Some Notes on Titles, Topics and Themes in Old English

Dora Maček
Faculty of Philosophy, Zagreb

Some structures and functions of titles are examined in two types of Old English texts, the “narrative” and the “directive”. The functions of the titles as topics of the texts are followed up in the initial, or “topical”, sentences. Finally the relation of topic to the sentence theme and rheme is established. Observations are also made on continuity in the organization of written texts.

1. A type of non-simultaneous communication occurs when “someone reads a book written centuries ago” which Tschumi (1973/148) calls cultural transmission. He says that “for culture to be usefully and effectively transmitted through several centuries, the background of the book must contain permanent adequacy even though its foreground may be partly discarded, and its creativity must be on a continuous line leading to contemporary books.” An element of permanent adequacy is also the organization of texts, which reaches many centuries back, and can still be accepted and recognized by the modern reader as coherent samples of communication, or an interaction between writer and reader over a space of time.

The regularity of textual organization in written medieval texts is remarkable, though both graphic and structural peculiarities, of course, exist. Differences in text organization between medieval and modern texts can be accounted for by various socio-linguistic factors, such as time, place, participants (particularly the writer-scribe) and genre of written discourse.

2. On terminology. The term discourse will be used to mean various forms of what Brown and Yule (1983/1) say is “language in use”. Text is thus “a communicative occurrence” (Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981/3), “the verbal record of a communicative act” (Brown and Yule, 1983/6), “eine abgeschlossene sprachliche A usserung” (Dressler, 1973/3), or “any passage, spoken or written, of whatever length, that does form a unified whole” (Halliday and Hasan 1976/1).

More specifically, four texts will be discussed which belong to two basic types, or genres, of discourse, i.e. the narrative and the directive. The term narrative is used to mean “an account of events” and directive in the sense of “instruction”.

187
Texts are organized into macro-structures, i.e. "normal semantic structures, not by one clause or sentence but by a sequence of sentences. In other words, macro-structures are a more global level of semantic description, they define the meaning of parts of a discourse and of the whole discourse on the basis of the meanings of the individual sentences" (van Dijk, 1977/6). The title of a work can be regarded as a type of macro-structure and is defined by Dressler as "eine reduzierte paraphrase des folgenden Textes" with its own pragmatic function (Dressler, 1973/18). Brown and Yule point out that "titles, chapter headings, sub-divisions and sub-headings all indicate to the reader how the author intends his argument to be chunked" (1983/7), which is precisely their pragmatic function as an explicit communication by the author to the reader about the organization of the particular type of text.

By paraphrasing the text to follow, the title is a “possible expression” of the topic of the text (Brown and Yule, 1983/134). The primitive meaning of topic is “what the text is about” and it is “the unifying principle which makes one stretch of discourse ‘about’ something and the next stretch ‘about’ something else…” (Brown and Yule, 1983/70).

Theme will be used as in Brown and Yule to “refer to a formal category, the left-most constituent of the sentence” (1983/126) the rest of the sentence being the rhyme (or comment). These two elements of a sentence express given and new information respectively, or they place an element of the information into focus.

3. The texts.

The relations between theme, topic, title and text will be examined on four Old English (further OE) texts. The texts used for the present study are:

a) The Parker Chronicles (832–900), ed. A. H. Smith (1951). The text of this edition was written during the period covered by the particular entries, i.e. 832–900 (Smith, 1951/3). The Chronicles are vernacular compositions written in four hands.

b) Beda Venerabilis, Historiae Ecclesiasticae Gentis Anglorum in (perhaps) King Alfred’s English translation, ed. J. Schipper (1897). The editor has made use of several manuscripts (further MSS), probably written in the 10th century (Quirk and Wrenn, 1957/6).

c) Læcebob, ed. G Leonhardi (1905). The MS of the Laccebob is usually taken to have been written in the 10th century but Schipper (1905/1120) believes that it might be older.

d) Halitgar’s Penitential in the English translation, ed. J. Raith (1933). It was probably written by two scribes in the first half of the 11th century (Raith, 1933/1X).

These texts belong to “classical OE” (Quirk and Wrenn, 1957/6), and can be considered a relatively homogeneous representation of formal varieties of written OE.

