Complement selection in Early English 
dependent desires: A look at commands 
and requests

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ABSTRACT
This article studies complement selection in dependent commands and requests in Early English as exemplified by the complements of the high frequency verbs biddan and bêodan. Using data from the Old and Middle English sections of the Helsinki Corpus, the authors show that these two types of dependent desires behave differently in a number of respects, among them the following: (i) the greater complexity of requests, which, as opposed to commands, can appear in three different semantic types; (ii) the preference for commands to be coded by infinitival complements vs. the survival of the subjunctive until a later stage in requests; (iii) the wider range of modal verbs possible in requests; and (iv) the presence of downtoning expressions in connection with requests. Furthermore, the article provides evidence that, in the two types of dependent desires analysed, modals generally retain their primary modal meanings, and that only very occasionally is this modal meaning bleached.

Key words: Old English, Middle English, syntax, complementation, modal verbs

Selección de complementos en deseos dependientes:
Ruegos y mandatos en Inglés Antiguo y Medio

RESUMEN
Este artículo estudia los tipos de complemento en mandatos y ruegos dependientes en Inglés Antiguo y Medio, utilizando para ello los predicados de alta frecuencia biddan y bêodan. El estudio demuestra que estos dos tipos de deseos dependientes se comportan de diferente manera en lo que respecta a (i) la mayor complejidad de los ruegos, que, a diferencia de los mandatos, pueden aparecer en tres tipos semánticos diferentes; (ii) la preferencia que muestran los mandatos por materializarse en cláusulas de infinitivo, frente a los ruegos, que mantienen el uso del subjuntivo hasta una época más tardía; (iii) la mayor variedad de verbos modales presente en los ruegos; (iv) el uso de expresiones atenuantes en el caso de los ruegos. Por otra parte, el artículo aporta evidencia de que la selección de verbos modales en ruegos y mandatos responde básicamente al significado modal primario de los mismos.

Palabras clave: Inglés Antiguo, Inglés Medio, sintaxis, complementación, verbos modales

SUMARIO: 1. Introduction. 2. Problems of delimitation. 3. Analysis of the data. 4. Concluding remarks.
1. INTRODUCTION

Sentential complementation has attracted considerable attention for several decades now from both a synchronic and a diachronic point of view. A favourite topic in the abundant literature on complementation has been the choice between different types of complement, more specifically the various factors which may bear an influence on the selection of one particular complement-type at the expense of others (cf. Riddle 1975, Warner 1982, Rudanko 1984, Fanego 1990, Mair 1990, Frajzyngier and Jasperson 1991, Rohdenburg 1995, López-Couso and Méndez-Naya 1996, among many others).

In line with such studies, the aim of this paper is to look at the variation between different complements in two types of dependent desires in Early English, namely commands and requests. Old and Middle English dependent commands and requests were also the focus of our 1996 article in *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, where we looked at the variation between the subjunctive mood and the modals in finite complements to four high-frequency manipulative predicates ((be)bêodan, (ge)biddan, command and pray). In the present paper, which intends to take a fresh look at the topic, we have restricted the study to only two predicates, namely bêodan “command” and biddan “pray”, together with some of their derivatives, such as bebêodan, gebêodan and gebiddan. On the other hand, the scope of the investigation has been expanded to include a further complement-type in the picture. Thus, in what follows, we will pay attention not only to finite clauses with subjunctives and modals, but also to non-finite complements, with both bare and to-infinitives. The data for our study have been retrieved from the Old English (henceforth OE) and Middle English (henceforth ME) sections of the *Helsinki Corpus of English Texts* (henceforth HC).

The article is structured as follows: Section 2 deals with a number of cases in which the delimitation of the structures under analysis is problematic. Section 3, in turn, is devoted to the study of the corpus data. In our analysis commands and requests will be studied independently, offering a description of the different complement-types in which they may appear. Finally, section 4 provides a summary of the most relevant conclusions.

2. PROBLEMS OF DELIMITATION

The study of the complementation patterns in which the verbs bêodan and biddan occur in OE and ME is not as straightforward as it may seem at the outset.

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2 In the discussion that follows, biddan and bêodan are used as cover terms to refer also to their corresponding derivatives in OE and ME.
Prior to the data analysis, we had to circumvent a number of difficulties related, on the one hand, to the distinction between the two predicates under study (cf. section 2.1. below) and, on the other, to the indeterminacy that exists in certain contexts between the different complement-types available for these verbs (cf. section 2.2.).

2.1. **BêODAN VS. BIDDAN: FORMAL AND SEMANTIC AMBIGUITY**

In OE the verbs bêodan and biddan were clearly distinguishable in all their forms. In the preterite system, for example, bead (sg.) and budon (pl.) contrasted with bêd (sg.) and bêdon (pl.) as the forms for bêodan and biddan respectively. In ME, however, the preterites of both verbs coalesced so that, by the end of the period, it was impossible to distinguish one from the other (cf. DOE s.v. bêodan v.; MED s.v. bêden v.; OED s.v. bid v.)³. In order to avoid this problem of formal ambiguity, our examples have been classified according to whether the sub-clause expresses a command or a request, and not according to the matrix predicate involved.

