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Construing Old English in the Thirteenth Century: The Syntax of the Winteneý Adaptation of the Benedictine Rule

Maria Artamonova

Introduction

More and more scholarly attention is now being paid to the period in the history of English writing between the Norman Conquest and the thirteenth century. Many studies have focused on the status of English as a learned and literary language in that time, and on the survival, copying and transmission of Old English manuscripts in the face of the challenges arising from the political situation, on the one hand, and from linguistic change, on the other. The research spearheaded by Mary Swan and Elaine Treharne, and aided by their large-scale project aimed at cataloguing and studying English manuscripts produced between 1060 and 1220,¹ has challenged the perception of this period as a ‘dark age’ when English texts were only produced as a result of ‘antiquarian’ efforts to salvage some of the Anglo-Saxon cultural heritage, or as a concession to the unlearned population who did not understand the prestigious Anglo-Norman or Latin.² The picture emerging from recent research is that of ‘proactive efforts to provide didactic and religious texts for an English-speaking audience. Far from being archaic or antiquarian in impulse, these works and the language in which they are written are dynamic and pragmatic.’³

This thorough exploration and re-evaluation of Old English texts copied and revised in the two centuries after the Conquest provides the backdrop for the present investigation of syntactic revision in a post-Conquest text, namely the ‘Winteneý’ version of the Old English Benedictine Rule, dating from the first quarter of the thirteenth century. Although the language of the Rule has been updated in the course of revision, its Old English syntax turns out to be in a remarkable state of preservation.

¹ See the website of ‘The Production and Use of English Manuscripts 1066-1220’ project (<<http://www.le.ac.uk/english/em1060to1220/index.html>>). The best introduction to the topic is offered by the contributions to *Rewriting Old English in the Twelfth Century*, ed. by Mary Swan and Elaine Treharne, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 30 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

² Cf. the description of English literary texts produced in the twelfth century as ‘both thin on the ground and (...) disappointingly undistinguished’ (Ian Short, ‘Language and Literature’, in *A Companion to the Anglo-Norman World*, ed. by Christopher Harper-Bill and Elisabeth van Houts (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003), pp. 191–215 (p. 194).

³ Elaine Treharne, ‘Categorization, Periodization: The Silence of (the) English in the Twelfth Century’, *New Medieval Literatures*, 8 (2007), 248–75 (p. 260).

Construing Old English in the Thirteenth Century

Pre-Conquest Old English texts were not simply copied after 1066: they were edited, compiled, expanded and abbreviated, updated and adapted, reflecting a need for non-French vernacular materials. Although by far the most popular genre was devotional literature (represented by homilies and hagiography along with the English texts of the Gospels and Psalter), there is also evidence, *inter alia*, of Old English laws, chronicles, charters and medical texts being read and copied for a long time after the Conquest.⁴ The thrust of recent research has focused on showing the practical, utilitarian nature of this activity: the manuscripts on the whole seem to have been intended for private devotional reading or preaching.⁵

Discussions of possible audiences of post-Conquest English texts often focus on the monastic context as the environment in which such texts were likely to have been produced and read. However, the picture is more complicated: although monasteries and nunneries, as well as monastic cathedrals such as Worcester or Rochester, are always cited as key centres of transmission and dissemination, the possible audience of English texts perceived for the eleventh to thirteenth centuries has been expanded to include secular canons and non-monastic religious women, parish priests (and, consequently, their lay congregations), and laypeople interested in devotional reading.⁶ Many studies place a special emphasis on the role of female readers, both nuns in organized monasteries and secular religious women, as a potential audience of vernacular devotional materials; a continuity between the practices of Anglo-Saxon times and the dedicated program of writing for women in the thirteenth century exemplified by *Ancrene*

⁴ A full catalogue of manuscripts and their contents is being published on the website cited above; for short descriptions of key manuscripts and their contents see, *inter alia*, Susan Irvine, 'The Compilation and Use of Manuscripts Containing English Religious Texts in the Twelfth Century', in *Rewriting Old English in the Twelfth Century*, ed. by Swan and Treharne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 41–61 (pp. 41–42); Elaine Treharne, 'English in the Post-Conquest Period', in *A Companion to Anglo-Saxon Literature*, ed. by Phillip Pulsiano and Elaine Treharne (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 403–14; Mary Swan, 'Old English Textual Activity in the Reign of Henry II', in *Writers of the Reign of Henry II: Twelve Essays*, ed. by Ruth Kennedy (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 151–68 (pp. 153–54).

⁵ See the contributions to *Rewriting Old English in the Twelfth Century*; Mary Swan, 'Old English Textual Activity in the Reign of Henry II', in *Writers of the Reign of Henry II: Twelve Essays*, ed. by Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 151–68; Elaine Treharne, 'Reading from the Margins: The Uses of Old English Homiletic Manuscripts in the Post-Conquest Period', in *Beatus Vir: Studies in Early English and Norse Manuscripts in Memory of Phillip Pulsiano*, ed. by A. N. Doane and Kirsten Wolf (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006), pp. 329–58; Aidan Conti, 'The Circulation of an Old English Homily in the Twelfth Century: New Evidence from Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 343' and Mary Swan, 'Preaching Past the Conquest: Lambeth Palace 487 and Cotton Vespasian A. XXII', in *The Old English Homily: Precedent, Practice, and Appropriation*, ed. by Aaron J. Kleist (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 365–402 and 403–23 respectively. Elaine Treharne has repeatedly discussed the possible uses of newly-copied English manuscripts in the spheres outside that of preaching; apart from the articles quoted above, see also E. Treharne, 'The Life of English in the Mid-Twelfth Century: Ralph D'Escures's Homily on the Virgin Mary', in *Writers of the Reign of Henry II: Twelve Essays*, ed. by Ruth Kennedy (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 169–86; Bella Millett, 'The Pastoral Context of the Trinity and Lambeth homilies', in *Essays in Manuscript Geography: Vernacular Manuscripts of the West Midlands from the Conquest to the Sixteenth Century*, ed. by Wendy Scase, Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe, 10 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 43–64.

⁶ Apart from the works quoted above, see also Mary Swan, 'Imagining a Readership for Post-Conquest Old English Manuscripts', in *Imagining the Book*, ed. by Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson, Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe, 7 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), pp. 145–57; Elaine Treharne, 'Bishops and Their Texts in the Later Eleventh Century: Worcester and Exeter', in *Essays in Manuscript Geography: Vernacular Manuscripts of the West Midlands from the Conquest to the Sixteenth Century*, ed. by Wendy Scase, Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe, 10 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 13–28.

Wisse and the Katherine Group texts has been noted and explored.⁷ Another important link has been shown to have existed between post-Conquest production and the ‘Regularis Concordia Network’, owing its existence to the tenth-century Benedictine Revival; it has been claimed that we have evidence of a ‘systematic program of textual transmission within those institutions most closely associated with the reform of the English Church’.⁸

Linguistic adaptation and updating is another important factor in the discussion of the use of Old English manuscripts after the Conquest. A rigid demarcation of ‘Old’ and ‘Middle’ English is not always helpful for the study of texts which have affinities with both periods, although many researchers prefer to pigeonhole the English texts copied and revised post-1066 in one of the two categories. Still, in a subtle shift of focus, the key linguistic question no longer seems to be formulated as ‘When did Middle English begin?’, but rather as ‘When did Old English end?’. Elaine Treharne, for one, is prepared to describe texts based on pre-Conquest manuscripts as ‘Old English’.⁹ Various dates have been offered for the transition from Old to Middle English;¹⁰ an approach based on the dating of manuscripts, used, for instance, in the compilation of material for the *Corpus of Middle English Verse and Prose* and the *Oxford English Dictionary*, would classify the same texts that Treharne would call ‘Old English’ as ‘Middle English’.¹¹

Aside from the problem of nomenclature, the question of whether or not tenth- or eleventh-century Old English texts were fully intelligible to the scribes who copied and revised them in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries has been much debated, and at times the same evidence has been adduced to support different points of view. On the one hand, the evidence of glossing, and especially the activity of the Tremulous Hand of Worcester, seems to suggest that by the end of the twelfth century, Old English was becoming increasingly opaque to the readers of

⁷ Irvine, ‘The Compilation and Use of Manuscripts Containing English Religious Texts in the Twelfth Century’, p. 53; Swan, ‘Imagining a Readership for Post-Conquest Old English Manuscripts’, pp. 150–53, *et passim*.