Texts (a) and (b) are examples of narrative prose, the first being a more technical and the second a more literary subtype, (b) is a translation from a Latin original). Texts (c) and (d) represent directive prose with a more wordly (c) and a more spiritual (d) concern respectively. (The second is also a translation from Latin).

1. In our definition “text”.

188
A note should be given on the potential influence of the Latin originals. Although there can be no doubt that Latin influenced the style of the translations into English, the translations are far from slavish. A number of adjustments have been made by the translators, for a number of possible reasons: their understanding of the original was faulty, they employed different procedures to transmit the content of the Latin text into English (Ivir, 1987), or because the structure of English was different from the original.

3.1. Narrative texts.

The two narrative texts are historical accounts, so their overall arrangement is, of course, chronological. The Chronicles “aim at being repositories of facts grouped together in years” (Smith, 1951/2), so the facts are related impersonally, with only one emotional detail”. Bede’s History, on the other hand, contains descriptive passages of places and people, dialogues, letters and other types of discourse. For this reason his chronology is not perfect, often going back in time in order to relate some important details or evaluate the events. Because of all this Bede’s style is much more complex and strikes the reader as more sophisticated and “literary”.

3.1.1. The Parker Chronicles are organized into sections by the date of entry, each year forming a definite unit. The unit is typically headed by the reference to the year written in Latin and in Roman characters, e.g. Anno dcccxxxii. The account of the events that follows the date is entirely in English.

The Latin inscription functions as title of the entry, signalling the (chronological) arrangement of the entire text and also representing the topic of the entry. Apart from its function as an indicator of textual organization, the Latin inscription also provides authority to the vernacular text (on similar functions of code-switching in medieval English texts, see Maček, 1988).

This type of title is its most condensed form, since the structure of a title can be anything from a sequence of sentences or clauses, nominal phrases, elliptic structures, to single elements extracted from sentences (Dressler, 1973/18). In this case it is a part of a temporal adverbial “in that year”. This is a temporal definition, i.e. the particular year is the topic of the entire entry, and it is understood that it covers events having occurred at that time.

All such titles are followed by what van Dijk (1977/136) calls topical sentences. A topical sentence paraphrases or partly repeats the topic:

1. Her hepene men oferher3eadon Sceapi3e. (Here the heathens ravaged Sheppey)

While the reference of the title-topic is cataphoric, referring to the entire section, the topical sentence begins with an anaphoric pronominalized adverb her, referring back to the title.

This anaphoric adverb, representing the topic in a pronominalized form, is the theme of the sentence, the rest of it, stating the events, is the rheme. The rheme is

2. In the entry for 846 the exclamation 3odes ponces (thank God!).
3. The spelling of the various texts has here been regularized to facilitate printing. These are the changes: ø = æ, ʒ = ʒ, ʒ = d, ʒ = t. The translations are meant, as far as possible, to reflect the original.
normally a full sentence, often consisting of a sequence of clauses linked by *and* (mostly in the form of th sigill, i.e. 7).

2. *Her 3eafeah Ecgbryht cynin3 pæn bætook xxii scipplaesta act Carrum 7 pæer pearsæ micel 3elaæen 7 pæa Denesan ahton pælstope 3equal...* (Here fought king Ecgbert against 32 crews at C and there was a great slaughter and the Danes had control over the battlefield)

Single variations on the thematic element *her* are the more explicit, full forms, e.g. *on pissum 3eare, on pys 3eare, on py ilcan 3eare* (in this year, in this same year):

2. *Da pæs on sumera on pyssum 3ere...* (Then thereafter in the summer of this year).
3. *Ond soma eftær pæm on pys 3eare* (and immediately after that in this year...)

The connectors *pæa* and *ond* occur most frequently in the medial position connecting clauses or sentences, but here their function is to bring a sequence of text into focus.

The structure of the sentence thus introduced is most frequently V-NP.

4. *Her 3eafeah Ecgbryht cyning...* (Here fought king Ecgbert)

But the number of sentences with the order Adv–NP–V is by no means negligible (cca 40%), e.g.

5. *Her Ecgbryht cyning forþpierde...* (Here died king Ecgbert)

Since these differences cannot be accounted for by the syntactic structure of the sentence, they must be understood as expressing a focusing strategy. Furthermore, the shift of focus seems to occur as a free variation.

A few initial clauses have a more complex structure, i.e. when the initial element (the theme) is followed by a pronominal object coreferent with the subject, and preceding the verb, e.g.

