

*The consolidation of the indirect and prepositional passive in Early Modern English: evidence from the Helsinki Corpus**

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ABSTRACT

As is well-known, in Old English there were severe constraints on the type of NP that could become subject of a passive construction, since only accusative objects were eligible for this function. In Middle English, however, new passive types emerge, namely personal passives of former dative-governing verbs, prepositional passives and indirect passives. The aim of this paper is to examine the frequency and distribution of the newly established forms in the Early Modern English period, as represented in the *Helsinki Corpus*. Statistical data and examples drawn from the corpus will confirm the hypothesis that there is a steady consolidation of these new passive types in the period under study.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the degree of consolidation of the passive types available in the EModE period, as represented in the *Helsinki Corpus*. I have included, prior to the discussion of the EModE data itself, a historical outline of the passive types available in the Old and Middle English periods (cf. section 2). The aim of this outline is to provide a basis for diachronic comparison and thus help the reader to better understand the changes undergone by the passive construction during the EModE period. Section 3 describes the sample used, and section 4 analyses the data retrieved from it. Finally, section 5 offers the conclusions reached in the present study.

2. PASSIVE TYPES IN OLD AND MIDDLE ENGLISH

2.1. Passive types in Old English

OE distinguished only two broad types of passive construction, namely the 'personal passive' and the 'impersonal passive'. The norm for OE was that only a NP in the accusative case in the corresponding active sentence could appear as the subject of a passive (Allen 1980: 68-9, Bennett 1980: 102, Mitchell 1985: §834 and Fischer 1992: 383). The resulting construction is the so-called personal passive.

Apart from verbs taking a single complement in the accusative case, the following subclasses of OE verbs allowed the formation of personal passives. To start with, there are verbs governing a double accusative or/and accusative + a finite or non-finite noun-clause. Among these verbs are included verbs of teaching and verbs taking an accusative object and a predicative adjunct. In both cases, only the personal accusative object becomes subject of the passive. Secondly, verbs governing an accusative + a genitive, a dative or a prepositional phrase. In the passives of these constructions the accusative object becomes subject of the passive, and the second element remains unaltered. In OE there is no possibility for the personal dative object to become subject of a passive sentence, as is the case in PE (Berndt 1989: 163). Consequently, the type *The boy was told the story* does not occur in OE¹: it would be made possible later on by the disappearance of all formal differences between the dative and the accusative. Thirdly, verbs governing a finite or non-finite noun-clause and/or a second complement surfacing as a PP, or as a NP marked for the genitive or dative. Whenever these constructions are used in the passive, either the finite noun-clause, the non-finite noun clause or an anticipatory pronoun are found as passive subject. The second element (the PP, the genitive or the dative), if expressed, remains unaltered. Contrary to PE, there is no OE example of the type *he was persuaded to leave early* as a passive counterpart of *they persuaded him to leave early*, where the recipient of the action becomes subject of the passive.

Together with the personal passive, in OE there are also 'impersonal passives' (cf. Mitchell 1985: §749) or 'subjectless passives' (cf. Bennett 1980: 102), two terms that cover all other passive forms, which do not have a subject NP marked for the nominative case. The active constructions allowing the formation of impersonal passives in OE are, firstly, verbs governing a genitive and / or a dative. OE verbs like, for instance, *helpan*, *cweman* and *beodan* (van der Gaaf 1929: 2), take complements in dative and genitive. As these cannot become the subject of passives (Berndt 1989: 163), an impersonal passive is used instead, wherein the active subject comes to be governed by a preposition expressing agency, the verb shows the regular passive morphology, but the

dative or genitive complement remains in the same case (Bennett 1980: 102), as in example (1):

- (1) *ÆCHom* ii. 510. 7 (from Mitchell 1985: §849).
ac Marinus astah on Pam sticelan hrofe ... and wæs Pa geholpen þam unscyldigum huse
 and Martinus ascended on the steep roof ... and was then helped the poor family.

Secondly, impersonal passives are also formed on verbs governing only a prepositional phrase. The prepositional passive, that is, the pattern illustrated in *The candidate was voted for*, does not occur in OE (Allen 1980: 69, Mitchell 1985: §855, Berndt 1989: 163). Even though there is great controversy about the reasons that made it possible for the prepositional passive to emerge during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (cf. Section 2.2 below), the lack of syntactic cohesion between the verb and the preposition it governs is generally considered the main reason for the non-occurrence of the prepositional passive in OE.