⁸ Elaine Treharne, ‘The Life and Times of Old English Homilies for the First Sunday in Lent’, in *The Power of Words: Anglo-Saxon Studies Presented to Donald G. Scragg on His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. by Hugh Magennis and Jonathan Wilcox, *Medieval European Studies*, 8 (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2006), pp. 205–42 (p. 212).

⁹ ‘The argument is that Old English, usually used to refer to the language and texts written in that language from the eighth to the eleventh centuries, might more accurately be used to cover the vernacular language and texts from the twelfth century also, indeed incorporating a number of works composed as late as the twelfth century’ (Treharne, ‘Reading from the Margins: The Uses of Old English Homiletic Manuscripts in the Post-Conquest Period’, p. 332).

¹⁰ Useful discussions are provided in Peter Kitson, ‘When Did Middle English Begin? Later than You Think’, in *Studies in Middle English Linguistics*, ed. by Jacek Fisiak, *Trends in Linguistics: Studies and Monographs*, 103 (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1997), pp. 221–70; Hans Sauer, ‘Knowledge of Old English in the Middle English Period?’, in *Language History and Linguistic Modelling: A Festschrift for Jacek Fisiak on his 60th Birthday*, ed. by Raymond Hickey and Stanislaw Puppel, *Trends in Linguistics, Studies and Monographs*, 101 (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1997), pp. 791–814; Christopher Cannon, ‘Between the Old and the Middle of English’, *New Medieval Literatures*, 7 (2005), pp. 203–23.

¹¹ *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. by Hans Kurath and others, 20 vols (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952–2001); this and the *Corpus of Middle English Verse and Prose* can be accessed at <<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/mec/>>. The thirteenth-century Winteneý Version of the Benedictine Rule discussed in this article is included in the *Corpus* as a Middle English text.

pre-Conquest manuscripts.¹² The relative lack of scribal innovations in some manuscripts has been taken as a sign of the purely antiquarian value of these manuscripts, copied by scribes who might have found their language problematic. On the other hand, the ‘inconsistent and rarely complete’ nature of revisions to Old English texts can be viewed as an indication that these texts were intelligible to their intended audiences (and their scribes) even without a wholesale linguistic updating.¹³ In his detailed examination of scribal practices in the early Middle English period, Roy Liuzza cites the opinion of Margaret Laing, who suggested that ‘twelfth- and thirteenth-century copyists of Old English documents do not usually modify the text to a form of language similar to that which they themselves would write spontaneously’.¹⁴ Andreas Fischer’s examination of the changes introduced in two late manuscripts of the West Saxon Gospels likewise leads him to conclude that the lexical and morphological updating of the texts was not very extensive.¹⁵

We are, then, faced with a delicate balance of probabilities: there are hardly any examples of texts copied ‘literatim’, without at least some orthographic, morphological or syntactic updating. Even the most authoritative text of all, the Bible, was subjected to such scribal reworking. This suggests that the scribes performed a sort of mental ‘translation’ in their heads, automatically adjusting the linguistic forms they encountered in the text placed before them (or read aloud to them) to their own dialect or even idiolect. At the same time, the revisions were not extensive enough to warrant the label of ‘translation’ — in many cases, including that of the Winteneý Benedictine Rule, many of the original Old English forms and structures are still in evidence, despite the revision.¹⁶

The very fact that Old English manuscripts were glossed, annotated, rearranged and updated for at least two centuries after the Conquest suggests that their language, give or take a few obsolete words or confusing endings, was not interpreted as a dead idiom of a gone-by

¹² See Christine Franzen, *The Tremulous Hand of Worcester: A Study of Old English in the Thirteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); Sauer, ‘Knowledge of Old English in the Middle English Period?’; Wendy Collier, ‘The Tremulous Worcester Hand and Gregory’s Pastoral Care’, in *Rewriting Old English in the Twelfth Century*, ed. by Mary Swan and Elaine Treharne, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 30 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 195–208; Roy Liuzza, writing in the same volume, refers to the much-quoted note from a twelfth-century manuscript containing Old English material: ‘non appreciatum propter ydioma incognita’, pp. 143–65 (p. 145, n. 5).

¹³ For discussions of ‘modernizing’ changes introduced by late revisers of Old English texts see, among others, Andreas Fischer, ‘The Hatton MS of the West Saxon Gospels: The Preservation and Transmission of Old English’, in *The Preservation and Transmission of Anglo-Saxon Culture: Selected Papers from the 1991 Meeting of the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists*, ed. by Paul E. Szarmach and Joel T. Rosenthal, Studies in Medieval Culture, 40 (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications Western Michigan University, 1997), pp. 353–68 (pp. 359–61); Robert McColl Millar and Alex Nicholls, ‘Ælfric’s *De Initio Creaturae* and London, BL Cotton Vespasian A.xxii: Omission, Addition, Retention, and Innovation’, in the same volume, pp. 431–63 (p. 437); Joana Proud, ‘Old English Prose Saints’ Lives in the Twelfth Century: the Evidence of the Extant Manuscripts’, in *Rewriting Old English in the Twelfth Century*, ed. by Mary Swan and Elaine Treharne, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 30 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 117–31 (pp. 120–21); Liuzza, ‘Scribal Habit’; Treharne, ‘Reading from the Margins’, pp. 341, 347.

¹⁴ Liuzza, ‘Scribal Habit’, p. 148, n. 11.

¹⁵ Fischer, ‘The Hatton MS of the West Saxon Gospels’, p. 361.

¹⁶ This distinction between different types of scribal transmission was first suggested by Michael Benskin and Margaret Laing, ‘Translations and *Mischsprachen* in Middle English Manuscripts’, in *So Meny People Longages and Tonges*, ed. by Michael Benskin and M.L. Samuels (Edinburgh: Middle English Dialect Project, 1981), pp. 55–106; further discussions include Fischer, ‘The Hatton MS of the West Saxon Gospels’, p. 358; Liuzza, ‘Scribal Habit’; Treharne, ‘Reading from the Margins’, pp. 342–47; Swan, ‘Preaching Past the Conquest’, pp. 410–13.

classical age, to be admired and preserved in a perfectly mummified state, but rather as a living source of information, instruction and inspiration, whether for private devotion or for preaching to the English-speaking congregations. Elaine Treharne's exploration of manuscript production in this period leads her to the conclusion that 'Old English in the post-Conquest period, then, is employed as a living language for the writing of formal materials; it was usable, used, and widely comprehended in a non-specialist (that is, not simply antiquarian) context'. She goes on to state that 'the annotators and glossators were perfectly able to read West Saxon up to two centuries after its literary zenith'.¹⁷

Further evidence of the afterlife, or rather the 'new life' of Old English after the Conquest, comes from the examination of a post-Conquest revision of the Old English Benedictine Rule. This version survives in a thirteenth-century manuscript (British Library, Cotton Claudius D III), associated with a minor Cistercian nunnery of Wintney (Hampshire) and probably originating from it. Among the contents of the trilingual manuscript (it contains items in French, Latin and English), there is a revised version of the late tenth-century Old English translation of the *Rule of St Benedict*, which is generally ascribed to Æthelwold, Bishop of Winchester.¹⁸ The manuscript contains both the English and the Latin texts of the Rule adapted for female use, which alternate chapter by chapter, so that the reader has access to both the original and the translation.¹⁹

When Æthelwold's vernacular text was first disseminated, it must have carried the combined authority of the Latin Rule and of the translator himself — in his time a renowned reformer, politician, teacher and stylist.²⁰ In the years that followed, there was clearly enough practical demand for a vernacular Rule to ensure that it continued to be copied and read in the reformed monasteries throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Out of the nine surviving manuscripts, several contain minor alterations,²¹ and two can be described as revisions: the eleventh-century 'Wells Fragment' (MS Wells, Cathedral Library 7), containing fifteen chapters of the Rule, and the Wintney Version itself.