6. *Her hiene bestel se here into Perham...* (Here 'themselves' the army moved stealthily to Werham).

Another focusing strategy occurs in 'split' verbal phrases when an auxiliary verb is separated from the main verb by a subject, object, or adverbial. Since the main informational impact of the rheme in a longer structure rests with the verb, the reader's attention is diminished after the verb has been expressed. To avoid this effect, elements deemed important are placed before it. With obligatory verbal complements such as in the phrase *feng to rice* (came to the throne), the verb functions like the auxiliary (its meaning is almost empty) and the PP like the main verb (i.e. *ricode*), and can be split in the same manner.

7. *7 feng AEpeljulf Ecgbryhtning to rice* (and AEþhelmwulf son of Ecgbert came to the throne).

Since the splitting is not obligatory however, e.g.

8. *Her Herebyrht aldormon pæes ofslææen* (Here was killed aldrman Herebríht)

we must assume that it is a variation producing a more compact expression and focus on the members within the 'verbal parenthesis'.

The splitting of subject and verb by a series of adverbials as in 9., brings the adverbs into focus before the main element, the rheme (verb), is expressed.

4. Type 2 word-order in Closs Traugott (1972/107).
9. Her hæpene men acerst on Scæpni3e ofer ūnter sæctun. (Here the heathen lay in wait on Sheppey over winter for the first time)

Paragraphing in a running text, as found most frequently in medieval MSS, has also to be effected by linguistic means. In narrative discourse sequencing close cohesion of sentences and clauses is achieved by the medial paratactic connector and (7). If the sigill is missing, the sense of connectedness is lost and the next sentence, beginning with a different, initial, connector ūna, marks a new event, new topic. It also serves as a sign of a new paragraph, or macro-structure. In the following example from the Chronicles (entry Anno dcccxxii)

10. ūna he ūnaet hierde (when he heard it)

The first three clauses of the entry tell of the Danish and Welsh victory over Egbert, when the break comes through the omission of and (7) (example 10). The next four clauses, again linked by and (7) relate to Egbert’s actions and his victories over the Danes and the Welsh. Similarly, if the medial connector and occurs initially, it is meant to connect the section with the previous entry.

3.1.2. Bede’s History is divided into a Praefatio and five books, each organized in a number of chapters. The books and chapters in the English translation are marked by a special type of title which refers only to the technical division of the text, not to its topic. These titles are in Latin and in Roman characters, e.g. Liber Primus, Liber Quintus etc., Caput XXV etc.

The chapters are preceded by headings stating the topic of the chapter, e.g.

11. Caput I Be 3esetynynse Breotene odde Hibernia Scotta calandes and heora ūnae aerran bi3en3um. (On the situation of Britain and Hibernia the island of the Scots and their earliest inhabitants).

The topic of the chapter is expressed by characteristic structures, (a) prepositional phrase be (about) + NP, where the NP can continue in the form of a clause or a series of clauses.

The NP is as a rule a complex phrase with a number of coordinate nouns, e.g. example 11: 3esetynynse Breotene odde Hibernia Scotta calandes ond heora ūnae aerran bi3en3um. (b) a subordinate declarative sentence introduced by ūnaet. The main clause is here ‘understood’ to be something like: “The text of this chapter says that...”, e.g. the following example:

12. Daet se aerrn Romwara casere 3a3ius Julius Breotone 3esohete. (That Gaius Julius was the first Roman emperor to reach Britain).

The titles are thus more complex than those noted in the Parker Chronicles, but they are not necessarily full sentences.

The characteristic introductory elements, be and daet determine the structure of the title.

If it is introduced by the preposition be, the title is typically a nominal phrase (as in example 11.), or rather several coordinate NPs. That, on the other hand, introduces subordinate clauses (which is evident from their syntactic structure with verb in final

5. The title of the entire book is in Latin too. The Preface is a different discourse genre and it will not be considered here.
position). In neither case are the titles complete sentences, because the theme of the sentence is missing, i.e. a phrase like 'This chapter is about', 'The chapter tells that', etc. The same holds good for titles with both structures in a paratactic order, e.g.

13. Be Diocletianus rice, 7 þæt he cristene men waes echtende. (On the reign of Diocletian and that he persecuted Christians).

