tendrils and fruit were crystal and
 emerald, and also a gem was hanging there among the crystals.’
 [Alex, 003700 (8.14–8.16)]

Such clauses would usually be translated into Modern English with existential *there*. In this case, the golden leaves of the vine are an important element in the story of all the riches that Alexander’s army encountered in the city of Porres, so the clause represents coordinating discourse relations, functioning on

³An important factor here is also the subject shift (from the plural, indicating Ananias and his wife, to the nobleman himself), observed regularly in narrative V1 clauses with a nominal subject, see Section 4.3.

the main level of the storyline. Since this seems to be the case with all the presentational structures identified in this study, unless signalled otherwise, presentational clauses (93 in total) will be included in the general statistics considering narrative V1.

In addition, there is a big group of V1 declaratives used in reporting structures to quote (mainly direct) speech, as in (9). While such reported dialogues undoubtedly push the story forward and could also be treated as examples of narrative inversion, I will keep them separate in the statistics since the level of attraction between V1 and verbs of saying is exceptionally high (Cichosz 2017a).

- (9) *Eft he frægn, hwæt seo þeod nemned wære, þe*
 Again he.NOM asked what the.NOM people.NOM called were which
heo of cwomon. Ondswarede him mon þæt heo
 they.NOM of came answered him.DAT one.NOM that they.NOM
Ongle nemde wæron. Cwæð he: Wel þæt swa mæg:
 Angles.NOM called were Said he.NOM well that.NOM so may
forðon heo ænlice onsyne habbað, & eac swylce
 because they.NOM angelic.ACC faces.ACC have and also so
gedafonað, þæt heo engla æfenerfeweardas in heofonum sy.
 becomes that they.NOM angels.NOM afterwards in heavens.DAT be
 ‘He asked again about the name of the tribe from which they came.
 Someone answered him that they were called Angles. He said: It may
 well be so because they have angelic faces and it is only becoming that
 they will later be angels in heaven.’ [Bede 2, [002000 (1.96.21–22)]]

Last but not least, the descriptive type shown in (10) clearly stands out from (7)–(9). In this case, the text presents the life and heroic death of Saint Martin. Before the story unfolds, St. Martin’s background is presented and some additional information about his place of birth and family is presented. Then, the story moves back to the main line of narration and the most important events of the saint’s life are described. Apart from the fact that the V1 declaratives shown in (10) play a different role in discourse, appearing in a sub-structure of the text, what is quite striking is the great accumulation of such clauses in one fragment, which is not an exceptional situation as such clusters of descriptive V1 declaratives appear in all of the “top four texts” identified in this study (cf. Table 1).

- (10) ... *þe Martinus wæs haten. Wæs he Gode swiðe gecoren on*
 ... who Martin.NOM was called was he.NOM God.DAT very dear in
his þeawum. Wæs he in Pannana þære mægðe
 his.DAT customs.DAT was he.NOM in Pannonia.DAT the.DAT diocese.DAT

in woruld cumen, in Arrea ðam tune. Wæs he
in world.ACC come in Arrea.DAT the.DAT city.DAT was he.NOM
hwæðre in Italia afeded, in <Ticinā> þære byrig. Wæs
nevertheless in Italy.DAT raised in Ticine.DAT the.DAT city.DAT was
he for worulde swiðe godre gebyrde. Wæron his
he.NOM for world.DAT very good.GEN birth.GEN were his.NOM
fæder & his modor buta hæðen. Wæs
father.NOM and his.NOM mother.NOM both.NOM heathen.NOM was
his fæder ærest cyninges þegn, & þa æt nehstan
his.NOM father.NOM first king.GEN thane.NOM and then at next
geþah þæt he wæs tribunus, þæt is ealdorman cyninges
happened that he.NOM was tribune.NOM that is alderman.NOM king.GEN
þegna. Ða sceolde he, sanctus Martinus, nyde beon
thanes.GEN then should he.NOM saint.NOM Martin.NOM necessary be
sona on his giogoðhade on geferræddenne cyninges þegna
soon on his.DAT youth.DAT on fellowship.DAT king.GEN thanes.GEN
‘... who was called Martin. He was very dear to God in his customs. He
has come to the world in the diocese of Pannonia, in the city of Arrea.
He was nevertheless brought up in Italy, in the city of Ticinum (Pavia).
He was of very good birth to the world. His father and his mother
were both heathen. His father was first the king’s thane, and then (he)
was a tribune, that is the alderman of the king’s thanes. Then he, St.
Martin, in his youth had to belong to the fellowship of the king’s thanes.’
[LS17.2, [000200 (1)]–[000800 (10)]]

After the aforementioned manual analysis of all the V1 clauses in context, it turned out that almost one third of all examples retrieved from YCOE corresponds to the descriptive function represented by (10), which is quite a high proportion, considering the generally low frequency of the structure. Table 2 illustrates the functional division in the texts with the highest number of V1 clauses (the presentational function, being closest to the narration-pushing function, is included under the label “narrative”).