Considering how important the Benedictine Rule was for the monastic milieu of the transmission and revision of Old English texts after the Conquest; how great was the demand for formalised rules intended for various religious communities in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; and how the role of female audiences has been repeatedly explored in recent scholarship, it is surprising that this text of the Rule has not received more critical attention. The standard edition is that by Arnold Schröer, originally published in 1888, and revised by Mechthild

¹⁷ Treharne, 'Reading from the Margins', pp. 338, 346.

¹⁸ *Die angelsächsische Prosabearbeitungen der Benediktinerregel*, ed. by Arnold Schröer, Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa, 2 (Kassel: Wigand, 1888). For a full discussion see Mechthild Gretsch, *Die Regula Sancti Benedicti in England und ihre altenglische Übersetzung*, Texte und Untersuchungen zur englischen Philologie, 2 (Munich: Fink, 1973) and a later version in Mechthild Gretsch, *The Intellectual Foundations of the English Benedictine Reform*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 25 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 226–60; Rohini Jayatilaka, 'The Regula Sancti Benedicti in late Anglo-Saxon England' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 1996); Rohini Jayatilaka, 'The Old English Benedictine Rule: Writing for Women and Men', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 32 (2003), 147–87.

¹⁹ The same arrangement is used in six out of nine surviving MSS containing the Old English Rule. See Gretsch, *Die Regula Sancti Benedicti in England; The Intellectual Foundations of the English Benedictine Reform*, pp. 226–60; Jayatilaka, 'The Old English Benedictine Rule', p. 148.

²⁰ See Michael Lapidge, 'Æthelwold as Scholar and Teacher', in *Bishop Æthelwold: His Career and Influence*, ed. by Barbara Yorke (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1988), pp. 89–117.

²¹ Gretsch, *Die Regula Sancti Benedicti*; Jayatilaka, 'The Old English Benedictine Rule'.

Gretsch in 1978.²² Gretsch has also produced the only full-length discussion of the language of the revision.²³ MS Cotton Claudius D III is mentioned a few times in recent discussions of post-Conquest English texts, but unlike homilies, hagiographies, Gospels and other genres, it has not been viewed within the general context of the Early Middle English period. Christopher Cannon's 2005 article, for instance, only mentions the Winteneý version very briefly, but makes an important point, corroborated both by the findings of Schröer and Gretsch and by the other scholarship dealing with this period: he notes the 'surprising stability' and resilience of Old English forms in a text which was copied in the early thirteenth century.²⁴ Indeed, the text of the Rule contained in the Winteneý manuscript is still essentially Æthelwold's Old English translation, although it has been revised, possibly on more than one occasion. Several chapters have been rewritten rather than merely altered, and the spellings and inflexions have been generally updated.²⁵ Gretsch's 1978 article provides a useful overview of the revision strategies and the lexical and morphological changes witnessed by the Winteneý manuscript. The intention of this article is to look at the changes introduced by the reviser(s) to the syntax and word order of Æthelwold's original.

With regard to the lexical and morphological adaptation of the Old English Rule, Gretsch has presented the evidence, and it accords very well with other discussions of similar post-Conquest texts: while obsolete vocabulary has occasionally been updated, and inflectional morphology shows signs of change consistent with the processes current in Middle English, the resulting texts are still very close to their Old English exemplars.²⁶ Syntactic structures are larger linguistic units than morphemes and phonemes, and they can be expected to be more resilient to translation, whether from one dialect to another, or between different scribal

²² *Die Winteneý-version der Regula S. Benedicti*, ed. by Arnold Schröer (repr. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1978), reprinted with introduction by Mechthild Gretsch.

²³ Mechthild Gretsch, 'Die Winteneý-Version der *Regula Sancti Benedicti*: Eine fruhmittelenglische Bearbeitung der altenglischen Prosubersetzung der Benediktinerregel', *Anglia*, 96 (1978), 310–48.

²⁴ Cannon, 'Between the Old and the Middle of English', pp. 208–10. Cannon credits the Winteneý Version with having preserved the feminine forms from Æthelwold's putative original. Whether or not Æthelwold's original translation was intended for women or men is a contested issue: see Gretsch, *Die Regula Sancti Benedicti*, esp. pp. 179–200; in a more recent article she has claimed that Æthelwold produced both the male and the female versions (Gretsch, 'The Benedictine Rule in Old English: a Document of Bishop Æthelwold's Reform Politics', in *Words, Texts and Manuscripts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Culture Presented to Helmut Gneuss*, ed. by Michael Korhammer, Karl Reichl and Hans Sauer (Cambridge: Brewer, 1992), pp. 131–58 (pp. 142–43); Rohini Jayatilaka has argued that the manuscripts show signs of several attempts 'to adapt and revise a male version for use in female communities' (Jayatilaka, 'The Old English Benedictine Rule', pp. 149–50). She has also made a strong case for the Winteneý Version as a new adaptation for nuns, with some passages entirely rewritten in comparison with the male version. In view of all the evidence, it is hardly likely that the Winteneý Rule has retained some features from a hypothetical early female version. Other discussions of the Winteneý Rule include Alaric Hall, 'Old MacDonald had a *Fyrm*, *eo*, *eo*, *y*: Two Marginal Developments of <eo> in Old and Middle English', *Quaestio: Selected Proceedings of the Cambridge Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic*, 2 (2001), 60–90; John Scahill, 'Trilingualism in Early Middle English Miscellanies: Languages and Literature', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 33 (2003), 18–32.

²⁵ Gretsch in 'Die Winteneý-version' refers to 'the reviser' ('der Bearbeiter') (e.g. p. 315), while Jayatilaka states that the text 'has evidently undergone substantial revision of several different kinds, and no doubt at different times', while also claiming that the 'adapter's revisions are not entirely consistent' (Jayatilaka, 'The Old English Benedictine Rule', p. 158). To simplify matters, I will hereafter refer to 'the Winteneý revision' or 'reviser', although the possibility of multiple layers of revision in different time periods and contexts will not be disregarded.

²⁶ See, for instance, Fischer, 'The Hatton MS of the West Saxon Gospels'; Millar and Nicholls, 'Ælfric's *De Initio Creaturae*'; Liuzzza, 'Scribal Habit'. None of these studies have much to say about syntax.

idiolects.²⁷ The Winteneý Version would then be likely to exhibit the picture of Late Old English word order in a fairly intact state.