Titles in Bede's History are typically rhematic structures, summing up the topic of the chapter. This can also be said for the titles in the Chronicles. They are a part of the theme, i.e. *(It) happened in the year* x.y.

The chapters begin with a topical sentence resembling those in the Chronicles. The date is thematized in explicit form, e.g.

14. Da waes ymb tu hund wintra 7 syx 7 hundeahtati3 aefter þære drihtenlican mennyscnysse. (Then about two hundred and eighty years after the Lord's incarnation).

15. Þære tide ... *(At that time...)*

16. In þysses cyninges rice (During the reign of this king...)

There are variations on the *Da waes* temporal marker and a variation on the sequencing (medial) connector *and*, i.e. *swylce eac*. Occasionally, when the connector is left out, the verb is thematized.

The initial elements are typically the sequencing connectors *da, da aefter*, which mark the temporal sequence of the information. One of the less frequent themes is the noun, here *Bretone* in the first chapter.

17. Bretone is 3arseeges ealond... *(Britain is an island)*

The complexity of Bede's text can be seen in the structure of both the titles and topical sentences, where a variety of elements are thematized, though predominantly time adverbs and verbs, and where a link with the previous chapter is intended, by means of such connectors as *þa, þa eac* etc. This kind of chapter linking is more frequent in the History than in the Chronicles.

3.2. Directive texts.

Directive texts address themselves more directly to the potential reader than narrative texts do. Their function is to advise the user how to perform certain actions. They may be said to have a perlocutionary force (Searle, 1976). While the Læceboe gives advice on how to prepare and apply medicine, the Penitential prescribes punishment and penitence for various sins. Though many of the remedies in the Læceboe derive from medieval Latin books, the text is not a translation, unlike the Poenitentiale by Halitgar, bishop od Camberei (817–831), which was originally written in Latin.

3.2.1. *The Læceboe* falls into two parts: (a) a register of prescriptions against various ailments, starting with the head and its parts, moving downwards over the entire body, and (b) a detailed elaboration of various prescriptions and directions how to prepare and use these medicines.

Each paragraph contains prescriptions for one part of the body, and is headed by a number in Latin characters (I – LXXXVIII) both in the register and in the main text.

The register consists of single short paragraphs giving an inventory of the prescriptions. Each paragraph states the topic of the text under the same number in the second part. Here are some examples of the register:
18. X Laecedom wip 3esnote 7 wip 3eposum (Remedy against a running nose and a cold in the head)
19. XI Laecedomas wip sarum weolorum (Remedies against sore lips).
20. Laecedom 3if mon blod hraecce (Remedy if one coughs up blood).

The topics are characteristically stated by elliptic sentences with a thematized rheme (Laecedom). What is missing is the theme and the verb, i.e. This is a remedy against. This is a similar nominalized structure as the headings in Bede.

The titles resemble those in the Chronicles, except that their function is to signal only the arrangement of the text, they are not the topic (see 3.1.2. on the arrangement of books and chapters in Bede). The heading consists either of a prepositional phrase (PP), the preposition being with, e.g. 19, a sequence of PP’s linked by and as in 18, or a sequence of clauses linked in the same way. If the connector is omitted in the sequence, it is 'discontinued'. There is a slight break, or a signal for a new paragraph starting with the preposition wip e.g.

21. Laecedomas wip eallum untrymnessum heafdes 7 hwannan ealles 3e healfes heafdes ece cume 7 claesnunega 7 swillinn3 wip hrum 7 3ilistrum to heafdes haelo 7 hu mon scyle3ebrocenes heafdes tilii3ean 7 3if pæet braen3en ut sie (Remedies against all illnesses of the head and when the pain of half of the head comes and the purging and the washing against soot and pus for the healing of the head and how one should handle a broken head and if the brain has fallen out).

Such a long item is quite complex, but it is treated in the same way as the short ones, i.e. it contains the topic (laecedomas) and the comment consisting of a sequence of nouns (e.g. wip hrum 7 3ilistrum) or a sequence of subordinate clauses, e.g.

21a. 7 hwannan ealles 3e healfes heafdes ece cume
7 hu mon scyle 3ebrocenes heafdes tilii3ean
7 3if pæet braen3en ut sie

The register is thus a list of topics elaborated in the second part of the Lacceboc. Each item in the register, however, has its own topic, i.e. Laecedom(as), which at the same time is the theme of the entire sentence/paragraph. As observed earlier, it is a thematized rheme. The entire structure of the new rheme is again a nominalized form depending on the preposition wip. The subordinate clauses in the sequence observe the verb final word order.