2.2. Passive types in Middle English

The collapse of the OE case system and the greater rigidity of word order during the ME period has a twofold consequence as regards the passive construction. On the one hand, OE verbs taking a dative complement, such as *help* or *thank*, which had only impersonal passives in OE, begin to occur in personal passives in ME. As Van der Meer (1929: 51) points out, this process is made possible by the disappearance of inflectional endings, which blurred the formal distinction between accusative and dative complements and merged them into one oblique case (Jespersen 1909-49, III: 299, Visser 1963-73: §1935, Traugott 1972: 130, Lieber 1979: 687, Berndt 1989: 164 and Fischer 1992: 384). This new oblique object can now be plausibly interpreted as the direct object of a transitive verb and be accordingly promoted to subject position when passivisation applies. Witness:

- (2) *Mandeville's Travels* 3-37 (from Van der Meer 1929: 51).
god be thanked.
 God be thanked

The loss of the inflectional contrast between nominative and other cases also brought about the minimisation of the difference between nominative, subjectivised NPs and non-nominative, non-subjectivised NPs in preverbal position, these latter being those occurring in impersonal passives. As a

consequence, all preverbal NPs are now reinterpreted as the subject of the verb (Berndt 1989: 165). To this reinterpretation contributes the fact that the person and number distinctions in the verb, which marked agreement with the subject, are also gradually lost.

Another factor contributing to the disappearance of impersonal passives in ME is the pressure of SVO order, which further assisted in the interpretation of preverbal NPs as subject². As Berndt (1989: 164) points out, "The more the pre-verbal position came to be regarded as a marker of subject function, the greater the 'pressure of position' became for a reinterpretation of the originally objective noun phrase as the subject noun phrase of the passive sentence. The former *OV(S)* pattern was thus reinterpreted as an *SV(O)* pattern".

Together with the personal passive of former dative-governing verbs, in ME other new passive types emerge, due to the fact that the OE constraint whereby only active accusative objects could become subjects of the passive no longer holds in ME. These new passive types are the so-called indirect passive and prepositional passive, which are discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

As already mentioned, the indirect passive does not exist in OE, its emergence dating back to ME. As one could expect, the loss of dative case-marking assisting in the development of the personal passive affects indirect objects as well (van der Gaaf 1929: 1), so that both the personal object (indirect object) and the direct object are eligible to become subject of the passive in ME (Mustanoja 1960: 440 and Estival 1986: 141), as in (3):

- (3) *Jakob&J* (Bod) 229 (from Fischer 1992: 385).
Nas neuere quene in dis lond ido so muche ssome ...

The factors outlined above in connection with the emergence of the personal passive are also responsible for the emergence of the indirect passive. As already mentioned, intransitive verbs taking a dative complement already have a passive in OE, in which the dative complement retains its dative case and normally occupies preverbal position. It has been argued that, once this complement loses its case-marking, given its preverbal position, it comes to be reanalysed as the passive subject (van der Gaaf 1929: 61, Bennett 1980: 103 and Fischer 1992: 385). Concerning the indirect passive, the explanation is very similar. It is frequent in OE for indirect objects to be topicalised to the front of the sentence, a position which leads to their reanalysis as passive subjects (Kisbye 1972: 136)³. Van der Gaaf (1929: 64) illustrates this process with the OE pattern *me is not left one*, reinterpreted in ME as *I am not left one*.

Where the preverbal NP is a pronoun, and, therefore, the loss of inflectional endings does not erode the distinctions dative-nominative, subjectivisation takes longer (Fischer 1992: 385). According to Berndt (1989: 165), indirect passives

with pronominal subjects are rare until Late ME and appear by analogy with the reinterpreted indirect passives with nominal subjects.

In any case, in Late ME the establishment and regulation of the indirect passive was still incomplete, as can be inferred from Van der Meer's analysis of *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, a travel book written in the second half of the fourteenth century. He states that "verbs governing two objects, one direct and the other indirect, are only found with the direct object as subject [of the passive]" (1929: 51). This seems to indicate that this construction, though already attested in ME, has a later consolidation.

As is the case with the indirect passive, the prepositional passive does not occur in OE but begins to appear about the thirteenth century, its use becoming finally established by the end of the fourteenth (van der Meer 1929: 51, Mustanoja 1960: 441, Lieber 1979: 671, Estival 1986: 172, Berndt 1989: 162 and Denison 1993: 125).

- (4) al400(al325) *Cursor* 14216 (from Denison 1993: 126).

Bot nu ðan am i after send.

But now when am I after sent.

'But now when I am sent for'.