To complicate matters even further, biddan, whose basic meaning was one of request, i.e. “ask, pray, beseech”, could occasionally be used to introduce a command as early as OE (cf. MED s.v. bidden v.; OED s.v. bid v. III; Los 1999: 172; 2005: 114). As a consequence, semantic ambiguity adds to the formal ambiguity described above. In fact, it is not unusual for verbs of request to be used as euphemisms for commands, which constitute “potential ‘Face Threatening Acts’” (Los 2005: 108), in Brown and Levinson’s (1988) terms. In their first uses in such contexts, verbs of asking may have served to tone down the command. In the course of time, however, they may have become so closely associated with the face threatening act itself that a new sense may have arisen for them (Los 1999: 172; 2005: 108). This was probably the case with biddan in OE and ME times. In our analysis, biddan has been taken to express its primary meaning of request except in the following contexts, in which the sense “command” seems to be far more suitable:

(i) when it is coordinated with a verb of commanding, such as hâtan, bêodan or lêran, as in (1) below (cf. DOE s.v. biddan 5.a.iii), or when a verb of commanding appears in the context, as in (2). The presence of biddan in such cases probably served as an attenuator of the command.

(1) And we lærað & biddað & on Godes naman beodað. þæt ænig Cristen mann binnon VI manna sibface on his agenum cyrne æfre ne gewifie. within six men degree of affinity in his own kin ever not marry
   (O3, Laws (Eleventh Century), 288)

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³ According to Los (2005: 243), coalescence also affected the derivative verb bebêodan.
(2) δα het se gerefa hio nimon and be ḷan fexe up ahon and baed wyrcan
then ordered the judge her take and by the hair up hang and ordered make
scearpa piles and het wrecen between flæsce and bane.
sharp nails and ordered press between flesh and bone

(O3/4, A Passion of Saint Margaret, 174)

(ii) when the subject of biddan is of a higher rank than the person addressed, as
when a king addresses his subjects (cf. example (3)) or God addresses a human

(3) & weard se cyng swiðe gram wið ḷa burhware. & ofsænde se cyng Godwine
& becomes the king very angry with the citizens & sent the king Godwin
eorl. & baed hine faran into Cent mid unfrīa to Dofran.
earl & ordered him go to Kent with hostility to Dover

(O3/4, Chronicle MS E, 173)

2.2. INDETERMINACY BETWEEN DIFFERENT COMPLEMENT-TYPES

As illustrated in examples (1) to (3) above, in OE and ME biddan and bēodan
could be complemented by finite clauses containing a verb in the subjunctive or a
modal (cf. example (1)), or by infinitival clauses, as in (2) and (3). However, the
distinction between the different complement-types may sometimes be a rather
complicated task. Consider in this connection a Late ME example like (4) below.

(4) And ḷis taku Poul as lyleue whonne he bidduth men rise fro slep.
And this takes Paul as faith when he orders men rise from sleep

(M3, Wycliffite Sermons, I, 476)

From a morphological point of view, the form rise can be interpreted in three
different ways at this stage: as a subjunctive, as an infinitive, and as an imperative.
Example (4) is therefore ambiguous between the following three readings:

(a) He commands Ø men should rise from sleep (i.e. biddan takes a finite clause
introduced by the zero complementiser with a subjunctive verb phrase).
(b) He commands men to rise from sleep (i.e. biddan takes a bare-infinitive
clause).
(c) He commands men: “Rise from sleep” (i.e. biddan introduces an imperative
clause in direct speech).

The existence of potential ambiguity in instances of this kind is already
discussed in some eighteenth century grammars. Visser (1963-1973: 2303) reports
how the grammarian Anselm Bayly, in A Plain and Complete Grammar of the
English Language (1772), criticises the author of an earlier grammar for taking “the
latter verb after ‘bid’, ‘dare’, ‘make’ and other verbs to stand in the infinitive mood.
without its sign to.” Bayly maintains that this analysis is not correct and that such forms “may rather be supposed to stand in the imperative, subjunctive, or some other form”.

Both Fischer (1990: 232-234) and Akimoto (2000: 70-72) consider similar cases of ambiguity after the verb of request pray. On the one hand, Fischer discusses instances such as *I prey ȝow fore-ȝette noȝth to brynge me my mony* (her example (3a)), which may be indeterminate between an imperative construction and a bare infinitive reading. On the other hand, Akimoto mentions cases of potential ambiguity between an imperative and a subjunctive clause, in instances of the type *I pray you come and lodge with me here at my place* (his example (1c)), without even considering the possibility of a bare infinitive. Both authors favour the imperative interpretation, without providing, in our opinion, any convincing arguments. As will be shown below, however, a number of criteria may help us in disambiguating between the three possible analyses mentioned above, and it is precisely the imperative reading supported by Fischer and Akimoto that turns out to be the least likely interpretation in the end.

Our first piece of evidence comes from inflectional morphology. Table 1 summarises the inflections for the infinitive, the imperative and the subjunctive in Early English (cf., for example, Quirk and Wrenn 1955: 43, 47; Mossé 1952: 76).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive</th>
<th>Imperative</th>
<th>Subjunctive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OE</td>
<td>-an</td>
<td>-Ø, -a, -e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eME</td>
<td>-(e(n)</td>
<td>-(e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the course of the ME period, all these endings were gradually reduced to –(e), thus giving rise to the ambiguity present in examples like (4) above. For OE and Early ME, however, inflection can be a very helpful tool in distinguishing between the different potential readings. In example (5), for instance, the presence of the ending –en in the form *fiȝtten* rules out the imperative interpretation, as the expected inflection for the imperative plural in this text is –e₂ (cf. *Yhere₂ what he dude, jwis!,* p. 227).

(5) He *bad* his folk *fiȝtten* hard, Wiþ spere, mace and wiþ swerd.
    he commanded his people fight     hard with spear mace and with sword
    (M2, *Kyng Alisaunder*, I, 219)

Example (5), however, still remains ambiguous: it allows a bare-infinitive analysis (“He commanded his people to fight hard”), but can also be interpreted as a subjunctive clause introduced by the zero complementiser (“He commanded Ø his
people should fight hard"). Nevertheless, as will be discussed below, further arguments can be adduced in favour of the infinitival reading in examples of this kind.