Æthelwold's translation of the Benedictine Rule could be cited as a textbook example of Old English prose word order. It maintains a statistically very marked distinction between different types of clauses in terms of the position of the finite verb, which normally occurs early in independent clauses and tends towards the final position in dependent clauses. The problem with this 'textbook example' of an Old English syntactic feature is that, like many such examples, it is not consistent with a fuller analysis of the corpus. A comparison of Æthelwold's syntax to other Old English texts indicates that its clear-cut distinction between different clause types should be considered idiosyncratic rather than representative. Both early texts, such as the Alfredian *Pastoral Care*, and later ones, such as the *Rule of Chrodegang* and the *Capitula Theodulfi*, exhibit a greater variability of the patterns used across different clause types.²⁸

The rigid and rather stilted nature of Æthelwold's syntax means that the Winteneý Version can help us to understand whether or not it presented any difficulties for later revisers, and whether they might have wanted to shift the frequency balance between different constructions closer to Middle English usage. It is even more interesting to see exactly how much could be left intact in a period when the distribution of word order patterns in the corpus was already very different from that of the tenth and eleventh centuries. An early thirteenth-century reviser might have had several more or less conscious goals:²⁹ bringing the English text into greater conformity with the Latin; 'updating' the obsolete language for practical purposes (an activity witnessed by many other manuscripts containing post-Conquest reworkings of Old English texts); or introducing a few stylistic changes reflecting synchronic variation rather than diachronic change. Last, but not least, the adaptation of the Rule for female use could have been a factor since it entailed a thorough scrutiny of the text.

Important though it was for the transmission of the vernacular Rule, the interchange of masculine and feminine forms and terms relating to nuns as opposed to monks does not seem to have had any impact on syntax. If the reworking of the text for a female audience is thus disregarded, we are left with three other factors (updating, checking the text against the Latin and general stylistic revision), which had a much greater potential to influence the syntactic choices of the reviser.

The Winteneý manuscript contains a Latin text which, though adapted for female use and containing a few other additions and alterations which accord with the English version, is nevertheless not considered to be the immediate exemplar against which the reviser was

²⁷ Cf. the opinions expressed by Benskin and Laing, 'Translations and *Mischsprachen*', pp. 94 and 95: 'the morphology of a text may be systematically converted into the scribal dialect, but the syntactic rules governing the distribution of variants may even so be replicated from the exemplar'; 'compared with syntax, spelling and morphology demand much smaller spans of text to be held in mind for a complete translation to be effected. It may well be that in the normal course of copying a text, the units that a scribe takes in, glance by glance at his exemplar, are too small to encompass the larger syntactic structures, and that the syntax, though not the spelling and morphology of his copy, remains essentially that of his exemplar'.

²⁸ Gretsçh, 'Die Winteneý-version', pp. 337–38. Gretsçh notes that some of the emendations in the English version of the Winteneý text do not accord with the Latin readings of the same manuscript, while according with other versions of the Latin Rule of St Benedict surviving from Anglo-Saxon England. The reviser and the compiler of Claudius D III must have used different Latin texts.

²⁹ Gretsçh, 'Die Winteneý-version', pp. 315ff.

checking the Old English translation.³⁰ But given the general stability of the version of the Latin Benedictine Rule transmitted in England, in most cases it is possible to determine which phrases were translated anew to provide better agreement with the original text. It is less easy to distinguish which changes reflect the need to update the language and which simply betray the reviser's individual usage or stylistic preferences. Some guidance can be offered by the general course of syntactic change in Middle English. We know, for instance, that the number of verb-final clauses and head-final patterns in general would be expected to go down, dramatically in some cases, as the manuscripts reflect the departure from conservative Late West Saxon conventions.³¹ It follows from the general trend of change that an emendation removing the verb from the final position or favouring a VO pattern over OV could either be triggered by a grammatical consideration (getting rid of a pattern which seemed obsolete to the scribe) or reflect a purely stylistic choice — perhaps an entirely unconscious aspect of 'aural' copying. If, on the contrary, the reviser were to introduce a change in the direction of a verb-final (VF) or OV pattern, this would be unlikely to be a case of 'updating', and so could be analysed as an instance of stylistic or pragmatic variation.

It is also noteworthy that the changes in the Winteneý Version are not evenly spread. Some chapters have undergone a particularly drastic reworking, while others have been barely touched by the reviser.³² Some parts of the more heavily revised chapters can almost be considered a new translation, providing an interesting insight into the linguistic habits of a writer who was both updating a text composed around two hundred years before and composing anew, in their own variety of English.

The Old English text of the Benedictine Rule has been fully parsed and compared to the Winteneý text. For my analysis of the syntactic changes introduced by the Winteneý

³⁰ Gretsç, 'Die Winteneý-version', pp. 337–38. Gretsç notes that some of the emendations in the English version of the Winteneý text do not accord with the Latin readings of the same manuscript, while according with other versions of the Latin Rule of St Benedict surviving from Anglo-Saxon England. The reviser and the compiler of Claudius D III must have used different Latin texts.

³¹ Most discussions of syntactic change between Old and Middle English disregard the evidence of post-Conquest Old English texts and rely instead on the newly-composed or at least newly-compiled texts. For discussions of the transition from Old to Middle English, see, among others, Bruce Mitchell, 'Syntax and Word Order in the *Peterborough Chronicle*', *Neophilologische Mitteilungen*, 65 (1964), 113–44; Viljo Kohonen, *On the Development of English Word Order in Religious Prose around 1000–1200*, Meddelanden från Stiftelsens för Åbo akademi forskningsinstitut, 38 (Åbo: Research Institute of the Åbo Akademi Foundation/Stiftelsens för Åbo akademi forskningsinstitut, 1978); Ans van Kemenade, *Syntactic Case and Morphological Case in the History of English* (Dordrecht: Foris, 1987); David Denison, *English Historical Syntax: Verbal Constructions* (London: Longman, 1993); Tony Foster and Wim van der Wurff, 'The Survival of Object–Verb Order in Middle English: Some Data', *Neophilologus*, 79 (1995), 309–27; Anthony Kroch and Ann Taylor, 'Verb movement in Old and Middle English: Dialect Variation and Language Contact', in *Parameters of Morphosyntactic Change*, ed. by Ans van Kemenade and Nigel Vincent (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 297–325; Olga Fischer, Ans van Kemenade, Willelm Koopman and Wim van der Wurff, *The Syntax of Early English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Anthony Kroch and Ann Taylor, 'Verb-Object Order in Early Middle English', in *Diachronic Syntax: Models and Mechanisms*, ed. by Susan Pintzuk, George Tsoulas and Anthony Warner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 132–63; Carola Trips, *From OV to VO in Early Middle English*, *Linguistik Aktuell/Linguistics Today*, 60 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2002); the special issue of *English Language and Linguistics*, 9.1 (2005) on aspects of OV and VO order in the history of English, ed. by Ann Taylor and Wim van der Wurff; Susan Pintzuk and Ann Taylor, 'The Loss of OV Order in the History of English', in *The Handbook of the History of English*, ed. by Ans van Kemenade and Bettelou Los (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 249–79.

³² This is not haphazard. The changes reflect the application of the Rule to wider audiences of religious women, including secular canonesses: see Jayatilaka, 'The Old English Benedictine Rule', pp. 158–66; Gretsç, 'Die Winteneý-version', p. 315.

reviser, I have focused on those chapters of the Rule which were not extensively rewritten and therefore still allow for a possibility of a clause-by-clause comparison with Æthelwold's original text. I will consider both the 'Latinisation' and 'modernisation' hypotheses, using the reviser's treatment of several syntactic structures to illustrate their strategies.

In what follows, the abbreviation *BenR* will be used to denote Æthelwold's translation as printed by Schröder; *BenRW* is used for the English Winteneý version, and *RSBW* for the Latin Rule as preserved in the Winteneý manuscript. The references to the Latin and English texts of the Winteneý MS follow Schröder's edition revised by Gretsch.

Changes related to the Latin text

One of the important features of Æthelwold's translation is the fact that although for the most part idiomatic, it is still very close to the original Latin text, potentially too close for the comfort of subsequent readers and revisers. While it is quite likely that the Winteneý reviser was trying to bring the text closer to the Latin in some instances (a point that Gretsch makes),³³ they could also have been uncomfortable with some phrases which might have appeared too Latinate. Some illustrative examples in the sphere of syntax are provided by the use of passives and participles.