There is great controversy about the origins of the prepositional passive, scholars being of different opinions as to which is the immediate cause of its emergence (Denison 1993: 134-60). The most widely accepted view is that of a structural reanalysis whereby the preposition enters into constituency with the verb rather than with the following NP (Fischer 1992: 386). The following factors have been adduced as having contributed to an increasing association between the verb and the preposition⁴:

1) *Obsolescence of OE prefixal system*. OE verbal prefixes served the purpose of turning an intransitive verb-stem into a transitive compound verb (cf. *ridan* 'to ride', *geridan* 'to ride over/to'). When Germanic prefixes ceased to be a productive system, the verb-preposition collocations came to fulfil their function (Bennett 1980: 106 and Fischer 1992: 386), as a manifestation of the general tendency in ME to substitute analytical constructions for synthetic ones (van der Gaaf 1930: 8)⁵. These newly developed constructions soon occur with a very specialised lexical sense (Strang 1970: 275), so we can assume that they have become deeply entrenched in the language. Besides, most OE prefixed verbs are transitive and remain so when they turn into verb-particle combinations (Fischer 1992: 386). Consequently, these new **V+P** combinations are probably viewed as still forming a compound verb followed by a direct object rather than as forming a verb with a prepositional object.

2) *Word order*. It has also been claimed that the fixing of SVO order, which is a consequence of the decay of inflectional endings (Estival 1986: 125),

helped the establishment of the **V-P** order in preposition stranding, with the consequent consolidation of prepositional verbs in general.

Mustanoja (1960: 441), Bennett (1980: 106-7), Estival (1986: 201ff) and van der Gaaf (1930: 1-21), among others, provide evidence for the existence of a structural reanalysis of these V+P collocations in ME. The syntactic facts outlined below are, according to these authors, surface manifestations of the fact that such a reanalysis has taken place.

A) *Preposition stranding*. Preposition stranding, whereby the preposition comes to be attached to the verb and is left without its NP complement, is very common in OE (Fischer 1992: 387), especially in relative and infinitive clauses. In ME there develop new preposition stranding patterns, as in, for instance, clauses relativised on the object of a preposition (cf. Allen 1980: 224-31):

- (5) c1180 *Orm.* 461 (from Denison 1993: 130).
ðiss gode prest, ðatt we nu mæleonn offe.
 'this good priest that we now speak of'.

Preposition stranding brought about a positional association between the verb and the preposition and, consequently, a dissociation of the preposition and its object NP. In ME, alongside relative clauses with or without preposition stranding, there are a few in which the preposition is repeated (Denison 1993: 133), as in example (6):

- (6) (al470) *Malory, Wks.* 1234.1 (From Denison 1993: 134).
all thes be ladyes for whom I have foughten for.
 all these are ladies for whom I have fought for.
 'all these are ladies on whose behalf I have fought'.

This type of structure seems to indicate that the connection between the verb and the preposition was felt to be closer in ME than in OE, and that the reanalysis from V+PC into VP+NP has already taken place in ME.

B) *Semantic unity*. The verb-preposition collocations constitute a semantic unit in ME and so can often be paradigmatically replaced by a one-word transitive verb. In addition, the meaning of the V + P combination is different from the sum of the meaning of its parts (Bennett 1980: 106).

C) *Coordination with other transitive verbs*. Another piece of evidence that has been adduced as a proof of the above-mentioned reanalysis is the occurrence of V + P collocations coordinated with transitive verbs and sharing the same object (Bennett 1980: 106-7 and Denison 1993: 127-9). This is what Denison calls 'verb conjunction'⁶ and is illustrated in (7):

- (7) al250 *Ancr.(Nero)* 57.4 (From Denison 1993: 129).
saul ðet is ðe ueond hateð & hunteð efter hire.
 Saul that is the devil hates and hunts for[=pursues] her

The emergence of the prepositional passive indicates that the NP following the preposition is now considered a verbal complement in its own right. The occurrence of the prepositional passive, therefore, can be interpreted as both a symptom and a consequence of the reanalysis of the V + P collocations.

The complex prepositional passive, that is, the type V+X+P where X stands for a NP (*the house was set fire to*), adverb (*stealing was stopped short of*), PP (*the problem was never got to grips with*) or past participle (*his chances of promotion have been put paid to*), enters the language some 150 years after the simple prepositional passive. The phrasal-prepositional verb, which is a special type with an adverbial particle between the verb and the preposition as in the pattern *it was made away with*, is not found in the passive until much later (Denison 1985: 202 and 1993:153-4); Visser's (1963-73: 2164) first instance dates back to 1502.