As we have seen, inflection constitutes one of the criteria which can be used to discard the imperative interpretation favoured by Fischer (1990) and Akimoto (2000), but it is not the only one. Thus, for example, it must be borne in mind that the presence of an imperative is typically associated with direct speech, in which the exact words of the command or request are repeated. In indirect or reported speech, by contrast, the wording of the command or request is adapted, which entails a number of changes in deictic elements, like pronouns and adverbs, as well as in tense forms (Warner 1982: 158ff.; Quirk et al. 1985: 1028-1029; Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 1023-1025). Consider, in this context, example (6) below. In this fragment Rymenhild is begging Aylbrus the steward (through Horn) to ask the king, her father, to knight Horn:

Are come seue niȝt. / Haue her þis cuppe, / And þis Ring per vppe, / To before come seven night have here this cup and this ring there up to Aylbrus and stuard, / And se he holde foreward. / Seie ich him biseche, / Wiþ Aylbrus and steward and see he hold forward tell I him beseech with loueliche speche, / þat he adun falle / Bifore þe king in halle, / And bidde þe lovely speech that he down fall before the king in hall and ask the king ariȝte / Dubbe þe to kniȝte”.

king straightaway make you as knight

(M2, King Horn, 21)

The translation of the last two lines in this example reads as follows: “Tell him that I beseech him, with gentle words, to kneel down in front of the king in his hall, and to ask the king immediately to make you a knight”. The corresponding direct speech would, in turn, read “and ask the king immediately: ‘make him [Horn] a knight’”. Evidence from the pronouns discards, therefore, a possible imperative interpretation in this and similar examples. On other occasions, we find a third person pronoun where in direct speech a second person pronoun would be expected instead. Consider example (7) below, in which the corresponding direct speech would be “stop your barking”.

(7) þe cherl … chastised his dogge, bad him blinne of his berking.
the man chastised his dog commanded it stop of its barking
(c 1375 Will. of Palerne 54; quoted from Visser 1963-1973: 2304).

In example (7) and similar instances, where the addressee is pronominal, and thus marked for the oblique case (him), the infinitival interpretation is, therefore, the only possible. Note, however, that in cases in which the addressee is realized by a NP, as in (5) and (6) above, ambiguity may remain between the infinitival and the
subjunctive interpretations (“he commanded his people should fight hard” and “ask the king should make you knight”). Nevertheless, the subjunctive interpretation is the least likely, since it requires the sub-clause to be introduced by the complementiser zero, a variant which has been shown to be extremely uncommon in OE and ME (Warner 1982: 169; Rissanen 1991; Méndez-Naya 1995: 402), and to occur only sporadically with the verbs under analysis.

Further evidence in favour of the infinitival reading comes from coordination. In example (8), taken from Visser (1963-1973: 2303), the potentially ambiguous form (ȝelde) is coordinated with a marked infinitive (to ȝelde). As Visser puts it, “the infinitive character of the second verb is clear on account of the occurrence farther on the sentence of an infinitive preceded by to” (Visser 1963-1973: 2302).

(8) ou biddes yche man ȝelde good for ille, Nouȝt ylle to ȝelde ageyne
you command each man pay good for evil not evil for evil to pay again

In sum, the foregoing discussion has shown the existence of strong arguments against the imperative and the subjunctive readings in certain ambiguous cases, while no counterevidence can be adduced against the infinitival analysis. We can then conclude that the bare infinitive has certainly been a complementation option for verbs of commanding and requesting from the earliest periods, and indeed quite a robust one. Therefore, in the classification of the data, examples which could, in principle, be considered ambiguous within the parameters outlined above have been counted as illustrating the infinitival pattern.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

3.1. BASIC FEATURES OF COMMANDS AND REQUESTS

Dependent commands and requests are complements to so-called manipulative predicates, those which “typically encode situations where the agent attempts to manipulate the affectee into performing some action or assuming some state” (Noonan 1985: 126). One of the characteristic features of complements of this kind is that their time reference is a direct consequence of the meaning of the complement-taking predicate. In other words, given that “the nature of the causative relationship requires a specific temporal order of cause and effect” (Noonan 1985: 126), the time reference of complements to manipulative predicates is determined or dependent (Determined Time Reference (DTR)). This type of dependency has some bearing on the selection of complement-types, as it has been shown that, crosslinguistically, complements with DTR are typically encoded by subjunctive (cf. Noonan 1985: 92) and infinitival clauses (cf. Noonan 1985: 101). In this respect, English is no exception, as will be seen below.

Warner’s (1982: 171) corpus of Wyclifite English, biddan does not show a single example of zero. The same holds for Méndez-Naya’s OE data on biddan and bêodan (Méndez-Naya 1995: appendix I, 5-6).
From a semantic point of view, dependent commands and requests involve three participants, which need not be necessarily overt: the agent who commands or requests (X), the addressee of the command or request (Y), and the person who is to carry out the command or request (Z). In principle, these three participants may combine according to three different patterns depending on the relations of identity / non-identity established between them:

Type a ⇒ X Y Z
Type b ⇒ X Y Z
Type c ⇒ X Y Z

3.2. COMMANDS

In the corpus the verbs *biddan* and *bēodan* (and their derivatives) introduce dependent commands in 290 examples, which are distributed as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Distribution of complement-types in dependent commands
(raw figures and normalised frequencies per 100,000 words)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Indicative</th>
<th>Subjunctive</th>
<th>Modal</th>
<th>Infinitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O1 (-850)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>5 (228.3)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O2 (850-950)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>16 (17.38)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>6 (6.51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O3 (950-1050)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>54 (21.4)</td>
<td>9 (3.57)</td>
<td>7 (2.78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O4 (1050-1150)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>12 (17.8)</td>
<td>14 (20.77)</td>
<td>5 (7.42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M1 (1150-1250)</td>
<td>1 (0.88)</td>
<td>6 (5.31)</td>
<td>13 (11.5)</td>
<td>17 (15.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2 (1250-1350)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2 (2.05)</td>
<td>3 (3.07)</td>
<td>15 (15.38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M3 (1350-1420)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>3 (1.62)</td>
<td>12 (6.51)</td>
<td>40 (21.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M4 (1420-1500)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4 (1.87)</td>
<td>9 (4.2)</td>
<td>37 (17.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1 (0.09)</td>
<td>102 (9.98)</td>
<td>60 (5.87)</td>
<td>127 (12.42)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 Ogawa (1989: 160) distinguishes only two participants in dependent desires, the Wisher (i.e. “the agent who desires something”) and the Doer (i.e. “the agent of whom it is desired that he should do or be something”), which may or may not be identical. As we have argued elsewhere (López-Couso and Méndez-Naya 1996: 417), it is also relevant to distinguish a third participant, the person to whom the command or request is addressed (Y). Again, this may or may not be identical with the Doer.

6 The following criteria have been used for the classification of the corpus instances: (i) following Los (2005: 24), neutralised VPs, i.e. VPs which are ambiguous between the indicative and the subjunctive moods, have been numbered among unequivocal subjunctives; (ii) VPs containing modals have been counted together irrespective of whether the modal verb was marked for the indicative or for the subjunctive; (iii) in coordination, only the first conjoin was counted, except in those cases in which the conjoins show different types of complement. These criteria also apply to the classification of requests in section 3.3. below.
As can be seen, in the OE and ME sections of the HC commands dependent on the selected verbs materialise in four different complement-types:

(a) Finite clause with a simple VP inflected for the indicative, as in (9) below.
(b) Finite clause with a simple VP inflected for the subjunctive, as in (1) above or (10) below.
(c) Finite clause with a complex VP containing a modal, as in (11).
(d) Non-finite infinitival clause, either with a bare (cf. ex. (12a)) or with a marked infinitive (cf. ex. (12b)).

(9) “(...) þt he beode þis englum bi þe þt heo þe on heoræ handen that he commands his angels concerning you that they you in their hands habbað þin fot ne dūrfe forðon æt stane spurnen”. have so that your foot not need therefore at stone stumble (M1, Bodley Homilies 10, 102)

(10) And we beoda ðæt man eard georne clænsian anginne on æghwylcan ende & and we command that one land eagerly cleanse begin at each end & manfulra ðæð æghwaer geswice. wicked deeds everywhere cease from (O3, Laws (Eleventh Century), 310)

(11) he þa bebead, þæt man þam halgan were þæt ilce hors eft bringan he then commanded that one to-the holy man the same horse again bring sceolde. should (O2/4, Gregory the Great, Dialogues MS C, 78)

(12a) þe kyng by þe chyn hym shook, And his sergeauntz hym he tok, And bad the king by the chain him shook and his attendants him he took and ordered hym lokken in presoun. him lock in prison (M2, Kyng Alisaunder, I, 221)

(12b) pis sindan ða domas þe se ælmihtega God self sprecende wæs to Moyse these are the laws that the almighty God himself speaking was to Moses & him bebead to healdanne. & him ordered to keep (O2, Alfred, Introduction to Laws, 42)

Judging from the data in Table 2, simple VPs inflected for the indicative constitute a highly marked option in dependent commands at the early stages of the history of English (cf. Gorrell 1895: 371ff; Mustanoja 1960: 461; Visser 1963-1973: §825-826; Warner 1982: 190; Mitchell 1985: §2003; Fischer 1992: 314; Méndez-
Naya 1995: 496). This is not at all unexpected, since, as seen in section 3.1 above, complements to manipulative predicates normally show DTR and are, therefore, typically encoded by subjunctive or infinitival clauses. In examples such as (9), the presence of the indicative carries the implication that the order has indeed been fulfilled (cf. e.g. Traugott 1992: 240, who provides a very similar example; Visser 1963-1973: §826; Mitchell 1985: §2014).

Finite clauses with a simple VP inflected for the subjunctive are by far the most frequent complements of *biddan* and *bêodan* in commands in the earliest subperiods. It seems, however, that towards the end of the OE period complements involving a periphrastic VP with a modal start gaining ground at the expense of the simple VP with a subjunctive form (consider in this connection the data from subperiod O4, which runs from 1050 to 1150). Such a development is in line with the traditional assumption that modal verbs came to be increasingly used as substitutes for the subjunctive once the morphological distinctions indicative vs. subjunctive became blurred (cf. Mustanoja 1960: 453; Fischer 1992: 246ff, 262ff). Although the connection between the two developments cannot be denied, we believe that it should not be overestimated (for a similar view, cf. Ogawa 1989: 229ff). As we showed in our earlier work, in dependent commands and requests complements containing modals were already found in the OE period, when the subjunctive was still in good health. Moreover, if modals are taken to be mere substitutes for the subjunctive, we would not expect to find examples in which the modal verb is itself inflected for the subjunctive mood (López-Couso and Méndez-Naya 1996: 415); but such examples do in fact exist (cf. (13) below). Finally, as shown in Table 2, the increase of modal VPs in the constructions at issue was only ephemeral.