Actives and passives

Quite a few changes introduced by the Winteneý reviser involve passive and active verbs. The adapter seemed equally happy to replace actives with passives and vice versa, whether or not the corresponding Latin text supported the change. Both active and passive constructions were of course widespread in Old and Early Middle English, and could easily substitute each other. All in all, I have counted 15 instances of active phrases being replaced with passives, and 13 instances of change going in the opposite direction.

But it seems that the Winteneý reviser was unhappy with one particular type of passive, that involving clauses with a personal agent represented by a prepositional object — perhaps because they seemed too Latinate. These changes account for six out of fifteen changes from passive to active:

and eac swa þa haligan trahtas **fram namcuþum fæderum and rihtgelyfedum** geworhte synt (BenR 9.33.19)

and also the sacred treatises are made by well-known fathers and righteous

and eac heore trahtes, þe namcuþe fæderes 7 ryhtbelyuedum larþeawas geworht habbod (BenRW 9.45.5)³⁴

and also their treatises, which well-known fathers and righteous teachers have made

³³ Gretsch, 'Die Winteneý-version', pp. 315–20. She notes that the reviser's efforts to reflect the Latin better than Æthelwold did were by no means consistent (p. 317), and that the reviser also seemed happy to deviate from the Latin in some cases and to preserve the double translations so typical for the Old English prose.

³⁴ The form *habbod* is quite unusual. Even though nearly any vowel could occur in unstressed inflectional endings in texts of this period, the Winteneý version uses forms like *habbod/habboð*, *habbon* both in the phrases added or changed in comparison with the Old English version, and in those retained verbatim. There is also the form *habbo* ('let her have'), which Schröder emends to *habbe* (BenRW 73.12) Other forms of *habban*, such as *hafð*, *hæfeð* etc., are also in evidence. These forms of *habban* are attested in the Winteneý Version alone of all the texts in the Middle English Compendium. Neither Schröder nor Gretsch mention the forms of *habban*. *-on* endings are also used with other verbs in the Winteneý text, both in infinitives and in various finite forms.

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sed expositiones earum que a nominatissimus doctoribus et orthodoxis catholicis patribus facte sunt (RSBW 9.44.5)

and also the explanations of them which have been made by well-known and orthodox Catholic Fathers³⁵

Note that the revised text preserves the verb-final order of the main elements of the clause ('geworhte synt' in Æthelwold's version, and 'geworht habbod' in BenRW), while changing a long and cumbersome phrase from passive to active voice and removing a split heavy group ('namcuþum fæderum and rihtgelyfedum'). It is also interesting that the adjective *ryhtbelyuedum* in BenRW has preserved the dative ending surviving from the original passive clause. An important criterion in assessing variation and conscious revision is the presence of counterexamples. Although the Wintenev reviser shows at least some discomfort with heavy passive constructions, they were quite happy to retain (or, in a couple of cases, even introduce), more straightforward passive phrases with a prepositional agent like 'unless the Lord's Prayer is said by the abbes'.³⁶

Absolute participles

Nearly all translations from Latin into English had to handle Latin absolute constructions. Used quite persistently throughout the Old English period, absolute participles were very rare in Early Middle English texts.³⁷ In many cases, they were replaced by finite verbs, participial phrases (PPs), or otherwise simplified, but some were preserved and probably presented a stumbling block for later readers, especially those unfamiliar with Latin or even Latinate writing. Some of the readers of Æthelwold's translation may have found these patterns problematic: although many of the participial phrases and absolute dative participles were allowed to remain in the Wintenev text, the reviser never introduces a single one.

The passage from Chapter XI of the Rule, reproduced in Table 1 below, is illustrative. There are as many as four participial constructions in the original Latin, which are all translated by absolute participles in Æthelwold's Old English version. The Wintenev version, however, preserves only two of them, in a form which is suspect and could be corrupt. Of the other two absolutes, one is replaced with a subordinate clause ('þonne he beo geendod') and the other with a prepositional phrase ('æfter þare bletsunge'). These examples show how the reviser dealt with the translation challenges offered by two common Latin constructions — one of them with a ready equivalent in English, the other with an English counterpart which was rapidly falling out of use. Whether or not the Wintenev reviser was striving to bring Æthelwold's Old English version into greater conformity with the Latin original, they also show signs of concern with over-complicated Latinate syntax and make attempts (admittedly

³⁵ The translations of the Latin text are taken from *St Benedict's Rule for Monasteries*, trans. by Leonard Joseph Doyle (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1948), as reproduced at <<http://www.osb.org/rb/text/toc.html#toc>>, and adapted in a few places to suit the manuscript readings.

³⁶ Cf. an example where the Latin text has such a passive with a prepositional agent ('nisi in ultimo ordine oratio dominica dicatur omnibus audientibus a priore', 'unless the Lord's Prayer is said by the abbot last, with everyone listening', RSBW 13.48.21), and where the translation removes the passive ('ac se ealdor hludde stefne callum gehyrendum þæt gebed eal singe', BenR 13.38.16). The Wintenev version reinstates the passive in its original place: 'buton þæt drihtelice gebedd ... beo gesed of þare abbodesse' ('unless the Lord's Prayer... is said by the abbes', BenRW 13.49.34).

³⁷ Bruce Mitchell, *Old English Syntax*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), §§3825–31; Tauno F. Mustanoja, *A Middle English Syntax*, Mémoires de la Société Néophilologique de Helsinki, 23 (Helsinki: Société Néophilologique, 1960), p. 407.

RSBW	English translation	BenR	BenRW	notes
11.46.9 Dicto etiam uersu et benedicente abbatissa , legantur alie quatuor lectiones de nouo testamento ordine quo supra.	Then when the verse has been said and the Abbess has given the blessing , let four more lessons be read, from the New Testament, in the manner prescribed above.	11.35.15 Æfter þam fers and gesealdre bletsunge fram þam abbode , syn gerædde ofre feower redinga of þære niwan cyþnesse þære ylecan endebyrdnesse, þe we bufian cwædon.	11.47.8 And syððon þæt fers 7 geseald þære abbedesse bletsunge , beon geræd ofere feower redunge of þære niwe cyþnesse þære ænbyrdnesse, þe we before cwædon.	Abs. Part. / Part (poss. corrupt in BenRW if <i>syððon</i> is read as a conjunction)
11.46.11 Post quartum autem responsorium incipiat abbatissa ympnum "Te Deum laudamus"; quoperdicto legat <i>sacerdos</i> lectionem de Euangelio. Cum honore et tremore stantibus omnibus	After the fourth responsory let the Abbess begin the hymn "We praise You, O God". When this is finished , the Abbess shall read the lesson from the book of the Gospels, while all stand in reverence and awe .	11.35.18 Æfter þæm glorian þæs feorþan repses beginne se abbot þære lofsang Te deum laudamus; þam geendedum , rede se abbot godspeþ mid arwyrðnesse and mid godcundum ege, him eallum standendum	11.47.11 Æfter þam fers þære lofsang: Te deum laudamus; þonne he beo geendod , rede se preost þæt godspeþ mid arwyrðnesse 7 mid godcunden ege, heom eallum standende .	Abs. Part. > Subordinate Clause; abs. Part. – no change
11.46.14 qua perfecta respondeant omnes "Amen", et subsequatur mox abbatissa hymnum "Te decet laus", et <i>data benedictione</i> incipiant matutinos	When it has been read , let all answer "Amen"; and let the Abbess proceed at once to the hymn "To You be praise". After the blessing has been given , let them begin the Morning Office.	11.35.21 æt þæs godspeþes endunge andswarien ealle Amen , æfter ðam beginne se abbot: Te decet laus, and geendadre bletsunge sy degedersang begunnen.	11.47.14 Æt þæs godspeþes endunge andswarie ealle Amen, ænd þæræfter beginne se preost: Te decet laus , 7 æfter þære bletsunge sy agunne se degedersang.	Abs. Part. > Participial Phrase

Table 1: the treatment of participles in BenR and BenRW

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	Main				Co-ordinate				Subordinate			
	VF	%	NVF	%	VF	%	NVF	%	VF	%	NVF	%
BenR	154	18%	722	82%	145	50%	147	50%	900	73%	333	27%
BenRW	152	17%	724	83%	134	46%	158	54%	868	70%	365	30%
ChrodR	96	17%	469	83%	64	17%	305	83%	629	52%	576	48%
SMarg	11	5%	218	95%	9	4%	226	96%	141	29%	351	71%

Table 2: the proportion of verb-final to non-verb-final syntax in main, coordinate and subordinate clauses in BenR, BenRW, ChrodR, and the early Middle English *Life of St. Margaret*.

rather clumsy and abortive in a few cases) to eliminate such difficult constructions at least on some occasions. This means that the reviser's anxiety about the precision of the translation cannot be the only explanation of the changes witnessed by the Winteneý Version.