3. THE CORPUS

As already stated, for the purpose of studying the consolidation of the indirect and prepositional passive types in EModE, a computerised corpus has been used, the *Helsinki Corpus of English Texts*. The sample used in the present study is not the whole EModE section of the *Helsinki Corpus*, comprising half a million words, but rather, a selection out of this comprising 153,000 words. This size was judged sufficient for my purposes because an overview⁷ of these 153,000 words showed that, firstly, they contained numerous instances of passive constructions, and, secondly, the passive types represented in them were repeatedly encountered. In other words, there was no indication that the analysis of a larger sample would result in the addition of significant instances, or would modify the proportional distribution of such instances in any relevant way. The distribution by chronological subperiods of the total words examined is shown below:

TABLE 1

Number of words examined per chronological subperiod

E1 (1500-1570)	50,000
E2 (1570-1640)	48,000
E3 (1640-1710)	55,000
TOTAL EmodE	153,000

As for text-types, since the passive is, like any other thematic device, closely interrelated with style, I thought it necessary to select text-types which

could provide data representative of both formal and informal settings, and also of written and speech-based texts. The corpus in the present study comprises, therefore, the following text-categories. On the one hand, among the text-types classified as formal by the compilers of the *Helsinki Corpus*, I singled out *Statutes*, *Science* and *Sermons*, as representative of three central fields of discourse. The relevance of *Science* for the passive voice is obvious, since the passive is specially significant in the description of scientific phenomena. On the other hand, among informal text-types in the *Helsinki Corpus*, I selected *Private Letters*, *Drama* and *Fiction*. *Fiction* and *Drama* were chosen because they contain lively dialogues between characters of the lower ranks, and thus can be assumed to resemble, from a stylistic perspective, oral registers of English. As for *Private Letters*, they are usually thought to exhibit certain colloquial, informal aspects of the language poorly represented in other registers. Table 2 below provides the breakdown for the text-types studied and the number of words analysed in each:

TABLE 2
Number of words per text-type

STATUTES	37,000	PRIVATE LETTERS	37,000
SCIENCE	25,000	DRAMA	19,000
SERMONS	15,000	FICTION	20,000
TOTAL	153,000		

Table 3 below displays the number of words examined in each subperiod, the number of active and passive clauses found, and the ratio of passive constructions with respect to actives. The count of active constructions was, of course, restricted to those for which a passive counterpart would be available, that is, to those active transitive constructions with an overt object eligible to become passive subject.

TABLE 3
Number of words examined, with indication of actives and passives and of relative frequency of passives with respect to actives

3	WORDS	ACTIVES	% ACTIVES	PASSIVES	% PASSIVES
E1	50,000	2,236	78.5%	612	21.4%
E2	48,000	2,550	77.9%	722	22.0%
E3	55,000	2,893	75.8%	922	24.1%
TOTAL	148,000	7,679	77.2%	2,256	22.7%

As can be seen from Table 3, there is a trend towards a rise in the use of the passive in the course of time: in E1, 21.4 per cent of the transitive clauses in the corpus are rendered in the passive voice; in E2 the percentage of passive clauses with respect to active transitive clauses amounts to 22.06 per cent, and in E3 it reaches 24.1 per cent. The data in the corpus, therefore, corroborate the general belief that the passive voice is more frequently used in EModE than in previous stages of the English language. In the following section, which deals with the analysis of the data retrieved from the corpus, I will try to ascertain whether the consolidation of the passive voice observed in my EModE corpus and the consolidation of the recently emerged passive types are parallel developments.

4. PASSIVE TYPES IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH

As was explained in section 2.2 above, the impersonal passive disappears in ME. The passive types available in EModE, therefore, are the basic passive, in which the direct object of an active transitive verb group becomes passive subject, the prepositional passive (PrP), and, lastly, the indirect passive (IP). Table 4 below sets out the number of occurrences and relative percentages of these various passive types, as illustrated in the corpus:

TABLE 4
Passive types in the corpus

BASIC PASSIVE	2,172	96.2%
PrP	52	2.3%
IP	32	1.4%
TOTAL	2,256	100%

As Table 4 shows, the vast majority of the passives in the corpus, namely 96.2 per cent, are of the basic type. Then follows the prepositional passive, which constitutes 2.3 per cent of the total, and the indirect passive, with 1.4 per cent. Table 5 shows the distribution of passive types by text-category.

As can be seen from Table 5, the text-type with the highest number of basic passives is *Statutes*, a text-type in which 99.3 per cent of all passives are of the basic type. Conversely, the lowest percentage of basic passives, namely 89.5 per cent, corresponds to *Sermons*, in which both the prepositional and the indirect passive occur with relative frequency.

TABLE 5
Distribution of passive types by text-category

5	Total	Basic Passive	PrP	IP
STATUTES	1,030	1,023 (99.3%)	5 (0.4%)	2 (0.1%)
SCIENCE	415	401 (96.6%)	14 (3.3%)	—
P. LETTERS	364	329 (90.3%)	19 (5.2%)	16 (4.3%)
SERMONS	192	172 (89.5%)	12 (6.2%)	8 (4.1%)
DRAMA	131	128 (97.7%)	2 (1.5%)	1 (0.7%)
FICTION	124	119 (95.9%)	—	5 (4.0%)
TOTAL	<u>2,256</u>	2,172 (96.2%)	52 (2.3%)	32 (1.4%)

Thus far I have shown the overall frequency and distribution by text-categories of the three passive types found in the corpus. A separate analysis of each of these types is provided in sections 4.1-4.3 below.