Sequencing by coordination, as shown in 21, may appear marginally acceptable because of the ambiguity arising from the variability of the cohesive force of and and syndetic coordination, as well as from an overgeneralized coordination reduction.

Example 21 can be interpreted in the following manner: The dominant element (D1) in the sequence is the noun laecedomas which is deleted in all but the first member of the sequence. Thus the sequence could be represented as

PP1 wip eallum untrymnessum heafdes
S1 hwannan ealles 3e healfes ece cume
S2 hu mon scyle 3ebrocenes heafdes tilii3ean
S3 3if braen3en ut sie

The series is split by an interpolated series with two conjoined dominant NPs (D2) claesnunega 7 swillinn3 followed by

PP2 wip hrum
PP4 (wip) 3ilistrum
PP5 to heafdes haelo
D2 are subcategories of the superordinate NP (topic) *laecedomas*. The coordination reduction in the interpolated string consists of the deletion of D2 elements and the dominant preposition (*wip*) in the PP4. The conjunction with PP5 is ambiguous since there is no link (*and*) to the preceding element. Thus it could also be understood as a “free” element, dominated by *laecedomas*. The presence of *and*, on the other hand, creates another ambiguity at the juncture between S1 and the interpolated sequence with D2. This could be interpreted as D2 (*claesnunga 7 willin3*) being a “split coordinate” with *ece* in S1 and thus dominated by *laecedomas*. This interpretation would in turn require PP3 and PP4 to be dominated by D1, which is acceptable.

From the point of view of communication, the ambiguities can pass unnoticed. The readers would probably expect a “reduced” kind of structure in a heading. Next, *laecedomas* would be accepted as the superordinate element, dominating even *claesnuniga 7 willin3* and interpreted as “such remedies as purification and washing.”

The text of the actual directions contains several paragraphs depending on the number of ailments and remedies described. The number of remedies is normally explicitly stated in the register:

22. XIV *Laecedomas* wid brestwaerce; IV craeftas. (Remedies against pain in the chest, 4 devices)

As already said, each entry in the register is the topic of the text in the main part of the Laecoboc, which is here often literally repeated in the topical sentence:

23. *Laecedomas* wid ea3ena miste 3enim... (Remedies against blurred vision...)

Moreover, the order of remedies can be explicitly mentioned:

24. I On þissum acrestan laeeccraeftum 3ewritene sint laecedomas wip eallu heafdes untrynynese. (In this first of the prescriptions are written down remedies against all the illnesses of the head)

or the topic is explicitly announced:

25. Her sint laecedomas... (Here are remedies...)

The topic, which is also the theme of the topical sentence, is followed by a verb in the imperative, giving directions such as: *3enini*, *smire*, *3e3nid*, *seo* (take, spread, crush, boil, etc.) and the rest of the predicate/rheme:

26. Wip þon ilcan 3enim betonican 7 pipor 3e3nid swide togaedere, laet ane niht han3ian on clade, smire mid. (Against the same take betony and pepper. crush it firmly together. let hang overnight in a cloth, spread it over the sore place)

These predicates/rhemes are arranged in asyndetic paratactic order, i.e. without *and*. Each segment starting with 7 or another connecter (the conjunction *3if*, the adverbs *hu, hwannon* etc) and preposition (*wid, to*) can be interpreted as dominated by *laecedomas*. Another interpretation could suggest nominalization of the entire sequence, which is thus dominated by both *laecedom* and *wid*. It is also obvious that sequences linked by *and* have a greater cohesion than those without them. The preposition *wid* is a signal that a new matter is to be introduced.

In a longer series of remedies anaphoric reference to the topic is expressed by the pronominal phrase *wid þon ilcan*.