Changes possibly aimed at updating the language

The position of the finite verb in relation to the end of the clause

It has already been mentioned above that Æthelwold's translation has a very high percentage of verb-final subordinate clauses, which make his work stand out in comparison to both earlier and later Old English prose. Therefore, nothing short of a clause-by-clause rewriting could have brought a later revision anywhere near other Late Old English or Early Middle English texts, which already show a pronounced preference for non-verb-final constructions.

This difference is illustrated statistically in Table 2. Æthelwold's Benedictine Rule and the Winteneý Version are compared to the Old English *Rule of Chrodegang* (a text very similar in genre and style to the Benedictine Rule, translated a few decades after Æthelwold's text), and to the *Life of St Margaret* (an early thirteenth-century translation from Latin into English) from the Katherine Group. The table lists the percentages for verb-final (VF) and non-verb-final (NVF) clauses in the original Old English *Rule of St Benedict* (BenR), the Winteneý Version (BenRW), the Old English *Rule of Chrodegang* (ChrodR) and the Early Middle English *Life of St Margaret* (SMarg). Main, coordinate and subordinate clauses are treated separately as 'MC', 'CC', and 'SC' columns in the table.³⁸ Just as expected, the *Rule of St Benedict* and the *Life of St Margaret* occupy the two opposite ends of the scale: Æthelwold's translation has a strong preference for verb-final patterns in subordinate clauses (73%) and a 50-50 balance in coordinate clauses, while the Early Middle English *Life of St Margaret*, just as consistently, prefers non-verb-final constructions in all clause types. Meanwhile, the early eleventh-century *Rule of Chrodegang*, too, looks a lot more innovative than the nearly contemporary Benedictine Rule, with a strong preference for non-verb-final coordinate clauses (83%) and a 50-50 balance in subordinate clauses.

One might expect that a late revision of the BenR would take the text in the same direction as the *Life of St Margaret*, and indeed the Winteneý Version consistently shows more non-verb-final patterns in each clause type than the earlier BenR. What is remarkable, however, is how few in number the changes are and how little general impact on the overall picture they seem

³⁸ Full texts have been used in all cases. As indicated above, the figures for the two versions of the Benedictine Rule include only directly comparable clauses, i.e. those which are different only in terms of their word order. Passages rewritten by the reviser without equivalent in Æthelwold's text have not been included.

Element type	Changed to NVF	Changed to VF
Prepositional Phrase or adverb	21	6
Non-finite verb	11	1
Nominal direct object	8	1
Pronominal direct object	1	1
Nominal indirect object	3	0
Pronominal indirect object	2	0
Subject	1	3
Predicative	3	2
More than one element	11	3
Total	61	17

Table 3: switches between non-verb-final and verb-final syntax between BenR and BenRW

to have had. These changes, moreover, do not go one way, so that even a small-scale updating tendency looks far from being entirely consistent. Table 3 shows different types of elements which were moved from preverbal position in BenR to postverbal position in BenRW, and vice versa. The changes from verb-final to non verb-final order are over three times as frequent as the changes in the opposite direction. Non-finite verbs and nominal objects were moved to a postverbal position much more often than the other way round, while prepositional phrases and adverbs were a lot more flexible. But there are occasional counterexamples involving elements like direct objects. Thus we see OV ‘their psalms sing’ > VO ‘sing their psalms’:

þonne eft æfter heora nongereorde rædan hy eft heora bec oðþe **hyra sealmas** singen
(BenR 48.74.8)

then again after their noon meal let them read again their books or sing their psalms

Donne eft æfter hire nonmete rædan hi eft on heore bec odðe syngon **heore sealmes**
(BenRW 48.99.21)

then again after their noon meal let them read again their books or sing their psalms

Post refectionem autem suam uacent lectionibus **suis** aut **psalmis** (RSBW 48.98.16)

after the noon meal let them apply themselves to reading or psalms

Another example is VO ‘have temperance’ > OV ‘temperance have’:

Deah munecas eallum tidum sceolon **forhæfdnesse** habban **fæstenes** (BenR 49.76.3)

although monks at all times should hold the temperance of fasting

Deah mynecene on eallum tidum **læntelic lif** healden sculle (BenRW 49.101.19)

although nuns at all times should have a life of temperance

Licet omni tempora uite sanctimonialium **quadragesime** debeat **obseruationem** habere
(RSBW 49.100.15)

Although the life of a monk ought to have about it at all times the character of a Lenten observance

If we were to search for an explanation for those changes that seem to go against the current of language change and introduce further OV and VF constructions into a text already full of them, we might want to fall back on the hypothesis that the reviser was bringing the English text more closely into line with the Latin. But unfortunately, this explanation does not seem

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to work. There is no visible correlation: while some verb-final clauses introduced in BenRW clearly mirror the order of the Latin, others clearly do not.³⁹ In the following example, BenR has VO order, ‘bear the infirmities’, while BenRW and the Latin text have OV:

Hi mid geþylde him betweoh betende **forberen** þa untrumnessa hira lichamena and þa tyddernessa hira þeawa (BenR 72.131.18)

they should with patience and in prayer endure the infirmities of their bodies and the frailties of their customs

Hyre seconesse ægðer ge ge of licaman ge ge gepance sibsumlice heom beotwene **forbere** (BenRW 72.145.15)

the sickness both of body and mind they should with patience endure amongst themselves

infirmates suas siue corporum siue morum pacientissime **tolerent** (RSBW 72.144.13)

[they should] most patiently endure one another’s infirmities, whether of body or of character

In the next, BenR and the Latin have VX, ‘is last of the order of the community’; but BenRW places the verb *be* at the end:

þeah he... ytemest **sy** on endebyrdnesse þære gesomnunge (BenR 64.119.4)

even if he be the last of the order of the community

þeah heo... utemest on þære endebyrdnesse þære gesomnunge **beo** (BenRW 64.131.12)

even if she be the last of the order of the community

etiamsi ultima **fuerit** in ordine congregationis (RSBW 64.130.7)

even if she be the last of the order of the community.

The relatively small scale of such changes and the existence of counterexamples shows that both verb-final and non-verb-final constructions were considered acceptable in main, coordinate and subordinate clauses even at the time when when, in the overall history of English syntax, Old English verb-final patterns were on the decline. The revision (or revisions) that gave rise to the Winteneý text must have happened at some point between the early eleventh and the late twelfth century. None of the changes introduced in the adapted text result in patterns unattested either in earlier Old English and later Middle English prose. Furthermore, the number of changes, though substantial, was not great enough to alter the overall preference Æthelwold’s Old English Rule had for verb-final and verb-late constructions.