(13) La leof, deope us *is bebeoden* þæt we geornlice mynegian and læran scylan,
Lo dear earnestly us is ordered that we eagerly exhort and admonish must
þæt manna gehwylce to Gode buge and fram synnum gecyrre
that of-men each to God turn and from sins turn
(O4, Wulfstan, *Institutes of Polity*, 106)

The prevailing modal in dependent commands in the corpus is *shall* (14 exs.) / *should* (45 exs.)\(^7\). Our findings thus corroborate the observations of other scholars such as Gorrell 1895: 371ff, Mitchell 1985: §2009, Ogawa 1989: 301ff and Méndez-Naya 1995: 501 for OE, and Warner 1982: 193 for ME. The use of *shall* / *should* in dependent commands implies that the recipient of the command is placed under an obligation, as in (14) and (15), while such an implication is not necessarily present in the case of subjunctive complements (cf. Warner 1982: 193).

\(^7\) There are two Late ME examples in which *should* correlates with a present matrix. The dissolution of the past/non-past relationship between *shall* and *should* may have started as early as OE (cf. Anderson 1991: 24, 28; López-Couso and Méndez-Naya 1996: 416), thus anticipating the Present-day English non-past obligational use found in *should*.
(14) The aughten commandement byddes vs þat we sall bere no false wytnes the eighth commandment commands us that we shall bear no false witness agaynes oure euen christen.
against our equal Christians
(M4, Dan John Gaytryge’s Sermons, 6)

(15) Moyses us bebed on þære æ þæt we sceoldon þus gerade mid stanum Moses us commanded in the law that we should of this kind with stones oftorfian;
stone
(O3, West-Saxon Gospels, 76)

In addition to shall / should, one example with mote has been found in the structures at issue. This is given as (16) below.

(16) Hym was heboden, on heora gehealdsumnyssum on Moyses lage, þæt hy moston him was ordered in their observance in Moses law that they must lufian heora agene frynd, and hatian heora fynd;
love their own friends and hate their enemies
(O3, Ælfric, Homilies, 534)

In this example, moston does not seem to convey the idea of permission, which was its primary meaning in OE. Rather, it seems to have acquired the sense of obligation or duty found in its Present-day English counterpart must. According to Solo (1977), the nuance of obligation (cf. BT s.v. motan II) first arose in negative contexts where the two senses “may not” and “must not” were nearly coincident, and then spread to affirmative contexts, such as the one in (16) (cf. also Warner 1993: 160).

The evidence from the HC indicates that the drastic decline of finite complements, including either a subjunctive VP or a modal periphrasis, witnessed in Early ME was counterbalanced by a considerable increase in the frequency of occurrence of non-finite infinitival complements, which had been present in the language though only sporadically from Early OE onwards. Of the three possible patterns outlined in section 3.1. above, commands are confined to type (c). Such a restriction follows from the fact that in commands the deontic source is to be found in X, which automatically excludes types (a) and (b), where the deontic source is Y. As seen above, the defining feature of type (c) is the identity between Y and Z, so that the latter can easily be left unexpressed, thus favouring the occurrence of infinitives in structures of this kind. The preference for commands to be expressed by means of infinitival clauses can therefore be seen as a direct consequence of their semantics.

Of the two possible types of infinitival complements, the bare infinitive seems to have been the unmarked pattern in Early English for the verbs of command selected for the analysis (110 examples in all, which represent 86.6% of the total of infinitive clauses). A similar picture emerges from the data in the additional sources. Visser (1963-1973: 2303), for example, asserts that the bare infinitive with biddan and bêodan
predominates all through the history of the language over its marked counterpart, which is only occasionally selected, mostly “for rhythmical or other stylistic reasons”. Although the number of relevant instances in the corpus does not allow us to reach definitive conclusions in this respect, certain tendencies of usage can be discerned.

In the OE section of the HC, the verb *biddan* seems to be closely connected with the bare infinitive (no instance of the marked form has been recorded)\(^8\), while *bêodan* occurs in the two patterns (cf. also Los 2005: 102-103, 124). When the addressee of the command (Y) is overt and appears in the dative case, as in (12b) above (*him bebead to healdanne*), the tendency is for the marked infinitive to be chosen (cf. Los 2005: 107), although the bare infinitive is also possible, as illustrated in (17) below (cf. also Traugott 1992: 246; contra Los 2005).

(17) δa sende se cyng æfter eallon his witan. & *bead heom cuman* to then sent the king after all his counsellors & commanded them come to Gleaveceastre.
Gloucester
(O3/4, Chronicle MS E, 173)

The bare infinitive, by contrast, seems to be preferred when the recipient of the command is left implicit, as in (2) above (*bæd wyrcan*) or appears in the accusative case (i.e. in an accusative with infinitive construction), as in (18) below:

(18)= (3) & *wearð se cyng wiðe gram wið ña burhware.* & ofsænde se cyng Godwine eorl. & *bæd hine faran* into Cent mid unfrïða to Dofran. (O3/4, Chronicle MS E, 173)

According to Los (2005: 132-133), the selection of a bare or a *to*-infinitive with the verbs under analysis has a direct influence on semantics. The accusative with infinitive construction with the bare infinitive, as in (18), comes close to a causative construction (cf. also Fischer 1992: 318), and the implication is that the command has actually been carried out. By contrast, when the verb occurs with a dative NP and a *to*-infinitive, as in (12b) above, the addressee has “greater freedom of action” (Los 2005: 132), and can choose to obey the order or not.

In the ME sections of the HC the bare infinitive is still the preferred option, while the *to*-infinitive occurs only occasionally (cf. Warner 1982: 117 for similar results)\(^9\). Example (19) illustrates the use of the latter type, despite the fact that the addressee of the command is implicit, a context which, as seen above, favoured the use of the bare infinitive in OE.