4.1. The basic passive

As was shown in Table 4 above, 2,172 out of the 2,256 passives in the corpus are basic passives. Though their subject always corresponds to the direct object of an active transitive verb, not all the corresponding active constructions are monotransitive. In some cases, the corresponding active is a ditransitive or a complex transitive construction, as Table 6 below shows. Relevant examples are provided in (8)-(10):

TABLE 6
Active constructions yielding basic passives

MONOTRANSITIVE	2,001	92.1%
DITRANSITIVE (DO)	108	4.9%
COMPLEX TRANSITIVE	63	2.9%
TOTAL	<u>2,172</u>	100%

- (8) *For without ye get some comaundement, I wott not how **your house shalbe kept**, for I know not wherof to levy one penyworth.* (IQE1_XX_CORP_APLUMPT: 80).
- (9) *and **the title of (Donuna) in the sense of Civil Law, was among the (^Romans^)** given to Wives.* (IQE3_IR_SERM_JETAYLO: 16).

- (10) *And when that a line doth crosse the edg of the circle, then is it called (^a cord^), as you shall see anon in the speakynge of circles. (IQE1_EX_SCIO_RECORD: 1).*

Among basic passives derived from monotransitive actives, the following constructions and verb groups deserve comment. Firstly, the use of the transitive verb *have*. As is well-known, stative verbs lack a passive in Present-day English, as in the vast majority of languages. Though most authors agree on this (cf., for example, Liles 1971: 69 and Palmer 1987: 82), Stein (1979: 94) and Quirk et al. (1985: 1391), however, claim that PE *have* can be passivised. According to Quirk et al., passive *have* has a transitive meaning that is not present in the active, which can be paraphrased as ‘to obtain’ or ‘to receive’; furthermore, passive *have* usually appears in *there* constructions, as in *there is little satisfaction to be had from pop music* (1985: 1391). My EMode corpus contains up to eleven instances of passive *have*, a pattern illustrated below:

- (11) (...) *wherby great Jeop~dy have ensued and irrecup^able damages may ensue if remedy therfor **be not seen and had** (IQE1_STA_LAW_STAT3: 6.)*
- (12) *If 12s the Acre **cannot be had**, rather than faile, eleven shilling the Acre. (IQE3_XX_CORP_HOXIDEN: 73).*

Passive *have* does not occur in *there* constructions in the corpus; however, the semantic connotation of ‘to receive’ or ‘to obtain’, that is, the transitive meaning alluded to by Quirk et al., seems to be present in the instances of passive *have* in the corpus. Thus, in example (12) above, the clause *if 12s the Acre cannot be had* might be paraphrased as ‘if 12s the acre cannot be obtained’. As for instances such as *a nice time was had by everybody*, in which passive *have* means ‘to experience’ (cf. Stein 1979: 94), no example was recorded in the corpus.

Also noteworthy is the occurrence of two examples containing the modal *would*. This is significant because semantic differences sometimes show up between an active clause and its passive counterpart when the verb group contains a modal verb. Thus, the meaning of the active *why wouldn't you talk to John?*, which can be paraphrased as ‘you refuse to talk to John’, is different from the meaning of its passive counterpart *why wouldn't John be talked to?*, which means ‘John refuses to be talked to’ (cf. Stein 1979: 38). Two cases like these were found in the corpus, namely:

- (13) *three or four times went hee thither, and still shee **would not bee spoken withall**: (IQE2_NI_FICT_DELONEY: 39).*
- (14) *I love Hunting, but **wou'd not**, like (Acteon), **be eaten up** by my own Dogs; (IQE3_XX_COME_FARQUHA: 33).*

In these sentences the modal meaning of *would* refers to the subject of the modal auxiliary. Thus, in (13) it is the subject *shee* that refuses to be talked to by anyone. The active counterpart, *someone would not speak to her*, would have a different meaning, since there would be a shift in the scope of the modal, from *shee* to *someone*. The change in the scope of *would* also accounts for the semantic difference observed between (14) and its corresponding active counterpart, *I love hunting but my own dogs would not eat me*.

4.2. The indirect passive

Earlier in this paper, I pointed out that the indirect passive, in which the IO in an active ditransitive construction becomes passive subject, was not available in the language till Late ME times. Since then, active ditransitive structures could yield two passive counterparts, depending on whether passivisation applied to the DO or to the IO. In my EModE corpus, this latter possibility, the indirect passive, occurs 32 times, which constitute 1.4 per cent of the passive clauses (cf. Table 4 above). Table 7 below provides the distribution of indirect passives by chronological subperiods and their percentage with respect to the total number of passives in each subperiod.