There is generally very little word-order variation among the surviving manuscripts of the Benedictine Rule. Some of them (like the Wells fragment and the twelfth-century MS London, British Library, Cotton Faustina A. X) sometimes deviate in their syntax and phrasing from other, earlier Old English manuscripts. It is always possible that the reviser’s exemplar was idiosyncratic in some ways, which would account for some of the differences from earlier versions discussed above. However, this hypothesis does not affect the low frequency of reworked phrases.

The presence of patterns whose introduction cannot be due to linguistic innovating does not mean that updating has to be automatically ruled out elsewhere. In some areas of grammar, the updating tendency is more discernible than in others. Objects are an interesting case in point.

³⁹ It is, of course, impossible to account for all the possible word order patterns that may have occurred in a now-lost Latin manuscript. No extant Latin MSS bear out the final position of the verb *be* as in RSBW 64.130.7 — cf. the collation in *Benedicti Regula*, ed. by Rudolphus Hanslik, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 75 (Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1960).

Nominal direct objects

All in all, BenR contains 368 clauses with preverbal nominal direct objects. These were moved to postverbal position in BenRW in 22 cases, with only three counterexamples of VO > OV in the whole Rule (see example 3 above). This accords perfectly with the expected decline of OV patterns in Middle English.

Pronominal objects

Some pronominal objects were moved to preverbal positions in the revised version. These go against the order of such Latinate phrases as BenR 53.81.20 ‘and ge onfengon min’ (‘and you received me’) translating the Latin ‘suscepistis me’ (RSB 53.123.2). In such cases, the Winteny reviser would often substitute the more common pattern, changing the phrase to BenRW 53.105.24 ‘ge me underfengen’. An interesting feature of the Winteny version, entirely independent of the Latin text, is the more or less consistent removal of pronominal objects from positions in the left periphery of the clause (14 cases all in all):

Gif **hit** þonne se abbod underfon hate (BenR 54.87.15)

if the abbot orders to undertake it

Gyf þonne þeo abbodesse **hit** underfon hate (BenRW 54.109.22)

if the abbess orders to undertake it

Ne ræde **him** mon nauðer ne Moyses boc (BenR 42.66.18)

let not the Book of Moses be read to them

Ne ræde man **heom** naðer ne Moyses boc (BenRW 42.89.8)

let not the Book of Moses be read to them

According to the account of Old English pronominal objects proposed by Ans van Kemenade and generally accepted in later publications,⁴⁰ they were clitics that could occur both in the position immediately to the right of the conjunction (complementiser) and immediately to the right of the verb in clauses with initial *wh*-, negative and *þa*.⁴¹ During the Middle English period, these positions were gradually becoming impossible. All the emendations in the Winteny Version place pronominal objects after the subjects (within the limits of the verb phrase) and remove them from the left periphery of the clause. There are a few clauses where no such change occurs, but (significantly) no counterexamples.

The earlier Wells revision, on the contrary, seems to be perfectly happy with this construction and even introduces several new ones where Æthelwold had something different.⁴² This type of tinkering with pronouns could be an indication of a relatively late date of the revision reflected in the Winteny text.

⁴⁰ Ans van Kemenade, *Syntactic Case and Morphological Case*, pp. 112–16, 188–201; see also Willelm F. Koopman, *Word Order in Old English, with Special Reference to the Verb Phrase* (Amsterdam: Universiteit van Amsterdam, 1990), pp. 75–131 (the chapter ‘Old English Clitic Pronouns: Some Remarks’); Willelm F. Koopman, ‘Another Look at Clitics in Old English’, *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 95 (1997), 73–93.

⁴¹ Fischer et al., *The Syntax of Early English*, p. 119.

⁴² E.g. ‘**hine** man adræfe ut mid ealle of ðam mynstre’ (BenRWells 62.112.18), corresponding to a passive phrase in Æthelwold’s text: ‘æt openum gyltum sy he of mynstre adræfed’ (BenR 62.113.15).

Pre- and postpositions

A similar innovative tendency in BenRW, more consistent with Middle English than Old English usage, can be observed in the order of objects and prepositions (or, as they often in fact are, postpositions). When a change takes place, the postpositions are normally replaced by prepositions (*him fore* > *for hyre*; *him ætforan* > *toforan hyre*; *him mid* > *mid hire*), and the postpositions separated from their objects are brought close together:

(8)gange **him** se ealder **togeanes** (BenR 53.83.3)

let the superior go towards him

þeo priore ga **hire** **togeanes** (BenRW 53.105.27)

let the prior go towards her

Exbraciation

Another sign of possible updating witnessed by the Winteneý version is offered in the so-called sentence brace, a construction in which the finite verb occurs early in the clause, and the non-finite verb occupies the final position (like the German *ich habe das Lied gesungen*). The Winteneý reviser made several changes (twelve cases all in all), always removing the sentence brace and bringing the two verb forms close together. Thus, a brace involving a finite verb (v), another element (X), and non-finite verb (V) could be changed so that the intervening element was made either to precede or to follow both verbs: vXV > XvV or vVX. For example:

Elles oþrum dagum on ðære wucan **sy** cantic **gesungen** (BenR 13.38.3)

But on the other days of the week let there be sung a canticle

Elles oðrum dægum on þære wucum **sy** **gesungan** an canticle of þære witegan boc (BenRW 13.49.23)

But on the other days of the week let there be sung a canticle from the book of the Prophets

Nam ceteris diebus canticum unumquemque die suo ex prophetis ... **dicatur** (RSBW 13.48.14)

But on the other days let there be said a canticle from the Prophets.

Newly translated passages

Whatever dating we might suggest for the revision behind BenRW, no English texts written between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries exhibit anything like Æthelwold's syntax (cf. Table 2 above). While the relatively small-scale nature of the Winteneý revision seems to rule out a conscious effort to update the syntax, we can still see the reviser emending some clauses as they went along — a process mirrored by a visible, but by no means consistent, effort to update the vocabulary, spelling and morphology of the text.⁴³ It was inevitable that changes would occasionally go both ways, reflecting synchronic word order variation still widely available to speakers of English, but some significant examples such as the pronouns discussed above show that there is still an unupdating tendency to be discerned.

From this point of view, it is fortunate that there are several passages in the Winteneý Version where the text is reworked to the extent that it can be called a new translation. This

⁴³ Discussed in Gretscht, 'Die Winteneý-version'. See also Hall, 'Old MacDonald had a *Fyrm*'.

reworking is often purely stylistic. There are also a few passages which do not have any equivalents either in Latin or in the Old English Rule of St Benedict. They exhibit many of the syntactic features of the Middle English period:

Sancte Benedict gywð munece cule and yesetteð mantel togeanes þære cule, and haligraft, forþan þe hit nis laga þat muncene habben cule; hodes hi magon habban, gyf hi willen, for wuche and eac þanne hi farað ut, gyf hi swa wylleð (BenRW 55.111.3)

St Benedict grants a cowl for the monks and we appoint a cloak in place of the cowl and a veil, because it is not permitted that nuns should have a cowl; they can have hoods, if they wish, for work and also when they go outside, if they so wish.⁴⁴

In this example, all the objects are postverbal, apart from the emphatic or contrastive *hodes*; there is a clear preference for verb-medial constructions; and the syntactic structures used are extremely simple and straightforward, almost to the extent of being colloquial. This is very significant, making it even more probable that whatever variety of written English was practised by the reviser, it was very different from the elaborate syntax characteristic of Æthelwold's Old English Benedictine Rule.