First of all, it should be noted that narrative V1 is very well represented in all the texts, though the proportions differ from 95% in Catholic Homilies I to 29% in Alexander’s Letter. In three of the four texts with the highest number of V1 clauses, the proportions between narrative, quotative and descriptive uses are quite balanced. Alexander’s Letter (a fictitious account of Alexander the Great’s military campaign in India written to his master Aristotle, cf. Khalaf 2013) stands

Table 2: Functions of V1 declaratives in YCOE texts

text	narrative (incl. presentational)	quotative	descriptive	all
Bede's History	213 (46%)	93 (21%)	153 (33%)	459
Vercelli Homilies	27 (40%)	11 (17%)	29 (43%)	67
Blickling Homilies	14 (31%)	13 (29%)	18 (40%)	45
Alexander's Letter to Aristotle	12 (29%)	2 (4%)	28 (67%)	42
Ælfric's Catholic Homilies I	20 (95%)	1 (5%)	0 (0%)	21
Ælfric's Lives of Saints	28 (80%)	4 (20%)	0 (0%)	35
Ælfric's Catholic Homilies II	17 (85%)	2 (5%)	0 (0%)	20
Anglo-Saxon Chronicle D	11 (85%)	0 (0%)	2 (15%)	13
YCOE (total)	448 (53%)	136 (16%)	256 (31%)	840

out from the other texts because of its rare use of quotative V1, but this must be related to the narrative structure of the travelogue since there are hardly any dialogues reported in the text. Most importantly, however, Table 2 shows that descriptive V1 is literally never used by Ælfric, even though he consistently uses V1 declaratives as a narrative device. This is a full confirmation of the tentative observation made in Cichosz (2022) on the basis of text samples. Interestingly, though, other texts are not that consistent, that is, non-Ælfrician compositions, if they use V1 declaratives at all, would usually make use of both narrative and descriptive V1.

When particular functions are presented as normalised frequencies (Figure 2) it becomes evident that the “top four” texts are exceptional not only in their particularly frequent use of V1 declaratives, but also in the employment of V1 clauses for the descriptive and quotative functions. Other texts, if V1 declaratives are attested in them at all, treat them as a narrative device.

Zooming in on the longest YCOE files, where the probability of finding a reasonable number of V1 declaratives is the highest (see Table 3), it can be found that many texts clearly avoid the structure entirely, and there is no clear pattern connecting texts where V1 is in use. For example, Gregory's Dialogues C, Orosius and Cura Pastoralis, all being early translations just like Bede's History, show

