Some Notes on Titles, Topics and Themes in Old English

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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 pecularities, 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 comunicative occurrence" (Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981/3), "the verbal record of a communicative act" (Brown and Yule, 1983/6). "eine abgeschlossene sprachliche Äusserung" (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".

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[1] 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 beig the *rheme* (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) *Laeceboc*, ed. G Leonhardi (1905). The MS of the Laeceboc 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/IX).

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).

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1. In our definition "text".

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[2]. 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 dcccxxii.* 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 heþene men oferher3eadon Sceapi3e[3]. (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

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2. In the entry for 846 the exlamation *3odes þonces* (thank God!).
3. The spelling of the various texts has here been regularized to facilitate printing. These are the changes: $\ae$ = ae, $\mathbf{3}$ = 3, $\eth$ = d, $\mathbf{7}$ = 7. 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 3efeaht Ec3byrht cynin3 þiþ xxxii schiphlaesta aet Carrum 7 þaer þearþ micel þel 3elsa3en 7 þa Denescan ahton þelstoþe 3eþald... (Here fought king Egbert against 32 crews at C. and there was a great slaughter and the Danes had control over the battlefield)

Single variations on the tematic 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. Ða þes on sumera on þyssum 3ere... (Then thereafter in the summer of this year).
3. Ond sona efter þaem on þys 3eare (and immediately after that in this year...)

The connectors *þa* 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 3efeaht Ecgbryht cyning... (Here fought king Egbert)

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

5. Her Ec3bryht cyning forþfierde... (Here died king Egbert)

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 Þerham... (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. *ricsode*), and can be split in the same manner[4].

7. 7 feng AEþelþulf Ec3bryhtning to rice (and AEthelwulf son of Egbert came to the throne).

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

8. Her Herebryht aldormon þaes ofslae3en (Here was killed aldorman Herebriht)

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 haeþene men aerest on Sceapi3e ofer þinter saetun. (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 parataclic connector *and* (7). If the sigill is missing, the sense of connectedness is lost and the next sentence, beginning with a different, initial, connector *þa*, 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 dcccxxxii)

10. þa he þaet 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.*[5]

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

11. Caput I Be 3esetnysse Breotene odde Hibernia Scotta ealandes and heora þam 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: *3esetnysse Breotene odde Hibernia Scotta ealandes ond heora þam aerran bi3en3um.* (b) a subordiate declarative sentence introduced by *þaet*. The main clause is here 'understood' to be something like: "The text of this chapter says that...", e.g. the following example:

12. Ðaet se aerra Romwara casere 3a3ius Julius Breotone 3esohte. (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 þaet he cristene men waes ehtende. (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 rheme, i.e. *(It) happened in the year xy*.

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

> 14. Đa waes ymb tu hund wintra 7 syx 7 hundeahtati3 aefter þaere drihtenlican mennyscnysse. (Then about two hundred and eighty years after the Lord's incarnation).
> 15. Đaere tide ... (At that time...)
> 16. In þysses cyninges rice (During the reign of this king...)

There are variations on the *Đa 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 *Breotone* in the first chapter

> 17. Breotone is 3arsecges 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 Laeceboc 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 Laeceboc derive from medieval Latin books, the text is not a translation, unlike the Poenitentiale by Halitgar, bishop od Camberai (817–831), which was originally written in Latin.

3.2.1. *The Laeceboc* 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 wiþ 3esnote 7 wiþ 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 hraece (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 wiþ eallum untrymnessum heafdes 7 hwannan ealles 3e healfes heafdes ece cume 7 claesnunga 7 swillin3 wip hrum 7 3ilistrum to heafdes haelo 7 hu mon scyle3ebrocenes heafdes tili3ean 7 3if þaet brae3en 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. *wiþ hrum 7 3illistrum*) or a sequence of subordinate clauses, e.g.