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\(^8\) But cf. Los (2005: 56, 115), who includes OE *biddan* in the group of “verbs of persuading and urging”, which, in addition to the constructions [NPacc] *[to]-PP* and [NPacc] [subjunctive clause], may also occur in the frame [NPacc] *[to]-VP*.

\(^9\) The tendency for dependent commands to be realised as infinitival complements continues in the Early Modern English period. Out of the 23 instances of the verb *bid* in the Early Modern English section of the HC, only one shows a finite clause. In the remaining cases, the complement is of the infinitival type (mostly bare and only occasionally marked infinitives).
(19) Whereapoun my lord spake of the bokis to us ayen; and y seide that my bokis were alle redy. And my lord bade to leye ham forth; and sowe didde the articulis. (M4, John Shillingford, Letters, 13)

Alongside the factors mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, other determinants of variation may also have played a role in the selection of one or the other infinitival form in Early English (cf. Fanego 1992: 32ff; Fischer 1992: 317ff; and the references given therein). Thus, for example, in (20) below the presence of intervening material between the matrix predicate and the infinitive seems to favour the selection of the to-infinitive (cf. Mustanoja 1960: 522; Warner 1982: 127ff; Fischer 1992: 322). Nevertheless, in other cases the choice of form does not seem to follow any regular pattern. Consider in this respect example (21) below, which shows the co-occurrence of the bare and the to-infinitive in a parallel context.

(20) And our Lorde bade hym [when he shall go to his bed and when he shall aryse] to blesse hym with the syngne of the crosse (M4, The Life of Saint Edmund, 165)

(21) Bad he non ageyn him go, / But bitwen his hondes he bar it in, / A[l] ordered he no one again him go but between his hands he bore it in all him one, to þe kichin. / Bad he non him water to fett, Ne fro b[r]igge go but between his hands he bore it in all he non him water to fett, Ne fro bridge

to bear the food (M2, Havelok, 30-31)

3.3. REQUESTS

The total number of requests dependent on the verbs biddan and bêodan (and their derivatives) in the OE and ME sections of the HC amounts to 259. Table 3 below shows the distribution of these examples into subperiods and complement-types.

Table 3. Complement-types in dependent requests in the HC (raw figures and normalised frequencies per 100,000 words)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Indicative</th>
<th>Subjunctive</th>
<th>Modal</th>
<th>Infinitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O1 (-850)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>10 (456.6)</td>
<td>1 (45.66)</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O2 (850-950)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>30 (32.59)</td>
<td>2 (2.17)</td>
<td>1 (1.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O3 (950-1050)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>79 (31.39)</td>
<td>10 (3.97)</td>
<td>2 (0.79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O4 (1050-1150)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>20 (29.68)</td>
<td>2 (2.96)</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M1 (1150-1250)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>32 (28.31)</td>
<td>3 (2.65)</td>
<td>2 (1.76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2 (1250-1350)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>21 (21.54)</td>
<td>6 (6.15)</td>
<td>13 (13.33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M3 (1350-1420)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>8 (4.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M4 (1420-1500)</td>
<td>1 (0.46)</td>
<td>8 (3.74)</td>
<td>1 (0.46)</td>
<td>7 (3.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1 (0.09)</td>
<td>200 (19.57)</td>
<td>25 (2.44)</td>
<td>33 (3.22)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen in Table 3, requests after *biddan* and *bēodan* show the same range of complements as commands. However, a comparison of Tables 2 and 3 reveals the existence of divergent patterns of distribution of the different complement-types for the two kinds of dependent desires. As seen above, commands favoured the use of subjunctive complements in the OE period, which were replaced by complements with the modal *shall / should*, and then by infinitives in the course of the ME period. Requests, by contrast, clearly favour the selection of subjunctive clauses in both OE and ME. Our results thus coincide with Warner’s (1982: 193) for Wyclifite English, where the subjunctive with *biddan* is usually found in requests. The only individual subperiod which does not conform to this tendency is M3 (1350-1420), which shows exclusively infinitival complements. This period also reveals a drastic decline of the overall frequency of occurrence of the verb *biddan*. Such a decrease is undoubtedly related to the borrowing of the French verb *pray*, whose first attested example dates back to c. 1290 (*OED* s.v. *pray* v.). The substitution of *pray* for *biddan* is clearly reflected in the data from the HC: while only two instances of a request dependent on *pray* are recorded in subperiod M2 (in *Havelok* and *King Horn*, both dated c. 1300), the figures for subperiods M3 and M4 rise to 46 and 113 examples respectively.

As was the case with commands, the indicative represents a highly marked option in dependent requests in Early English. The only example with an indicative VP after the verb *biddan* we have been able to trace in the HC is (22) below, an example from *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, a fifteenth century (c. 1450) translation of a popular French treatise, the *Somme des Vices et des Vertus*.

(22) We *biddeþ* not þæt we *beþ* not y-tempted, for þæt were a foles bidding and we ask not that we are not tempted for that were a fool’s request and shamefull.

(M4, *The Book of Vices þand Virtues*, 115)

In this example, the plural indicative form *beþ* seems to convey the certainty of the speaker that the event will actually take place in the future (cf. Visser 1963-1973: §826; Mitchell 1985: §2014; Traugott 1992: 240-241), that is, it seems to imply a kind of prophecy. This type of future of “ordained event” was also conveyed in ME by means of the modal verb *shall* (Fischer 1992: 264). It comes as no surprise, therefore, that *shall* is found in a parallel passage from the *Ayenbite of Inwyt*, a fourteenth century (1340) translation of the same French original.

(23) We ne *byddeþ* naȝt / þet we ne *ssolle* by uonden: Vor þet were a fole we not ask not that we not shall be tempted for that were a fool’s bezechinge / and ssamuol.

