

Leeds Studies in English

New Series XLII

2011

Edited by

Alaric Hall



Editorial assistants
Helen Price and Victoria Cooper

Leeds Studies in English

<www.leeds.ac.uk/lse>

School of English
University of Leeds

2011

Sedgwick, Judith Halberstam, Judith Butler, and Gayle Rubin, to name but a few. Whilst at times this range threatens to manipulate some readings and disrupt overall cohesion, it is never intrusive or gratuitous. Indeed, Oswald's use of this methodological tool succeeds in uncovering the excessive multivalence of the monster and its ability to mean different things in different contexts and to threaten different types of boundaries within changed epistemologies. Here, therefore, lies the most significant contribution of this book to our understanding of how the monstrous comprises an ever-present 'identity machine' within medieval texts: Oswald seizes the Derridean notion of 'the trace' as her central tool for unpicking the problems inherent to any form of representation, writing or otherwise. If for Derrida absence and presence are always in play within language, then as Oswald demonstrates in this book, 'the trace of the monster in the text declares its presence through its absence' (14).

Monsters, Gender and Sexuality offers a strong and convincing case for the spectral presence — or trace — of the monster as always already haunting a sexed and gendered human imaginary and its texts. As such, it proves itself a valuable addition to our understanding of how, in its infinite manifestations, the monstrous operates as a 'machine' for both the construction and the policing of human identities.

LIZ HERBERT McAVOY

SWANSEA UNIVERSITY

Kiriko Sato, *The Development from Case-Forms to Prepositional Constructions in Old English Prose*. Studies in Language and Communication, 88. Bern: Lang, 2009. 231 pp. ISBN 978-3-03911-763-5. £45.00.

Kiriko Sato's 2009 book is based on her Ph.D. dissertation, defended at the University of Tokyo in 2006. Focusing on Old English syntax, it has the ambitious aim of showing why, when and how variation between old case-forms and new prepositional constructions arose, leading to the eventual prevalence of the prepositional constructions. It examines six semantic relations that can be expressed by both case-forms and prepositional constructions: 1) *instrumentality/manner*, 2) a closely related *accompaniment*, 3) *point in time*, 4) *duration of time*, 5) *national origin*, and 6) *place specification* (with parts of the body). In addition, Sato looks at one syntactic construction — augmented vs. non-augmented *dative absolute*. The investigation is divided into seven chapters, six of them being case studies of six respective texts or sets of texts: the *Parker Chronicle*, Old English *Boethius*, Old English *Bede*, Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies* and *Lives of Saints*, and Wulfstan's *Homilies*, with chapter 7 providing a summary and conclusions. Six appendices list full inventories (a total of 1,937 examples) of Sato's chosen constructions in the selected research corpus.

Each case study begins with a survey of previous research on the text concerned, goes on to an overview of absolute and relative numbers of case-forms vs. prepositional constructions, and then discusses the six semantic relations and the dative absolute in more detail. The not unexpected conclusion of chapter 7 is that prepositional constructions increase towards the late Old English period with considerable variation remaining still among the selected functions and texts (e.g., Wulfstan is about as conservative as the Old English *Boethius* in his use of instrumental case forms).

The way Sato analyses her data gives the impression of a solid dissertation. She has good points to make about the stylistic side of the two constructions; for example, she observes that

Ælfric's use of dative absolutes in his later work can be explained by the fact that many of them rhythmically fit into a verse half-line and are thus preferred by Ælfric on stylistic grounds.