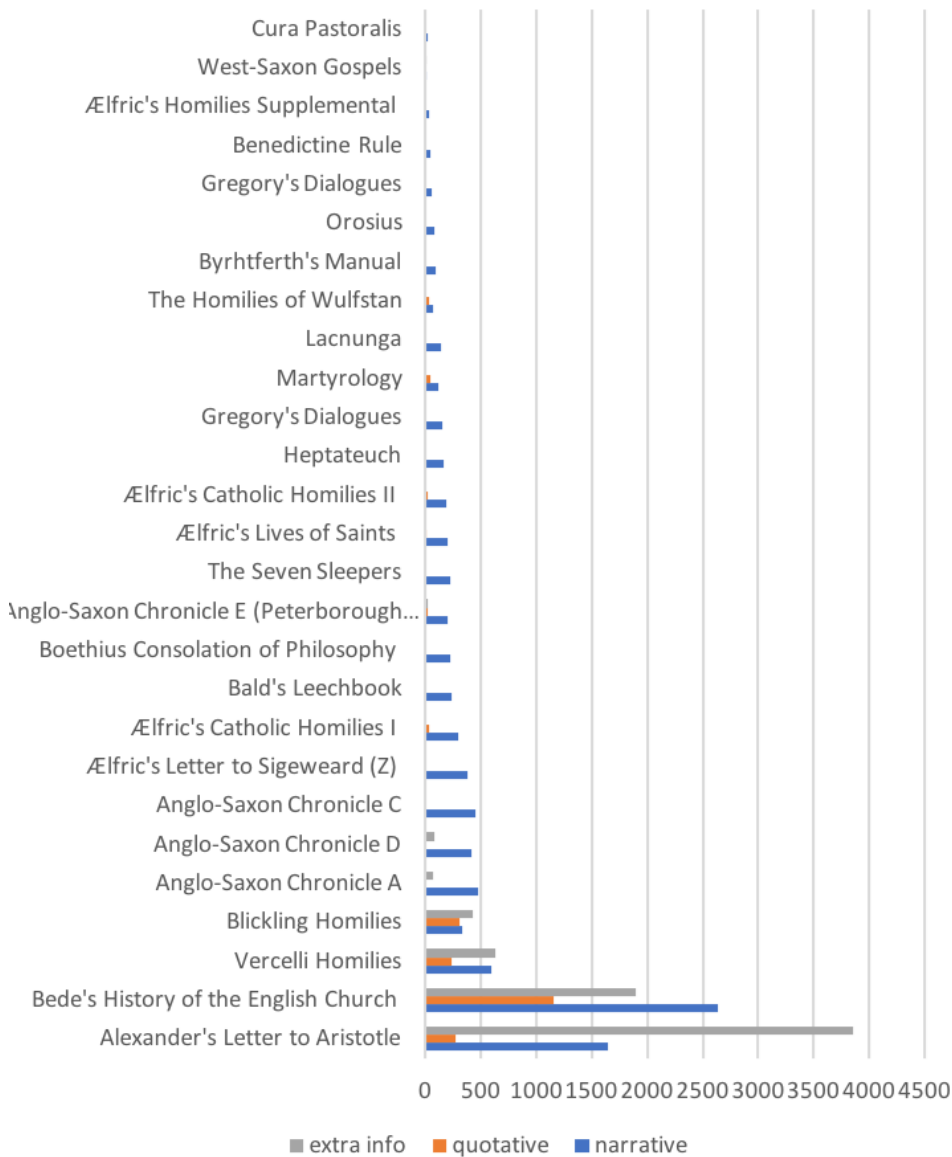


Figure 2: Normalised frequencies of V1 declaratives with particular functions per 1,000,000 words

no V1 of any type. The only regularity visible in the data is that descriptive V1 is only used in early texts (though this is a one-way relation only, i.e. virtually all descriptive V1 clauses are early OE⁴ but not all early OE texts have descriptive V1 clauses), while narrative V1 is scattered around the corpus and appears (mostly with very low frequencies) in various texts. Its use must have been stylistically conditioned since even Ælfric does not use it in all of his compositions (the highest frequency of V1 is visible in Catholic Homilies I, and the structure is virtually absent from his Supplemental Homilies).

Alexander's Letter is not included in Table 3 because of its length (only 7,271 words), but it is also an early text, so the analysis shows that descriptive V1 clauses seem diachronically limited. Before any final conclusions are drawn, I will check whether the structure may safely be treated as native to OE.

4.2 Bede: Influence of Latin

The discussion about the Latinate character of the syntax of OE Bede is long-lasting and so far inconclusive. On the one hand, Bede is not a gloss and it shows quite a lot of independence from the Latin source (according to Cichosz et al. 2016: 351, only 5% of all clauses in the text are translated phrase by phrase; for the West-Saxon Gospels the corresponding result is 15%). In addition, OE textual records, rich as they are, have their limitations, so it would not be practical to exclude a long text such as Bede from syntactic investigations only because sometimes “[t]he choices involved in translating Bede’s Latin into OE [...] manifest themselves in somewhat artificial structures” (Rowley 2011: 9). It is a fact that the OE Bede contains unexpectedly high amounts of constructions which are considered foreign or at least inspired by Latin, for example, the dative absolute (Stanton 2002: 58; Scheler 1961). On the other hand, the Bede translator did introduce numerous and sometimes substantial changes to the original composition, for example, extensively modifying the preface and omitting certain events from the narration, letters relating to the English Church and some information concerning the physical world (St-Jacques 1983: 86). What is more, the overall dependence of V1 declaratives in Bede on the Latin source text suggested in earlier studies (Ohkado 2000) was shown to be only partial in more recent corpus-based investigations (Cichosz 2017b). What has not been checked so far, however, is the impact of Latin on V1 declaratives performing particular functions in the text.

⁴The only exception is the Peterborough Chronicle (Anglo-Saxon Chronicle E), which is classified as a late text in YCOE, but it is partly based on earlier manuscripts, so the possibility of retaining obsolete structures in this particular text is quite high.

Table 3: The use of V1 declaratives in the longest YCOE texts (normalised frequencies)

text	words	sub-period	genre	translated	dialect	V1	narrative	descriptive
Ælfric's CH I	106,173	late	homilies	no	WS	330	292	0
Ælfric's LoS	100,193	late	biography	no	WS	210	200	0
Ælfric's CH II	98,583	late	homilies	no	WS	203	183	0
Gregory's Dialogues C	91,553	early	biography	yes	mixed	156	156	0
Bede's History	80,767	early	history	yes	mixed	5683	2637	1894
West-Saxon Gospels	71,104	late	bible	yes	WS	28	15	0
Cura Pastoralis	68,556	early	treatise	yes	WS	15	15	0
Ælfric's Sup. Homilies	62,669	late	homilies	no	WS	32	32	0
Heptateuch	59,524	late	bible	yes	WS	168	168	0
Orosius	51,020	early	history	yes	WS	78	78	0
Boethius	48,443	early	philosophy	yes	WS	227	227	0
Vercelli Homilies	45,674	early	homilies	no	WS(?)	1467	591	635
Blickling Homilies	42,506	early	homilies	no	mixed	1059	329	423
ASC E	40,641	late	history	no	mixed	221	197	25

Table 4 shows that the proportion of clauses inspired by the Latin source is not the same between the functions, but none of the functions is completely independent from the original.