21a. 7 hwannan ealles 3e healfes heafdes ece cume
     7 hu mon scyle 3ebrocenes heafdes tili3ean
     7 3if þaet braen3en ut sie

The register is thus a list of topics elaborated in the second part of the Laeceboc. 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 *wiþ*. 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 asyndetic 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   wiþ eallum untrymnessum heafdes
S1   whannan ealles 3e heafdes ece cume
S2   hu mon scyle 3ebrocenes heafdes tili3ean
S3   3if brae3en ut sie

The series is split by an interpolated series with two conjoined dominant NPs (D2) *claesnunga 7 swillin3* followed by

PP2   wiþ hrum
PP4   (wiþ) 3ilistrum
PP5   to heafdes haelo

D2 are subcategories of the superordinate NP (topic) *leacedomas*. The coordination reduction in the interpolated string consists of the deletion of D2 elements and the dominant preposition (*wiþ*) in the PP4. The conjunction with PP5 is ambiguous since there is no link (*and*) to the preceeding element. Thus it could also be understood as a "free" element, dominated by *laecadomas*. 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 swillin3*) being a "split coordinate" with *ece* in S1 and thus domiated 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 *claesnunga 7 swillin3* 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 breostwaerce; 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 Laeceboc, 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 aerestan laececraeftum 3ewritene sint laecedomas wiþ eallu heafdes untrymnese. (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: *3enim, smire, 3e3nid, seo* (take, spread, crush, boil, etc.) and the rest of the predicate/rheme:

> 26. Wiþ 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 connector (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 3eswelle 7 sare þaes ma3an.3enim... (About swellings and pain in the stomach take)
28. Wiþ hwostan... (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 rheme, i.e. *mon* and *blode hraece*. Many remedies have subtopics, or topics of paragraphs. They can refer to the symptom of the illness:

30. Tacnu þaere adle; sio adl cymd of yfelre watten (The sign of the illnes; the illness comes of bad water...)

or medicines and their ingredients:

31. Mirra hatte wyrt; 3e3nid on mortare... (Mirrh is the name of the herb, grind in the mortar)
32. Dolhsealf; acrind aefaerde... (Poultice; grind in the evening...)
33. Drenc wiþ þecradle; nime healfudu... (A draught against inflammation; take field-balm...)

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 refered 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. Wiþ þon ilcan 3enim faet ful grenre rudan leafa 7 senapes saedes cucler fulne. 3e3nid to3edere do ae3es aet hwite to cucler fulne aet sio sealf sie þicce smire mid faeþere 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. Laececraftas wiþ heals3unde 7 hu þu meaht 3ecunian hwae þer hit heals3und sie... (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 *wid*, this is done to foreground the text that follows. Backgrounding entails sequencing by a connector like 7 or *aþþe* or *eft* (afterwards, again). The last one introduces a temporal sequence e.g.

37. Eft dolhsealf 3enim wae3braedan 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 3escrince 7 eft þon swelle 3enim 3ate tord 3emen3 wid 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 muþ sar sie (if one's mouth is sore)
41. 3if nae31 sie of handa (if the nail comes off the hand)

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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 beod*), "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 ommitted: *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. Dolhsealf + acrind (NP + VP)
44. Drenc 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. Ðis 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 oðer boc mid hire capitulon 7 mid þam aefterfyl3edon cwydon. (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 (*Þis, 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 Laeceboc) are followed by the title in the form such as:

53. Be þam men þe willes man ofslyhd (About those men who kill a man intentionally)
54. Hu hit bebyred to foresceavienne be þaere 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 + NPcase   b) S = Adv + NP + VP

  P = be   Adv = hu

  NP = (Mod + N)case   NP = hit

  MOd = Det   VP = V + NP

       Adj   V = V3ps sg pres

       N   Adv

       S (rel.)

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 stale* (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 gecyrran 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 relatie clause show singular agreement (*his, wyle, hig, forliged*). This is not a peculiarity of the Latin original, which has plural agreement throughout.[6]

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 þeowan ofslyhd (On the men who kills his servant)

This points to the clearly conjunctive nature of *pe*, 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	=	þe + 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.[7]

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

60. Gif hwylc wif bewedded beo, nis hit na alyfed þaet hwylc oder man hine daes bereafige: gif hit swa do, beo he amansumad. (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 ofercraefte wif odde maeden neadiga nimd o unriht haemede hire unwilles, beo he amansumad (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 haemede 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 (*hwa* = 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 Laeceboc, with a directive verb form for the 3rd person singular or plural, i.e. the subjunctive (*faeste, beo he amansumad, þolian*[8]. 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 *þolien* (Raith. 1935) which may point to an ongoing change:.
63. Gif messepreost odde diacon wifigen þolian heora hades (If priest or diacon marry /they/ shall be deprived of their offices)

personal second person singular imperative of the Laeceboc, makes the style of the Penitential more formal, more "literary".

4. Concluding remarks.

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-elide 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 orgaization 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.

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OSVRT NA NASLOV, PREDMET TEKSTA I REČENIČNU TEMU U STAROENGLESKOM

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