Conclusions

The Wintene Version is certainly the most complex of the existing revisions of the Old English Rule. The fact that the manuscript is so far removed from the time of the original composition implies both a long transmission and an inevitable evolution of the text, reflecting both the ongoing linguistic change and the varied use of the Rule by different religious communities after the Conquest. It is plausible to imagine a reviser with an agenda — whether someone trying to make the text more linguistically accessible or someone trying to bring the English text into a rigorous conformity with the Latin original. Whichever it may be, neither attempt can be said to be consistent, which leads us to suppose that scribal stylistic preferences and unconscious ‘translation in transmission’ are equally conceivable explanations for many of the changes witnessed by the Claudius manuscript. Moreover, the Wintene text may well reflect more than one attempt at revising the original Æthelwoldian translation.

The conclusions that can be drawn from my analysis of the syntactic revision in the Claudius text fall into two broad categories, linguistic and extralinguistic.

Linguistically, the changes can best be characterised negatively as being neither essentially Latinising nor essentially modernising: the constructions which imitated the Latin still involved perfectly acceptable vernacular patterns, while the extent of updating was not great enough to bring the text as a whole close to the prevalence of verb-medial and VO patterns evident in contemporary Middle English. The presence or absence of counterexamples in each case is an important criterion, which shows that many of the changes cannot be attributed to anything other than the reviser's personal choice. The revisions indicate a shift in frequencies as opposed to a complete disappearance of certain patterns. Considering the lateness of the Wintene manuscript and the peculiarities of Æthelwold's syntax, it is remarkable that the reworking was not more extensive. Much of the evidence of the Wintene version adds to our understanding of both synchronic and diachronic syntactic variation in Old English.

This is not the place to recount different theoretical approaches to word-order change in the history of English. Suffice it to say that the change in the frequency of surface OV and VF

⁴⁴ Trans. by Jayatilaka, ‘The Old English Benedictine Rule’, p. 160, n. 59.

patterns has been attributed to underlying shift from OV to VO,⁴⁵ to the competition between OV and VO grammars,⁴⁶ or to the decreasing frequency of a surface order ultimately derived from an immutable VO pattern.⁴⁷ The works by Tony Foster, Willelm Koopman and Wim van der Wurff have drawn attention to the important problem of the status of recessive and rare patterns, such as the ‘object-verb’ pattern which survives in limited contexts until the present day and is well-attested in Middle English.⁴⁸ My study is concerned with surface patterns rather than derivation, and with exploring the limits of variation in individual texts rather than with analysing the corpus for data representative of the period as a whole. What emerges from the examination of the Winteneý text is a picture of a word order which may have seemed archaic even in Æthelwold’s own time (consider Table 2 above and the comparison with the near-contemporary *Rule of Chrodegang*), and which was nevertheless preserved, with relatively minor alterations, in a text which was supposed to be read, studied and followed (and so, linguistically speaking, processed and understood) by communities of English-speaking nuns and monks in the thirteenth century.

The preservation of Æthelwoldian language cannot be explained by the authority of the Rule alone — it did not have the sacred status of the Gospels (and the manuscripts of West Saxon Gospels show the same signs of updating and alteration by post-Conquest scribes),⁴⁹ and it was changed and adapted to suit the changing audiences, with some chapters entirely rewritten.⁵⁰ No matter what reverence the vernacular Rule may have commanded in the twelfth century, the important fact remains that the Winteneý reviser did not hesitate to rewrite several sections of it and make a number of changes to its vocabulary, spelling, morphology, and syntax. This reflects a need for a vernacular Rule, which would have been equally welcomed by the Cistercian nunnery in Winteneý and by any other community of religious women or men in the South of England. Recent scholarship provides abundant evidence for the many uses of English in the twelfth century, and the Winteneý Benedictine Rule certainly corroborates these findings.⁵¹

We do not know much about the use of the vernacular Rule in the reformed Benedictine monasteries and nunneries. It is quite possible that the vernacular version was a way of familiarising the novice monks and nuns with the Latin text, and the bilingual arrangement would

⁴⁵ E.g. van Kemenade, *Syntactic Case and Morphological Case*.

⁴⁶ E.g. Pintzuk, *Phrase Structures in Competition*; Pintzuk and Taylor, ‘The Loss of OV Order’.

⁴⁷ E.g. Ian Roberts, ‘Directionality and Word Order Change in the History of English’, in *Parameters of Morphosyntactic Change*, ed. by Ans van Kemenade and Nigel Vincent (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 397–426; Theresa Biberauer and Ian Roberts, ‘Changing EPP Parameters in the History of English: Accounting for Variation and Change’, *English Language and Linguistics*, 9 (2005), 5–46.

⁴⁸ Tony Foster and Wim van der Wurff, ‘Some notes on Word Order in Old and Middle English’, *Neophilologus*, 79, 1995, 309–27; Wim van der Wurff, ‘Deriving Object-verb Order in Late Middle English’, *Journal of Linguistics*, 33 (1997), 485–509; Willem Koopman and Wim van der Wurff, ‘Two Word Order Patterns in the History of English: Stability, Variation, and Change’, in *Stability, Variation and Change of Word-Order Patterns over Time*, ed. by Rosanna Sornicola, Erich Poppe, and Ariel Shisha-Halevy, Current Issues in Linguistic Theory, 213 (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2000), pp. 259–84.

⁴⁹ Fischer, ‘The Hatton MS of the West Saxon Gospels’; Liuzza, ‘Scribal Habit’.

⁵⁰ Jayatilaka, ‘The Old English Benedictine Rule’, pp. 158–66; Gretschn, ‘Die Winteneý-version’, p. 315.

⁵¹ See notes 5–7 above; cf. also Cecily Clark’s evaluation of the situation in post-Conquest Canterbury: ‘English, although subject to great and varied competition from French, cannot be regarded as superseded for any function, or even much discouraged’; ‘People and Languages in Post-Conquest Canterbury’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 2 (1976), 1–32 (p. 1).

certainly have been helpful for such a purpose.⁵² It is possible that the Latin text would provide an extra prop helpful for elucidating the English text.⁵³ This consideration may well explain the impulse to bring some phrases closer to the Latin, which may have been the reason for some of the changes introduced in the course of revision. But whether or not the Latin text of the Rule was the object of study or a sort of extensive gloss to the English text, its presence alone does not account for the revision.

The main conclusion that emerges from this study is that the Winteneý Benedictine Rule fully conforms to the tradition of post-Conquest circulation, reading, adaptation of Old English texts witnessed by many surviving manuscript and described in detail in recent scholarship. Here we have a practical and authoritative text, which would have little ‘antiquarian’ value, intended to be read by a community of religious women (and perhaps, men as well), and showing signs of adaptation for a specific audience. It would fit the niche later filled by the Katherine Group texts and *Ancrene Wisse*; before they came along, a vernacular Benedictine Rule must have been in great demand in nunneries, monastic cathedrals or other religious communities. While it cannot be ruled out that Æthelwold’s syntax, revised or not, might have seemed unusual or archaic to later readers, this study shows that their linguistic competence was certainly flexible enough to accommodate it, even if the revision betrays that the language spoken or written by the revisers or scribes handling the text must have differed from late Old English in many respects.

⁵² Bilingual manuscripts of the Benedictine Rule, in which the Latin and the English texts alternate chapter by chapter are extant from pre-conquest England as well, e.g. Oxford, Corpus Christi College 197, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 178, British Library Titus AIV, and the Wells Cathedral MS containing the Wells Fragment. It has been claimed that the bilingual arrangement may have been adopted by Æthelwold from the very start, although this is a contested issue — see Jayatilaka, ‘The Old English Benedictine Rule’, p. 148, n. 9.

⁵³ For the use of Latin to clarify the meaning of Old English texts in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century see, *inter alia*, Franzen, *The Tremulous Hand of Worcester*; Sauer, ‘Knowledge of Old English in the Middle English Period?’; Collier, ‘The Tremulous Worcester Hand and Gregory’s *Pastoral Care*’; Treharne, ‘Reading from the Margins’.