(M2, Dan Michel, *Ayenbite of Inwyt*, 116)
Judging from the evidence in the HC, infinitival complements never became a serious competitor to finite (in particular subjunctive) complements in dependent requests after *biddan* in Early English. In this respect, requests starkly contrast with commands, which show a clear changeover from finite (subjunctive or modal) complements to infinitival complements in the transition from OE to ME (cf. section 3.2. above). Our findings are thus in line with Rohdenburg’s observation for Early Modern English that verbs of commanding replaced finite complements by infinitives more readily than verbs “denoting less coercive acts” (1995: 373).

As was the case with commands, both bare and marked infinitives occur in dependent requests as complements to the verb *biddan*, as shown in examples (24) and (25) below. The bare infinitive is the predominant choice: out of 33 infinitival complements recorded in the corpus, 29 (87.8%) show a bare infinitive. Although the number of examples is too low to draw definite conclusions, the comments made in section 3.2. above concerning the potential determinants of variation between the two forms also seem to apply here.

(24) “I *bydde* þe gon in my name, Ihesu, for I am a-bouyn  thy gostly fadyr & I ask  you go in my name Jesus for I am from above your spiritual father & I xal  excusyn þe  &  ledyn þe & bryngyn þe a-geyn in safte”.
I shall excuse you and lead you and bring  you again in safety
(M4, *The Book of Margery Kempe* I, 227)

(25) and *bad* me *tarye* for hym
and asked me to wait for him
(M4, William Caxton, *The History of Reynard the Fox*, 59)

In order to provide a deeper understanding of complement selection in dependent requests in the corpus, a closer look at the different relations established by the three participants in a request seems in order. In contrast with commands, which can only occur in type (c) (cf. section 3.2. above), requests may appear in all three types. They can therefore be considered to show a higher degree of semantic complexity than commands. Table 4 below displays the distribution of complements depending on the type of request.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Indicative</th>
<th>Subjunctive</th>
<th>Modal</th>
<th>Infinitive</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type (a)</td>
<td>5 (83.3%)</td>
<td>1 (16.7%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>6 (2.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type (b)</td>
<td>24 (63.2%)</td>
<td>13 (34.2%)</td>
<td>1 (2.6%)</td>
<td>38 (14.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type (c)</td>
<td>1 (0.5%)</td>
<td>171 (79.5%)</td>
<td>11 (5.1%)</td>
<td>32 (14.9%)</td>
<td>215 (83.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A number of interesting insights can be gathered from the breakdown of the data in Table 4:
(i) Type (c), the only possible semantic type in commands, also constitutes the most frequent option in dependent requests. This pattern, where Y is identical with Z, could therefore be considered the basic type of manipulative complement, understanding as such that which “typically encode[s] situations where the agent attempts to manipulate the affectee into performing some action or assuming some state” (Noonan 1985: 126).

(ii) Infinitival complements are virtually restricted to occur precisely in this type. As Type (c) entails the identity between Y and Z, the latter participant can easily be left unexpressed, which favours the selection of infinitives.

(iii) The predominance of subjunctive complements holds for all three semantic types, though subjunctives score particularly high in type (c) (79.5%).

(iv) The proportion of modals is much higher in types (a) and (b) (16.7% and 34.2% respectively) than in type (c) (5.1%). This may be due to the fact that types (a) and (b) depart from the basic type of manipulative complement as defined above, being therefore semantically and cognitively more complex. The presence of modals in such contexts, we believe, conveys a greater specificity than is possible with either the subjunctive or the infinitive.

Let us now concentrate on requests involving modals. The comparison of the data in Tables 2 and 3 reveals that complements containing modal verbs constitute a less frequent choice in requests than in commands in Early English (2.44 vs. 5.87 per 100,000 words). The data indicate, however, that requests show a wider variety of modal verbs than commands, which follows from the fact that the former, in contrast to the latter, may appear in all three semantic types.

In both types (a) and (b), the prevalent notion is that of permission: Y is the deontic source, and grants or denies his/her permission for Z or X respectively, to carry out the request. It comes as no surprise, then, that the modal selected in these types is the modal of permission mote (14 instances) (cf. Ogawa 1989: 185ff., 213ff.). Example (26) below illustrates a type (a) request, while (27) shows a type (b) structure.

and they again were asking that Metellus to Rome be allowed
(O2, Alfred, Orosius, 232)

(27) Heo [X] bad him [Y] [at heo [Z=X] moste a-niȝht: to is bedde wiende
she asked him that she was-allowed at-night to his bed go
(M2, The Early South English Legendary, 434)

In type (c), in turn, X asks Y to carry out the request. This type shows a wider variety of modal verbs, with instances of shall (1 ex.) / should (5 exs.), will (2 exs.) and mote (2 exs.) / moste (1 ex.). In the five recorded instances with should, the obligational reading of the modal is completely ruled out. In such cases, it seems that should is semantically empty and that it functions as a mere substitute for the subjunctive (cf. Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca 1994: 214ff). Consider in this context...
example (28) below, where the addressee of the request is God, who cannot be
placed under an obligation.

(28) dæ awitegæ æt Gode [Y] hæt he [Z=Y] his folc miltsian sceolde,
then asked the prophet again at God that he his people pity should
& him renas & eorðlice væstmas forgifan.
& him rains & earthly fruits give
(O3, Ælfric, De Temporibus Anni, 78)

In turn, will is found in instances in which the focus is Y’s intention to carry out
the request:

(29) Ine þise bene we [X] bidde oure uader of heuene [Y] bet he [Z=Y] ouss wylle
in this prayer we pray our father of heaven that he us will
uoeryeue ourue misdedes
forgive our misdeeds
(M2, Dan Michel, Ayenbite of Inwit, 113)

Finally, the example with shall and the three instances with mote / moste occur
in a sub-pattern of type (c), which differs from standard cases of the construction in
that the subject of the complement clause does not convey Z. In this subtype, Z,
identical with Y, is left covert and the complement clause shows a passive subject,
as in (23) above, repeated here as (30) for convenience, and/or an inanimate NP
subject, as in (31).