TABLE 7
Chronological distribution of indirect passives

7	TOTAL	IP
E1	612	4 (0.6%)
E2	722	15 (2.07%)
E3	922	13 (1.4%)
TOTAL	2,256	32 (1.4%)

The percentages in Table 7 show that there is a rise in use for the recently established indirect passive: while in the first subperiod it only amounts to 0.6 per cent of all passives, in the last periods this figure doubles. This progressive acceptance of transformations with the indirect object of the corresponding active taking on the subject role derives, according to Strang (1970: 151), from the modern tendency to prefer human, and among them first person, subjects, if possible (see also Jespersen 1909-49, III: 301-2). It is for this reason, Strang argues, that in PE, unlike in EModE, indirect passives are imposed on most ditransitive sentences (cf. also Quirk et al. 1985: 727). The tendency through the history of English, therefore, has been towards a steady increase in the frequency of indirect passives.

In order to check which of the two objects in a ditransitive structure was more likely to be singled out as passive subject in the corpus, I compared the number of indirect passives with the number of passives formed from ditransitive actives which had the DO as subject. The results are given in Table 8⁸.

TABLE 8
Passive from ditransitive actives

8	E1	E2	E3	TOTAL
DITRANSTIVIE PASSIVE	43	50	47	140
IO AS SUBJECT	4 (9.3%)	15 (30.0%)	13 (27.6%)	32 (22.8%)
DO AS SUBJECT	39 (90.6%)	35 (70.0%)	34 (72.3%)	108 (77.1%)

Table 8 shows that the DO appears as passive subject more often than the IO (77.1 per cent as against 22.8 per cent, respectively), thus confirming the findings of Söderlind (1951-58), Kisbye (1952), Visser (1963-73), Strang (1970), Denison (1993) and Moessner (1994) that in the early stages of the development of passives from ditransitive structures, benefactives were less commonly promoted to subject position by passivisation than direct objects. As Strang (1970: 151) notes, "Thus, though we understand them, we would hardly now produce such passive structures as Shakespeare's *attorneys are deny'd me* or *it was told me* or Bacon's *Ther was given us...* In each case the normal modern form would use first person pronoun (transformed indirect object) as subject." In this respect, the behaviour of *tell* as a passive ditransitive verb in the corpus is noteworthy. There are only two instances: one corresponds to the case cited by Strang (15), with the DO as subject, and the other to the kind of passive we would expect in PE: that with the IO as subject (16). As might have been expected, the first dates back to E1, the second to E3.

- (15) *Come on fellow it is tolde me thou art a shrew iwysse, Thy neighbours hens y=u= takest, and playes the two legged foxe Their chickens & their capons to, & now and then their Cocks.* (IQE1_XX_COME_STEVENS: 54).
- (16) *I was told this day that the heralds had yet a quarter of their work to do:* (IQE3_XX_CORP_ANHATTO: 98).

Söderlind (1951-58: 24) makes the same claim in the light of the evidence from John Dryden's prose, namely that passives of ditransitive verbs in EModE normally have the DO, rather than the IO, as subject. He concludes that in ModE the passive of ditransitives with the direct object as subject is more in favour than nowadays. To illustrate this he adduces examples like (17) (1951-58: 23):

- (17) XIII Sat 15
*Now if it **may be permitted** me to go back again to the consideration of epic poetry ...*

Here the verb *permit* is used in the direct passive, a construction that would be highly unlikely in PE. This verb does not occur as a ditransitive verb in my corpus (it does so as a monotransitive verb, however,), but *allow*, which is both syntactically and semantically very similar, appears 3 times in a ditransitive passive construction, and all of them having the DO as subject, as illustrated in (18). My findings, once more, coincide with those of Söderlind.

- (18) *and the other halfe to such person or p~sons as shall sue or informe for the same in any Court of Recorde, by Action of Debte Bill Plainte or Information, wherein **no Essoyne Protection or Wager of Lawe shall be allowed to the Defendant.*** (IQE2_STA_LAW_STAT4: 19).

My data confirm, therefore, that it is still the passive with the DO as subject that prevails. However, as already mentioned in connection with Table 7, the indirect passive becomes gradually more frequent, which suggests that this recently established form is undergoing a process of steady consolidation in EModE. I concur with Kisbye (1972: 136), therefore, in claiming that, despite the fact that some examples have been recorded in ME, the indirect passive is essentially an EModE development.