The theme of the topical sentence is as a rule coreferent with the illness expressed as a PP or sentence (S):
27. Be 3e swelle 7 sare þæst maðan.3enim... (About swellings and pain in the stomach take)
28. Wip hwosten... (Against coughing)
29. 3if mon blode hraece... (If one coughs up blood)

Sentence 29 is a complex theme (a sentence) and as such has its own theme and rhyme, i.e. mon and blode hraece. Many remedies have subtopics, or topics of paragraphs. They can refer to the symptom of the illness:

30. Tacne þæere aðle; sio ad cymd of yfelre watten (The sign of the illness; the illness comes of bad water...)

or medicines and their ingredients:

31. Mërra hatte wyrt; 3e3nond on mortare... (Mërrh is the name of the herb, grind in the mortar)
32. Doleseal; acrind æfaerde... (Poultice; grind in the evening...)
33. Drenc wip þecradle; nime healfdu... (A draught against inflammation; take field-halm...)

The topics, or part of complex topics (PP, coordinates or S. e.g. 30 and 31), can be themes of the topical sentence, where they are not necessarily explicitly referred to by an anaphoric pronoun (e.g. 10). Often the verb is thematized (31–33) when the topic is not specifically stated, e.g.

34. Nim 3renes mirces leaf... (Take the leaf of a green smallage...)

The series can contain subordinate clauses with modifying functions (e.g. resultative, relative):

35. Wip þon ilcan 3enim fæt ful grenre nudan leafe 7 senapes saedes cueler fulne. 3e3nond to3edere do ææes aet hwite to cueler fulne aet sio sealfe sie þpiece smire mid fæphere on þa healfe þe sar ne sie. (Against the same take a cupful of green leaves of the rue and add mustard seeds. Crush them together, add the white of an egg, a spoonful, so that the ointment becomes thick, spread it with a feather on that part which is not sore.)

In some of the prescriptions the practitioner is directly addressed:

36. Laeceecraftas wip heals3unde 7 hu þu meanh 3ecunian hwæþer hit heals3und se... (Remedies against the swelling in the neck and how you can recognize whether it is a swelling in the neck).

Other parts of the text contain narrative structures, as in 30, when the nature of the illness is explained.

When a longer comment is split into equal parts by omitting the sigill, and therefore repeating wip, this is done to foreground the text that follows. Backgrounding entails sequencing by a connector like 7 or oppe or of (afterwards, again). The last one introduces a temporal sequence e.g.

37. Eft dohseal 3enim wæþbraedan saed... (Again a poultice. take the plantain's seed...)

Direct sequencing of clauses without link or cross-reference (e.g. by means of pronominalization) is typical of the Laeceboc:

38. 3if sino 3escrine 7 eft þon swelle 3enim 3ate tord 3emen 3wid eced smit on sona halad. (If the sinew contracts and afterwards in consequence of it swells take goat rud, mix with vinegar, smear over /it/ /it/ heals immediately)

Subordinate word order is optional, as can be seen in different sentences with the same structure:

39. 3if wyrmas on earan syn (if worms are in the ears)
40. 3if mannes mæþ sar sic (If one's mouth is sore)
41. 3if naæ31 sie of handa (If the nail comes off the hand)
To sum up: it is very characteristic of this style that the main introductory phrase or sentence is missing, such phrases as "there is" (here heed), "I recommend", "another remedy is", "note also". The object or nominal predicate of the clipped sentence, i.e. *laecedomas*, is either the only repeated element of the sentence, or it is elided as well, leaving only the preposition *wid*, which can also be elided.

*Laecedomas* is topicalized and it is the theme: *Laecedomas wid...* But it can be omitted: *wip wyrmum on ea3um 7 ea3selfa aelces cynne*, or, *3if mannes mup sar sie 3e tydred*.

The paragraphs of a division have the structure of the topical sentence, i.e. they state the topic, which is, or part of it is, the theme of the sentence. There are several strategies employed: a) the topic resembles the heading, i.e. it is not integrated in the rest of the sentence:

42. Murra hatte wyrt – 3e3gnid...(S + VP)
43. Dollsealf + acrid (NP + VP)
44. Drec wid eoradle – nime (NP + PP + VP)
45. Wid hwostan ... 3enim (PP + VP)
46. 3if mon blode hraece ... 3enim (S sub. + VP)
47. Her sint laecedomas (S)

b) Pronominal forms are thematized. c) It can also be any of the registry titles.

More complex topics/themes have subthemes, which are either nominal or pronominal, and if they are sentences, they also have their own rhemes, which are different from the set of directive verbs (imperatives such as *3enim*, etc.).