Table 4: Relation to Latin in V1 declaratives from Bede depending on function

	modelled	independent
narrative (with presentational)	133 (62%)	81 (38%)
quotative	48 (52%)	45 (48%)
descriptive	64(42%)	89 (58%)

(11) is an example of a V1 declarative with a narrative function which was classified as modelled on the Latin since both languages have the verb in the clause-initial position, and the subject is expressed later in the clause. It turns out that as many as 62% of narrative V1 clauses in Bede may be treated as inspired by Latin, though the degree of closeness is not always the same (e.g. in many cases there is no subject in the Latin source).

- (11) a. *Forðferde se arwyrða fæder Cuðbyrht in*
 forth-went the.NOM honorable.NOM father.NOM Cuthbert.NOM in
Farne ðæm ealonde;
 Farne.DAT the.DAT island.DAT
- b. *Obiit autem pater reuerentissimus in insula*
 died also father.NOM most honourable.NOM in island.ABL
Farne
 Farne.ABL
- ‘The honourable father Cuthbert died on the Isle of Farne.’
 [cobede, Bede_4:30.374.1.3734]

Nonetheless, independent uses such as (12), which shows a substantially paraphrased fragment, are well attested in the text as well. This, together with the fact that narrative V1 declaratives appear in many original OE prose works and in poetry, may be treated as a clear indication of the native origin of the structure, but it seems that the actual frequency of the structure in some (translated) texts may be inflated by Latin influence.

- (12) a. *Com se foresprecena hungur eac swylce hider on*
 came the.NOM aforesaid.NOM famine.NOM also such hither on
Bryttas
 Britons.ACC
 ‘Likewise the aforesaid famine reached the Britons.’
- b. *INTEREA Brettones famas sua praefata magis*
 meanwhile Britons.NOM famine.ACC their.ACC aforesaid.ACC greatly
magis-que adficiens, ac famam suae malitiae
 greatly-and suffering and reputation.ACC their.ACC wickedness.GEN
posteris diuturnam relinquens
 posterity.DAT lasting.ACC leaving
 ‘Meanwhile the Britons, suffering more and more from the aforesaid
 famine, and leaving the long-lasting reputation of their malice to the
 posterity...’ [cobede, Bede_1:11.48.19.434]

In the case of quotative V1, the ratio of independent uses to modelled clauses is roughly 1 to 1, while in the case of descriptive V1, which has the most limited distribution in the corpus, examples which clearly do not follow the Latin source text are a visible majority (58%). This is a rather surprising result since the easiest explanation for the use of this untypical structure in OE prose records would be to treat it as a foreign structure transferred from Latin into two translations (Bede and Alexander’s Letter) and two collections of homilies, which – even though not translated directly from a particular Latin source – were most probably based on a number of different religious texts written in Latin, like most OE prose texts (Stanton 2002). This hypothesis, however, is not corroborated by the data, since most examples of descriptive V1 clause resemble (13), where no inspiration for the clause-initial placement of the verb may be identified in the Latin text.

- (13) a. *Wæron hi begen on ciriclicum wisum ge on*
 were they.NOM both.NOM on church.DAT ways.DAT and on
wisdom haligra gewrita genihtsumlice gelæred
 wisdom.DAT holy.GEN scriptures.GEN enough educated
- b. *ambo et in rebus ecclesiasticis, et in scientia*
 both.NOM and in matters.ABL ecclesiastic-ABL and in science.ABL
scripturarum sufficienter instructi.
 scriptures.GEN enough educated
 ‘Both were adequately educated in matters related to the Church and
 in the science of the scripture.’ [cobede, Bede_5:16.446.20.4489]

Naturally, the possibility of copying is unquestionable in cases such as (14), but the number of such instances in the text is too low to give proper justification to the hypothesis of foreign transfer.

- (14) a. *Wæs þes ilca Æðelbeht Eormanrices sunu;*
was this.NOM same.NOM Ethelbert.NOM Eormenric.GEN son.NOM
b. *Erat autem idem Aedilberct filius Irminrici,*
was also this.NOM Ethelbert.NOM son.NOM Eormenric.GEN
'This Ethelbert was the son of Eormenric.'
[cobede, Bede 2:5.110.16.1037]

In short, whatever the origin and motivation for the use of descriptive V1 is, Latin cannot be treated as its source and it should rather be interpreted as an additional factor, possibly increasing the frequency of the structure in the translated texts which use it.

4.3 Does the subject matter?

So far, the analysis has not identified a clear motivation for the extremely skewed distribution of V1 declaratives (especially those with the descriptive function) in OE prose records. The context-based analysis of V1 clauses, however, makes it possible to notice a certain regularity in the data, namely that V1 declaratives with an overt subject tend to be followed by V1 clauses without a subject, just like in (15). Here, a V1 declarative with a narrative function is immediately followed by a subjectless V1 declarative with a descriptive function, providing additional information about the referent mentioned in the preceding clause.