According to Moessner (1994: 226), the rise of the indirect passive during EModE is obvious, yet very slow. In her view, the reason why it took so long (over five centuries, roughly) for indirect passives to become established is the fact that EModE readers/listeners could very easily misinterpret it: “When confronted with an expression like *he was given a present*, the [EModE] reader/listener tends to analyse the subject as the goal of the action denoted by the verb, and it is only fairly late that he recognises that this analysis is not correct; the subject is not the goal, but the beneficiary.” The indirect passive, therefore, could be subject to wrong analyses on the part of the reader/listener, which made this structure, according to Moessner, highly unpopular. In addition, Visser (1963-73: §1974) and Denison (1993: 112) contend that, from the eighteenth century onwards, the indirect passive was generally stigmatised, which further slowed down the establishment of this construction.

In my corpus, passives derived from ditransitive actives exhibit a variety of clause patterns. Table 9 below sets out the patterns found for passives with the DO as subject. It shows that, in passives with the DO as subject, the IO is most commonly realised by means of a PP, as illustrated in example (19) below.

- (19) *And for as longe tyme as they shall receyve Wag^e for theym this payment to be made **unto the seid retynues and e^vvy Souldeour of the same** of*

theire Capteyns and Petycapteyns all ways within vj daies. (QE1_STA_LAW_STAT3: 6).

TABLE 9
Category of the IO in passives with the DO as subject

9	IO = PP	IO = NP
E1	36 (92.3%)	3 (7.6%)
E2	31 (88.5%)	4 (11.4%)
E3	31 (88.5%)	3 (11.4%)
TOTAL	98 (89.9%)	10 (10.09%)

The pattern shown in (20), in which the DO is subject and the IO has the form of a NP, amounts to only 10.09 per cent of the total.

- (20) *so that what my Laundresse hath had overplus the last Quarter, shall be abated her for so much of this Quarter;* (IQE3_XX_CORP_STRYPE: 67).

In passives with the indirect object as subject, the DO can surface as a *to*-infinitive clause, *that*-clause, *wh*-clause or NP. Table 10 provides the figures for these patterns and their distribution by chronological subperiods. Relevant examples are given in (21)-(24).

- (21) *My mind is with thee howsoever I am forced to be absent from Thee.* (IQE3_XX_CORP_HOXIDEN: 71).
 (22) *To this I was answered, that though the Kynge wolde giue me licence vnder his letters patent, yet wolde it not serue against the statue.* (IQE1_XX_CORP_MORELET: 103).
 (23) *But we are taught in this place, how the Apostles spake also of enimies, whom as yet they had not seen, described a family of me^ as yet vnheard of.* (IQE2_IR_SERM_HOOKER: 3).
 (24) *I presume you were shewed y=e= fine things y=r= father brought me:* (IQE3_XX_CORP_EHATTON: 101).

TABLE 10
Category of the DO in passives with the IO as subject

10	TO-INF CLAUSE	THAT-CLAUSE	WH-CLAUSE	NOUN PHRASE
E1	2 (50.0%)	1 (25.0%)	1 (25.0%)	—
E2	9 (60.0%)	1 (6.6%)	5 (33.3%)	—
E3	6 (46.1%)	2 (15.3%)	1 (7.6%)	4 (30.7%)
TOTAL	17 (53.1%)	4 (12.5%)	7 (21.8%)	4 (12.5%)

As shown in Table 10, in the great majority of passives with the IO as subject, the DO is a clause. Such complements cannot be passivised, since clausal objects cannot be promoted to subject position through passivisation. The indirect passive is, therefore, used instead.

To sum up, the increasing frequency with which the indirect passive occurs in the corpus proves that the consolidation of this passive type takes place in EModE (cf. Table 7). However, the corpus also shows that, contrary to PE, the promotion of DOs to subject was still preferred over that of IOs (cf. Table 8), which is not surprising given the short history of the indirect passive by EModE times.

4.3. The prepositional passive

It is generally agreed that the increase in use is greater for the prepositional passive than for the indirect passive in EModE (Trnka 1930: 62-3). According to Söderlind (1951-58: 24-26), for instance, the prepositional passive is very frequently met with in John Dryden's prose, while the indirect passive, as I have just mentioned, is not used so frequently. Indeed, there is a remarkable rise for the prepositional passive in my corpus, as is shown in Table 11 below:

TABLE 11
Distribution of prepositional passives by chronological subperiods

11	PASIVES	PrP
E1	612	6 (0.9%)
E2	722	24 (3.3%)
E3	922	22 (2.3%)
TOTAL	2,256	52 (2.3%)

Just as with the indirect passive, the percentages in the two later periods double those of the earlier period. Nevertheless, we can observe in my corpus two differences in use between the indirect passive and the prepositional passive. Firstly, the increase observed from E1 to E2 is greater for the prepositional passive than for the indirect passive: the former rises from 0.9 per cent to 3.3 per cent, the latter only from 0.6 per cent to 2.07 per cent (cf. Table 7 above). Secondly, the prepositional passive outnumbers the indirect passive throughout Late ME and EModE, as the average percentage for the prepositional passive (2.3 per cent) versus that of the indirect passive (1.4 per cent) shows. Examples (25) and (26) illustrate the use of the prepositional passive:

- (25) *For by toumynge (...) and then fyndyng the roote of the square that remayneth, which roote (I meane the syde of the square) is the iuste length of the unknowen syde, whyche is sought for.* (IQE1_EX_SCIO_RECORD:18).
- (26) *They were spoken of by the Apostles of our Lord Iesus Christ.* (QE2_IR_SERM_HOOKER: 3).