(30) (23) We ne bydde næt / þet we ne ssolle by uonden: Vor þet were a folo
bezechinge / and ssamuol. (M2, Dan Michel, Ayenbite of Inwyte, 116)

(31) & ic [X] bidde minne leowan hlaford [Y] for Godes lufun þet min cwye standan
& I ask my beloved Lord for God’s love that my will stand
mote.
is-allowed
(O3, Documents 3, Anglo-Saxon Wills, 34)

As argued above, the selection of shall in (30) indicates that the action referred
to in the complement is taken to be an ordained event, something that will
necessarily come true. In (31), and the other two examples with mote / moste, it is
the notion of permission that prevails. Thus, the first part of example (30) would be
equivalent to “I ask my Lord that he allows my will to stand”.

The previous discussion clearly shows that the type of request exerts a strong
influence on the modal selected in the complement clause. Further evidence of the
close connection between request type and modals is provided by our analysis of
the ME and Early Modern English data of verb *pray* in the HC, where exactly the same tendencies are observed.

Example (31) above also shows another interesting feature of requests, namely the presence of the expression *for Godes lufun*. “Lexical or phrasal downgraders”, such as *for Godes lufun, for his mildheortnisse, georne, ðurh ðonne almighty drihten*, are relatively common in requests in the corpus, and serve the function of softening “the impositive force of the Request” (Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper 1989: 283). These expressions can be seen as functional equivalents of a courtesy marker like *please*, but show a higher degree of politeness (for similar expressions in Spanish, see Ballesteros Martín 2002: 4). Similar expressions can occasionally be found also with commands, where their function is to reinforce, rather than to attenuate, the order. Consider in this connection example (1) above and (32) below, both of which contain the expression *on Godes naman*:

(32) Ond ic *bebiode on Godes naman* ðæt nan mon ðone æstel from ðære bec ne and I command in God’s name that no man the clasp from the book not do, ne ða boc from ðæm mynstre do nor the book from the minster

(O2, Alfred, *Preface to Cura Pastoralis*, 9)

Formulaic expressions of this kind are, however, far more frequent in requests than in commands. While downgraders are present in one out of four requests in the corpus, reinforcing expressions are found in only 2.7% of commands. Besides lexical or phrasal downgraders, a request can sometimes be mitigated by means of syntactic devices such as the presence of the modal *will* in the matrix (cf. Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper 1989: 281, “syntactic downgraders”). Note in this respect example (33) below, which shows the combination of both devices.

(33) [{Nu{] ic ðec, beorna hleo, *biddan wille* ece ælmihtig, þurh pæt æðele now I you of-men protector ask will eternal almighty by the noble *gesceap þe þu, fæder engla, æt fruman settest*, þæt þu me ne læte of creatures that you father of-angels at first create that you me not let from *lofe hweorfan pinre eadgife*, glory turn-back your gifts of prosperity

(O3, *Juliana*, 120-121)

A close look at the corpus instances reveals that lexical/phrasal downgraders are more common with subjunctive clauses (57 examples out of 200; 28.5%) than with other complement-types (15.4% with modals and 12.1% with infinitives). Moreover, the vast majority of examples featuring a softening expression (59 out of 65; 90.8%) belongs to type (c), in which, as seen above, the manipulative sense of the verb *biddan* is most obvious.
4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The present paper has focused on two types of dependent desires, namely commands and requests after the predicates biddan and bêodan in OE and ME. Dependent commands and requests are complements to so-called manipulative predicates and may materialise in three complement-types: subjunctive clauses, infinitival clauses and clauses containing a modal verb. Our analysis of the OE and ME sections of the HC has led us to the following conclusions:

(i) As expected in structures showing DTR, commands and requests clearly favour subjunctive complements in the OE period. Our data also show that the subjunctive gradually decreases in use through time. However, while in requests subjunctive complements remain the most frequent choice in the two periods under analysis, commands show a clear changeover from subjunctive to infinitival complements in the transition from OE to ME.

(ii) Of the three possible semantic types described in section 3.1, commands are restricted to type (c). Requests, in turn, may occur in all three types, although type (c) constitutes the predominant pattern. It is precisely this pattern that more strictly complies with the definition of manipulative complements (Noonan 1985: 126), while types (a) and (b) are semantically and cognitively more complex. In view of this, (c) has been considered the basic type.

(iii) These semantic types have a clear influence on complement selection. On the one hand, the identity between Y and Z characteristic of type (c) favours the choice of infinitive complements. On the other, the proportion of modals in requests is much higher in types (a) and (b) than in type (c). This can be ascribed to the higher degree of complexity of the former types, which require a more precise expression than that provided by either the subjunctive or the infinitive.

(iv) Modal verbs in dependent commands and requests are selected according to their modal meanings: mote / moste occurs in contexts of permission, shall / should in contexts where obligation prevails, and will where volition is emphasised. This finding goes against the traditional opinion that modals came to be used in the course of the history of English as substitutes for the subjunctive. The only case in which the original modal meaning can be said to be bleached is should in dependent requests of type (c).

(v) Finally, both commands and requests can be accompanied by formulaic expressions harmonic with the type of dependent desire, reinforcers of the order in the case of commands and downgraders of the petition in requests.

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