- (15) *Feng to his rice Osred his sunu; wæs*
 took to his.DAT kingdom.DAT Osred.NOM his.NOM son.NOM was
eahtawintre cniht
 eight-winter.NOM boy.NOM
 ‘Osred, his son, took over the throne; (he) was an eight-year boy.’
 [Bede 5, [037800 (16.446.4)]]

In Bede, where V1 declaratives are so frequent, it is possible to come across several examples of such V1 clusters, though the subjectless V1 is not necessarily descriptive. In (16) a V1 narrative clause with a subject (*seo cwen* 'the queen') is followed by two subjectless V1 clauses which clearly operate on the highest level of the narrative structure, presenting subsequent events in the story.

- (16) *Wæs heo seo cwen sona lustfulliende þære godan*
 was she.NOM the.NOM queen.NOM soon glad the.DAT good.DAT
foresetenness & willan þæs iungan. Sende him þa to
 purpose.DAT and will.DAT the.GEN young.GEN sent him.ACC then to
Cent to Ercenbyrhte þam cyninge, se wæs hyre
 Kent.ACC to Ercenbyrht.DAT the.DAT king.DAT this.DAT was her.GEN
eames sunu; bæd þæt he hine arwurðlice to Rome
 uncle.GEN son.NOM asked that he.NOM him.ACC kindly to Rome.DAT
onsende
 sent

‘She, the queen, was soon glad about the good purpose and will of the young man. (She) sent him then to Kent to Ercenbyrht the king, he was her uncle’s son; (she) asked that he kindly sent him to Rome.’

[Bede 5, [042100 (17.452.19–21)]]

Thus, it seems that V1 declaratives with a subject are not that specific in their functional range because, at least in Bede, the same functions are performed by subjectless V1 clauses. A similar phenomenon seems to operate in Lives of Saints. Here, subjectless V1 clauses are narrative in function as in (17), and they are rarely preceded by a V1 clause with a subject, because the latter are not that frequent in this text.

- (17) *And he leop sona cunnigende his feðes, hwæðer he cuðe*
 and he.NOM ran soon testing his.ACC feet.ACC whether he.NOM could
gan. Eode þa mid blisse binnan þam temple mid þam
 walk went then with glory.DAT into the.DAT temple.DAT with the.DAT
halgum apostolum, þone hælend herigende. Þa oncneowan
 holy.DAT apostles.DAT the.ACC Saviour.ACC praising then recognised
hine ealle þe hine cuðon ær, and micclum wundrodon
 him.ACC all.NOM that him.ACC knew before and greatly wondered
þæs wædlan hæle.
 the.GEN poor.man.GEN health.DAT

‘And he soon ran, testing his feet, whether he could walk. (He) went then with glory to the temple with the holy apostles, praising Jesus. Then everyone who had known him recognised him and wondered greatly at the health of the poor man.’ [ÆLS, Peter’s Chair, 001400 (32–36)]

The number of non-conjunct main declarative clauses without a subject is not particularly high in OE prose. Table 5 shows that the whole YCOE contains only

around a thousand examples of the structure, but the interesting thing is that in most texts V1 clauses without a subject clearly outnumber those with a subject. The only exceptions to this rule are (again) the “top four” texts: Bede, Vercelli Homilies, Blickling Homilies and Alexander’s Letter, where the frequency of V1 declaratives with an overt subject is not only exceptionally high but higher than the frequency of subjectless V1 clauses (it should also be noted that in one of Ælfric’s texts, Catholic Homilies I, the two patterns are quite balanced, whereas in his other works the tendency is the same as in most YCOE texts).

Table 5: V1 declaratives with and without an overt subject in YCOE texts

text	with S	without S
Bede’s History of the English Church	459	195
Vercelli Homilies	67	28
Blickling Homilies	45	26
Alexander’s Letter to Aristotle	42	9
Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies I	35	36
Ælfric’s Lives of Saints	21	236
Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies II	20	97
Anglo-Saxon Chronicle D	13	35
Boethius Consolation of Philosophy	11	38
Heptateuch	10	30
Anglo-Saxon Chronicle C	10	32
YCOE (total)	840	1,069

In order to investigate the possible interrelations between V1 declaratives with and without a subject, I conducted a case study of two texts where both patterns are attested, but they seem to be on two extremes regarding the analysed structure: Bede (the whole text was taken into account) and Lives of Saints (only the books where V1 clauses with a subject are used at least once, i.e. Book of Kings (28 V1 clauses without a subject), Martin (25), Basil (25, Peter’s Chair (18) and Maccabees (16), 112 (47%) clauses in total). The classification was based on the labels determined for V1 declaratives with a subject (narrative, with presentational as a subtype, quotative and descriptive). Table 6 presents the outcomes of this analysis (based on raw numbers).