3.2.2. The Penitential is divided into four books (Libri), each dealing with a particular topic (I penitence in general, II penitential canons for laymen, III. penitential canons for clerics, IV. a complement to the first three books). Each book deals with a number of sins and transgressions, recommending the mode of penitence and atonement for them.

The books are headed by an inscription in Latin and the number of the book in Roman characters, e.g. *Liber I*. Each book falls into a number of chapters all beginning with an explicit statement about the classification of the text to follow, e.g.

48. Dis is aerest se forma capitul (This is to begin with the first chapter)
49. Her ongind se forma capitul (Here begins the first chapter)
50. Her ongind seo oder boe mid hire capitolun 7 mid 3am acfterfy3edon cwyonon. (Here begins the second book with its chapters and with the verdict that follows).

These sentences are typically situational sentences, i.e. sentences referring to the communicative situation. They begin with a deictic element (*pis, her*) pointing to the text and communicating to the addressee the contents of the text he is about to read. The tense is also situational, i.e. the present, referring to the time of the communicative situation from the point of view of both writer and reader, the time span between them having been cancelled. A characteristic transfer is here performed from face to face communication to written communication. The writer "pretends" to be communicating with his reader at the time of writing. The reader, at a temporal remove, assumes the same attitude, i.e. "pretends" to be facing the author via his text.

The explicit beginnings (see also Laecceboe) are followed by the title in the form such as:

196
53. Be þam men þe willes man ofslyhd (About those men who kill a man intentionally)
54. Hu hit bebyred to foresceavienne be þære synne maede (How it is proper to foresee the proportion of the sin)
55. Be gehadodra manna wifunga (On the marriage of ordained men)

The basic structure of the title could be represented as:

a) PP = P + NP\text{case}
   
   P = be
   
   NP = (Mod + N)\text{case}
   
   MOd = Det
   
   Adj
   
   N
   
   S (rel.)

b) S = Adv + NP + VP
   
   Adv = hu
   
   NP = hit
   
   VP = V + NP
   
   V = V3ps sg pres
   
   Adv

c) Adv + PP + NP
   
   Adv = eft

As in other texts, titles are typically nominalizations stating the topic. The sentence beginning with *hu* is also to be understood as a nominalized sentence, comparable to the simple PP: *Be state* (About stealing).

It is characteristic that if the NP contains a relative clause modifier, the relativized (coreferent) element does not agree in number with its antecedent, e.g.

56. Be þam men þe on his ytmeston daege his synna gecyrreng wyle (On those men who want/s/ to confess/his/ sins on their/his/ last day).
57. Be þam wifmen þe hig foreliged (About those women who commit/s/ fornication).

Although *Þam* is ambiguous (singular and plural) the form of the noun is unambiguously plural (*men, wifmen*), whereas all elements in the relative clause show singular agreement (*his, wyle, hig, foreliged*). This is not a peculiarity of the Latin original, which has plural agreement throughout.

The determiner *Þam* cataphorically refers to the following noun (*Þam men þe*) and correlates with the particle *þe*, functioning as the subject of the relative clause. It also correlates with a conjunction (e.g. *3if*) that introduces a clause with a full (nominal) subject.

58. Be þam gif wif ofslyhd hire wifman (On the woman who kills her maidservant)
59. Be þam men þe his peowan ofslyhd (On the men who kills his servant)

This points to the clearly conjunctive nature of *þe*, and makes the non-agreement between the relative clause and its antecedent more peculiar. The interchange between plural and singular seems to signal the generality of the statement: plural applies to everybody covered by the reference of the noun (*men, wifmen*), making the generic singular of the relative clause unambiguous. Moreover, subordination seems to mark a major syntactic and semantic break where restrictions such as number agreement are cancelled.

The structure of heading is as follows:

6. 55. De his qui partus suos ex fornicatione diversis modis interimunt.
Title = PP
PP = P + NP
P = be
NP = Det + S
Det = þam
S = pe + VP or gif + NP + VP
VP = NP + V

The last book (VI) has no heading, but does have an explanation why this is so. The initial formula about the organization of the text is here absent.

The body of the text is organized into conditional clauses, the topical sentence expressing a "condition" that requires punishment/punishment, e.g.