As a whole, however, the book does not go much beyond a positivist description of syntax. At no point does Sato discuss, adopt or criticise any of the more recent approaches to typology or historical corpus studies, such as grammaticalisation or variationist approaches. Nor does she clearly define her own approach, which unfortunately has a more immediate bearing on the selection of research data and methodology. For example, it remains unclear how and why the research texts were selected. It is evident that they have been grouped into early and late texts and that this division was intended to make the "chronological development" (p. 18) observable, but apart from all the six texts being prose, they hardly make a uniform set of comparanda. While the early Old English sample — the *Parker Chronicle* (studied in Plummer's edition rather than Bately's more recent one), *Bede*, and *Boethius* — does provide 'a wide variety of styles' (p. 20), *Bede*, moreover, having Mercian elements, this is not quite the case with the late Old English sample — Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies* I and II, his *Lives of Saints*, and Wulfstan's *Homilies*, with texts by Ælfric amounting to 91 per cent of this sample and 64 per cent of the whole research corpus. Statistics in particular highlight the weak points of Sato's selection. It has been observed above that even relative figures show that the development from case-forms to prepositional constructions is far from straightforward. Normalised frequencies could have been even more revealing. Table 1 gives my own calculation based on Sato's absolute numbers (p. 171) and the word counts for the six texts in the *York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose*.¹ In fact, we can see that case-forms are more frequent in the late *ÆLS*, and *WHom* than in the early *Bo*, while prepositional constructions are more frequent in the early *Bede* than in the late *ÆCHom* and *WHom*, which makes Sato's main claim about prepositional constructions having 'increased substantially from the early to the later OE periods' (p. 184) look slightly suspect.

| date | texts | case-forms | prepositional constructions |
|-------|---------------|------------|-----------------------------|
| early | <i>ChronA</i> | 86 | 16 |
| | <i>Bede</i> | 33 | 30 |
| | <i>Bo</i> | 8 | 13 |
| late | <i>ÆCHom</i> | 3 | 23 |
| | <i>ÆLS</i> | 14 | 39 |
| | <i>WHom</i> | 16 | 26 |

Table 1. Normalised frequencies per 10,000

What further complicates the matter is the selection of data within the studied texts. It remains unexplained why only thirty-four nouns are considered suitable for the investigation of the instrumentality/manner relation and how this list of nouns was arrived at, why the study of the accompaniment relation includes the noun *werod* only, and the study of point in time the nouns *deæg*, *niht*, *tid*, and *gear*, but not, say, *winter*. Similar decisions were made in connection with the remaining three semantic relations (pp. 22–23) but again the reasons

¹ Compiled by Ann Taylor, Anthony Warner, Susan Pintzuk and Frank Beths (University of York, 2003), <<http://www-users.york.ac.uk/~lang22/YcoeHome1.htm>> [accessed 6 May 2011].

Reviews

behind them are not explicit. With dative absolutes, Sato only considers constructions that have parts of the body as their nominal elements, e.g., *upahafenum handum* ‘uplifted hands’ (dative plural), which, as before, limits the validity of her conclusions. First of all, she records a single example of this type of dative absolute in early OE (corresponding to a remarkable 100 per cent in statistics on p. 178), while all her late examples are from Ælfric. Second, according to my estimate, absolute constructions with parts of the body are a type that can only amount to some 10 per cent of dative absolutes in OE.² Further, many among them are fossilised and should properly be interpreted through a collocational analysis; and so forth.

Sato says (pp. 17, 184) that her study was inspired by the desire to prove that Bruce Mitchell whose opinion I would like to reproduce here was in the wrong:

for what it is worth, my own impression is that — perhaps contrary to what we might expect — little significant change in the comparative percentages of case-forms alone and of prepositions + case-forms in those contexts where both are possible can be detected in the extant OE monuments.³

Well, she did try to challenge his opinion, but the old Bruce remains unshaken.

OLGA TIMOFEEVA

UNIVERSITY OF ZURICH

² Olga Timofeeva, *Non-Finite Constructions in Old English, with Special Reference to Syntactic Borrowing from Latin*, Mémoires de la Société Néophilologique de Helsinki, 80 (Helsinki: Société Néophilologique, 2010), pp. 34–45.

³ Bruce Mitchell, *Old English Syntax*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), I, §1225.