It turns out that there may be some connection between the two patterns since Ælfric consistently avoids the descriptive function in both cases, employing V1

Table 6: A case study of the function of V1 declaratives with and without S in Bede and Lives of Saints

	LoS		Bede	
	V1 with S	V1 no S	V1 with S	V1 no S
narrative	20 (95%)	89 (79%)	213 (46%)	123 (64%)
quotative	1 (5%)	23 (21%)	93 (20%)	35 (18%)
descriptive	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	153 (33%)	35 (18%)
all	21	112	459	193

Table 7: Subject types in V1 declaratives with an overt S in YCOE

	personal pronoun	noun	other pronoun
narrative	140 (31%)	253 (56%)	58 (13%)
quotative	78 (57%)	44 (32%)	14 (10%)
descriptive	125 (49%)	109 (43%)	19 (7%)

declaratives (with or without a subject, mostly the latter) to push the narration forward or introduce a quote. In Bede, on the other hand, all the functions are attested and even though the proportions are not identical, it cannot be said that the presence of the subject makes a drastic difference. This result makes it possible to draw a tentative conclusion: Perhaps it is the clause-initial position of the finite verb which is responsible for the pragmatic function of the clause, and the subject is not a crucial element of the pattern at all.

Comparing subject types between all the functions of V1 declaratives identified in this study in YCOE (Table 7), it turns out that while the proportion of other (non-personal) pronouns is similar, personal pronouns are well-represented in the quotative and descriptive function, and less frequent in narrative V1, which is quite logical, considering the fact that narrative inversion often introduces new characters to the story. The tendency becomes completely clear when nominal subjects are divided into proper nouns, nouns with overt marking of definiteness (modification by a demonstrative pronoun, a possessive pronouns or a genitive) and without it (bare nouns, optionally modified by adjectives and quantifiers such as *sum* “some”). Table 8 shows that in the case of descriptive V1 clauses, the subject is rarely discourse-new, even if it is nominal, while narrative V1 clauses co-occur with indefinite noun phrases in 25% of the cases (112 out of 451).

Table 8: Subtypes of nominal subjects in V1 declaratives in YCOE

	definite marking	no marking	proper noun
narrative	105 (41%)	112 (44%)	36 (14%)
quotative	21 (48%)	17 (39%)	6 (14%)
descriptive	90 (83%)	2 (2%)	17 (16%)

In addition, it should be noted that 117 out of 140 cases of narrative V1 with personal pronoun subjects (84%) come from the “top four” texts, another 9 from one of the manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and another 4 from Vercelli Homilies E (130 out of 140, 93% altogether), so the distribution of the structure is very limited.

Moreover, when adding clauses without an overt subject to the equation, an interesting pattern emerges. Table 9 shows the proportions for Bede, Table 10 for the sample of Lives of Saints.

Table 9: Subject types in V1 declaratives in Bede

	personal pro- noun	definite NP	indefi- nite NP	proper N	other pro- noun	no S
narrative	98 (29%)	42 (12%)	39 (11%)	21 (6%)	13 (4%)	123 (37%)
quotative	69 (54%)	4 (3%)	8 (6%)	2 (2%)	10 (8%)	35 (27%)
descriptive	75 (40%)	53 (28%)	1 (1%)	14 (7%)	10 (5%)	35 (19%)

Table 10: Subject types in V1 declaratives in LoS sample

	personal pronoun	definite NP	indefi- nite NP	proper N	other pronoun	no S
narrative	0 (0%)	9 (8%)	8 (7%)	0 (0%)	3 (3%)	87 (81%)
quotative	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	23 (96%)

It turns out that in Lives of Saints (LoS) the proportion of V1 declaratives without an overt subject is much higher in all of the attested functions than in Bede

(81% vs. 37% for the narrative function, 96% vs. 27% for the quotative function; the descriptive function is not used in the former text), while personal pronouns are never used. Thus, it turns out that there are two important differences between the analysed texts: a complete lack of V1 declaratives with a descriptive function in LoS and consistent avoidance of V1 declaratives with personal pronoun subjects by Ælfric. Interestingly, when the number of clauses with personal pronoun subjects and no overt subjects in Bede are added, the resulting proportions are much closer to the ones in LoS (66% vs. 81% for the narrative function, 81% vs. 96% for the quotative function). The difference between Bede and LoS in subject types in the narrative function proves significant when personal pronouns and clauses without overt subjects are counted separately (X^2 (3, $N = 437$) = 77.9917, $p < 0.00001$)⁵, and even when the two categories are merged, the difference remains significant (X^2 (2, $N = 437$) = 16.1207, $p = 0.000316$). It seems that narrative V1 declaratives with no overt subject such as (18) and those with a personal pronoun subject such as (19) are variants of the same structure whose purpose is to introduce subsequent events in the story when the main protagonist remains the same, and there is no need to change the subject.⁶