60. GIF hwylc wif bewedded beo, nis hit na alyfed þæt hwylc odor man hine daes bernasige: gif hit swa do, beo he amanumad. (If a woman is married, it is not allowed that another man takes her away / from her husband; if he does it he shall be excommunicated).

61. GIF wha mid his efecraete wif odde maedan neadigas nimd o unriht haemedo hire unwilles, beo he amanumad. (If somebody by force and with cunning rapes a woman or girl against her will, he shall be excommunicated).

The conditional clauses have a subordinate clause structure with the verb in final position. The verb can be followed by longer complements (in 59 to unriht haemedo hire unwilles = adverbial)

If the topic is an NP, it is repeated in the topical sentence, normally in the form of a "co-referent" verb, e.g.

62. Be stale. GIF whylc man stele deorwude þing: gif he bid laewade man, faeste V ger... (On stealing. If somebody steals a precious thing; if he is a layman he shall fast five years...)

On the other hand, when headings/topics are full sentences as in 61. for instance, part of the topic, i.e. the theme/subject of the sentence (i.e. men), is reproduced in pronominalized form (hwæ = an indefinite pronoun, semantically identical to the equally indefinite man).

It is interesting that in 62. for instance, the topic is expressed twice, first as a PP and then as S. Both are treated as headings. In fact, the topical sentence is not completed and functions as a nominalization. The next sentence has the same structure (conditional clause) whose subject is coreferent with the subject of the topical sentence (whylc man = he), but the offence is not the topic of the sentence, it is the penitence which is. The theme in both sentences is the indefinite NP man.

The rheme (main clause of the conditional sentence) begins, as in the text of the Laccœboe, with a directive verb form for the 3rd person singular or plural, i.e. the subjunctive (faeste, beo he amanumad, þolian). Such usage, as against the more

7. The Latin original gives no such explanation.
8. The form Þolian is probably a variant subjunctive plural form of Þolian (Raith. 1935) which may point to an ongoing change.
63. GIF messeþpreost odde diacon wiligen polian heora hades (If priest or diacon marry / they shall be deprived of their offices)
personal second person singular imperative of the Laeceboe, makes the style of the Penitential more formal, more "literary".


It is obvious from all the four texts examined that titles have a special pragmatic function, different from the main body of the text, which then warrants a special linguistic organization or structure. The function consists of signalling to the recipient the formal and semantic organization of the text, i.e. the overall arrangement and topic(s). The importance of the written text and its organization is emphasized by codeswitching into English, a language acquiring the status already held by Latin (Toon, 1985). The Latin titles refer mostly to the arrangement (of themes) of the text, whereas English headings introduce the topics. They stand out from the rest of the text by their characteristic nominalized structure, even when they explicitly, in a full phrase or sentence, state what they "are about". This is a strategy meant to help the recipient in easy and quick processing of the message, in grasping its main point. Such a strategy has a permanence in human (written and spoken) communication, which can be seen from various written (Exit, No U turn, The Royal Arms) and spoken (Help!) signals. In order to achieve this effect, such signals (and also titles) tend to deviate from other types of macro-structures in tending to over-ellipse sentence elements or treat non-nominal structures as if they were NPs without much adjustment.

The title is thus the topic of the text and the topic is often the theme of at least the initial (topical) sentence, where it is repeated entirely or in parts. But even when it is not mentioned, it is clear that everything in the text pertains to it (see also Brown and Givon, 1983).

It is reasonable to agree with the statement (Wagner, 1969/48) that OE is a theme-rheme language, since this is the organization that becomes clear from the structure of the title and topical sentence as well. Rhemes (predicates, verbs) are often thematized when it is necessary to focus the recipient's attention on them. Rhematic elements in this position may even resemble topics or even be nominalized (e.g., about stealing, keep left).

From what a modern reader can infer from the organization of an OE written discourse, it may be assumed that there are some civilizational constants in the tradition of written communication.

REFERENCES


199

OSVRT NA NASLOV, PREDMET TEKSTA I REČENIČNU TEMU U STAROENGLIJSKOM

Strukture i funkcije naslova promatraju se u dva tipa staroengleskih tekstova, "narativnom" i "direktivnom". Fungcija naslova kao predmeta teksta dalje se prati u početnim rečenicama teksta. Konačno se dovodi u vezu predmet teksta i tema i rema rečenice. U članku se također osvrće na postojanost u organizaciji pisanih tekstova.

200