- (18) *Ða gelæhte Petrus hire lipian hand, arærde hi*
 then took Peter.NOM her.ACC supple.ACC hand.ACC raised her.ACC
upp hale of þam bedde.
 up healthy.ACC of the.DAT bed.DAT
 ‘Then Peter took her supple hand, (he) raised her up healthy from the bed.’
 [ÆLS (Peter’s Chair) [002800 (73)]]

- (19) *Ða geseah he swa þeostre dene ane under him in*
 then saw he.NOM such dark.ACC valley.ACC one.ACC under him.DAT in
niþernesse gesette. Geseah he eac feower fyr onæled on
 bottom.DAT placed saw he.NOM also four.ACC fires.ACC lit on
þære lyfte noht micle fæce betweoh him
 the.DAT air.DAT not great.DAT space.DAT between them.DAT
tosceaden.
 separated
 ‘Then he saw a deep valley beneath. He saw also four fires lit in the air not far away from one another.’
 [Bede 3, [040400 (14.212.20)]–[040500 (14.212.22)]]

⁵Subtypes of nominal subjects are merged for the purposes of the statistical analysis since some of them are not represented in LoS.

⁶A similar observation was made with regard to Old Icelandic (Booth & Beck 2021).

When the subject is a noun, the narrative V1 clause often uses a new subject as in the clause with *se cyning* ‘the king’ shown (20), or there is a subject shift. Descriptive V1 clauses may also use a nominal subject, but in such a case, the subject is never new but rather old or accessible (as in *his baan* ‘his bones’ in the same example).

- (20) *Forðon þa he wæs mid wæpnum & mid feondum eall*
because then he.NOM was with weapons.DAT and with enemies.DAT all
utan beheped, & he seolfa onget þæt hine mon ofslean
outside cut.off and he.NOM self knew that him.ACC one.NOM kill
scolde, þa gebæd he for þam sawlum his weorodes.
shall then prayed he.NOM for the.DAT souls.DAT his.GEN army.GEN
Cwædon heo bi ðon þus in gydde: Drihten God miltsa
said they.NOM by this thus in song.DAT lord.NOM God.NOM pity
þu sawlum ussa leoda, cwæð se halga
you.NOM souls.DAT our.GEN people.GEN said the.NOM holy.NOM
Oswald, þa he on eorðan saag. Wæron his
Oswald.NOM when he.NOM on earth.ACC sank were his.NOM
baan gelæded & gehealden in þæm mynstre, þe
bones.NOM taken and held in the.DAT monastery.DAT which
we ær cwædon æt Beardan ea. Heht se
we.NOM before said at Bardney.DAT river.DAT ordered the.NOM
cyning, se ðe hine slog, his heafod on steng
king.NOM this.NOM who him.ACC killed his.ACC head.ACC on pole.ACC
asetton;
put

‘Because he was surrounded on all sides by armed enemies, and he understood that he would be killed, he prayed for the souls of his army. Thus they said it in a song: ‘Lord God, have mercy on the souls of our people, said the holy Oswald, when he fell to the ground.’ **His bones were taken and preserved in the monastery at Bardney river, which we mentioned before. The king who slew him ordered that his head should be set on a pole.**’ [Bede 3 [024700 (10.188.13)]–[025000 (10.188.20)]]

In LoS, nominal subjects used in narrative inversion (infrequent as they are) behave in a similar way, if they are not discourse-new, there is a change of protagonist in the story as in (21), when Avitianus is introduced, but then the story switches to the actions of St. Martin in order to get back to Avitianus a few clauses later.

- (21) *Auitianus hatte sum hetol ealdorman,*
 Avitianus.NOM was.called some.NOM cruel.NOM commander.NOM
wælhreow on his weorcum, se gewrað fela manna,
 savage.NOM on his.DAT deeds.DAT who.NOM bound many.ACC men.GEN
and on racenteagum gebrohte to þære byrig Turonia, wolde
 and on chains.DAT brought to the.DAT city.DAT Tour.DAT would
hi þæs on mergen mislice acwellan ætforan þære
 they.ACC this.GEN on morning.DAT cruelly kill before the.DAT
burhware, þa wearð hit þam bisceope cuð. Þa
 citizens.DAT then became it.NOM the.DAT bishop.DAT known then
smeade se halga wer hu he heora gehelpan
 thought the.NOM holy.NOM man.NOM how he.NOM they.GEN help
mihte, and eode to middre nihte ana to his gatum,
 might and went to middle.DAT night.DAT alone.NOM to his.DAT gates.DAT
and þa þa he inn ne mihte, he anbidode þærute. Wearð
 and then when he.NOM in not might he.NOM waited outside became
þa se ealdorman awreht færllice þurh Godes
 then the.NOM commander.NOM awoken suddenly through God.GEN
engel, and he him gramlice to cwæð, List ðu and rest
 angel.ACC and he.NOM he.DAT sternly to said lie you.NOM and rest
þe, and Godes þeowa lið æt þinum gatum?
 REFL and God.GEN servant.NOM lies at your.DAT gates.DAT
 ‘There was a cruel commander called Avitianus who bound many men
 and brought them in chains to the city of Tour, (he) wanted to kill them
 cruelly in front of the citizens the next morning. Then the bishop heard
 about it and considered how he could help them. He went in the middle of
 the night alone to the city gates and when he could not get in, he waited
 outside. **Then the commander was suddenly awoken by God’s angel**
 and he sternly told him “You are lying and resting and God’s servant is
 lying at your gates.’ [ÆLS (Martin), [028200 (1143)]–[028400 (1151)]]

In short, it seems that in the fragments with a new topic or topic shift narrative inversion with a nominal subject is used, and in the cases with topic continuation, there is a text-dependent variation between V1 declaratives without an overt subject (attested in Ælfric and many other, mostly late, texts) and with a personal pronoun subject (attested in Bede, Vercelli Homilies, Blickling Homilies and Alexander’s Letter, which are all early texts). Thus, the most probable variable responsible for this variation is diachrony.

5 Summary and conclusions

The study confirms that V1 declaratives are a rare structure with a skewed distribution, but they are present in most OE prose texts, both early and late, translated and non-translated, written in West Saxon or showing mixed dialect features. While the frequency of V1 declaratives in Bede is inflated by Latin, uses independent of the Latin source correspond to all the functions of V1 identified in OE prose, so one cannot treat any of them exclusively as examples of foreign transfer. Since no clear variable connects the compositions where the pattern is used, it seems to have been a stylistic choice of the (mostly) anonymous Anglo-Saxon writers, perhaps inspired by OE poetry where this discourse device is used most regularly (Mitchell 1985: §3932).

The basic function of V1 declaratives is narrative, that is, they are used to introduce subsequent events in the story and represent clearly coordinating discourse relations. This function has the highest corpus frequency (53% of all examples) and the most balanced textual distribution (despite generally low frequency, single examples are attested in numerous texts). Next, there are descriptive V1 clauses, operating in the sub-structure of the text, that is, providing additional information about known discourse referents and functioning as examples of elaboration and explanation. Such clauses, frequent as they are if YCOE is analysed as a whole (31% of the whole dataset), are largely restricted to 4 texts regularly mentioned in this study: Bede's *Historia*, Vercelli Homilies, Blickling Homilies and Alexander's Letter. Finally, the last function attested in the data is the V1 reporting construction, which constitutes only 16% of all examples, and its distribution is also rather restricted.

The analysis suggests that V1 descriptive clauses are an early native structure (they are absent from all late texts, including Ælfric's works), whose function must have been taken over by other, probably more hypotactic structures, relative clauses for example. Narrative V1 was considerably more conventionalised in OE, since it appears in numerous texts, covering both early and late records. It must be noted that narrative V1 declaratives with pronominal subjects are used mostly by the "top four" early OE texts; they alternate with V1 without an overt subject in other YCOE texts. This has some important implications for the syntactic interpretation of the structure: OE is a V2 language but its specificity is related to the behaviour of personal pronoun subjects: They usually fail to invert and there is a very specific group of closed-class elements which may trigger inversion of a pronominal subject (this includes *þa* 'then' and *þonne* 'then', *ne* 'not' and wh-words, cf. Ringe & Taylor 2014: 399–400). The fact that V1 declaratives feature personal pronoun subjects has been a topic of major discussion

among OE syntacticians since it means that narrative inversion must be structurally equalled with other pronoun-inverting cases representing V-to-C movement (Pintzuk 1999; Ohkado 2004), but it is unclear what actually triggers the pattern (Ringe & Taylor 2014: 408). Considering the extremely limited distribution of narrative inversion with pronominal subjects, the question is whether the structure should be included in the same category, on a par with other, more well attested patterns. Perhaps the stronger presence of V1 declaratives in early OE data means that they are a remnant of an older, possibly Proto-Germanic, structure, which was already becoming obsolete. It is a fact that V1 declaratives disappeared from English soon after the end of the OE period, and the constraint on personal pronoun inversion was a factor which could have contributed to its growing limitation and final loss.

All in all, the study reveals that V1 (with or without an overt S) is an OE discourse device creating dynamics in the story, and it is quite certain that it was one of many forms with such a function available to Anglo-Saxon writers. This suggests a number of potential directions for further study. First of all, in order to have a full picture of the situation, it is necessary to take a closer look at both prose and poetry records. We know that narrative inversion is used quite regularly in OE verse, but there are no studies that show whether descriptive V1 declaratives are attested in poetry and discussing the discourse function of V1 clauses without an overt subject. What is more, a promising direction for further study would be a function-to-form mapping of various discourse devices used for specific functions in OE (opening a new story, summarising the discussion, transitioning to a new action, introducing a new character, quoting speech, describing a known referent, etc.). Such a study would be difficult to design and would require quite a lot of close reading and contextual analysis, but this paper, among many other analyses of OE, shows quite clearly that it is impossible to understand OE discourse structure without a more qualitative approach to textual data.

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