The reasons for the rapid spread in the use of the prepositional passive can be outlined as follows. On the one hand, the original ME alternation between prefixed verbs and verb + preposition combinations is regularised in favour of postposition in EModE, so that the use of prepositional verbs in this period rises considerably. On the other hand, as already pointed out in section 2.2 above, there is evidence confirming the strong degree of cohesion between verb and preposition⁹, such as, for instance, the cases of verb conjunction (cf. 2.2). As a result, the NP complement of the preposition was reanalysed as the complement of a prepositional verb, that could be, therefore, passivised as in PE (Traugott 1992: 215).

The following examples, which belong to E2 and E3, contain coordinated passive verb groups, where the first term of the coordination is a prepositional verb and the second a non-prepositional one:

- (27) *My Journy into Spaine is stayd, for the newes heer is that the Prince is comeing home with all speed, and this is certaine that 2 shipps with horses and Tilting provision are sent after and stayd.* (IQE2_XX_CORP_KNYVETT: 76).
- (28) *for even by that sudden (transitus) of the small chips of Iron, they are heat red hot, and that (^combustible sulphureous^) Body is presently prey'd upon and devoured by the (^aereal^) incompassing (^Menstruum^), whose office in this Particular I have shewn in the Explication of Charcole.* (IQE3_EX_SCIO_HOOKE: 7).

This is what Denison (1993: 124) calls 'verb conjunction,' which, according to him, proves that the prepositional verb behaves syntactically very much like an ordinary verb. Also indicative of a high degree of integration between verb and preposition is the following E3 example, with two coordinated prepositional passives.

- (29) *Let man and wife be careful to stifflie liffle things, that as fast as they spring, they be cut down and trod upon;* (IQE3_IR_SERM_JETAYLO: 9).

Also noteworthy is the occurrence in my corpus of the passive of an idiomatic phrase:

- (30) *The payling of then we parke is made an ende of.* (IQE2_XX_CORP_HARLEY: 90).

Even though idioms already existed in OE, (for instance OE *niman gema*, 'take heed'), an increasing frequency of highly idiomatic phrases is observed after the Norman Conquest, which seems to have been encouraged by the corresponding Old French use. As is well known, the Old French contribution to ME lexis can be seen not only in direct borrowing from Old French, but also in the adoption of a group of OF highly idiomatic phrases which are reproduced by ME equivalents, what Jespersen calls 'set phrases' or 'verbal phrases' (1909-49, III: 316), such as *take notice (of)* or *give offence (to)*. In these structures, there is a strong connection between the verb and its object, and, consequently, they are regarded as being constituted by a highly lexicalised unit followed by a prepositional adjunct. In EModE the passive of these structures is apparently just beginning to appear, as is demonstrated by Söderlind (1951-58: 27-8), who found three instances in John Dryden's prose, and also by the data in my corpus, with only one occurrence, namely (30) above. The passive of idiomatic phrases expanded all throughout the Modern English period.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This paper has examined the frequency of the different passive types available in EModE with the following results. Firstly, the indirect passive, though scarce in the corpus as compared with PE (it represents only 1.4 per cent of the total), exhibits, nevertheless, an important rise in use throughout EModE, specifically from 4 occurrences in E1 to 13 in E3. My corpus, therefore, corroborates Kisbye's findings (1972: 136), since it proves that the indirect passive, though first emerging in ME, is basically an EModE development. However, the data also confirm that, despite the consolidation of the indirect passive in the course of the period, which constitutes one aspect of a wider modern tendency to prefer human subjects, in ditransitive clauses the passive with the DO as subject is still the prevailing one (in 77.1 per cent of the passives from ditransitive actives), in contrast with PE, where passives from ditransitives with the IO as subject are far more frequent than those with the DO as subject. The spread of indirect passives has been found to be, therefore, fairly slow, this was tentatively attributed to their ambiguity, since the subject of indirect passives was liable to be misinterpreted as the patient rather than as the beneficiary of the action, and also to the stigmatisation that they suffered on the part of grammarians from the eighteenth century onwards.

As regards the prepositional passive, the data provided in section 4.3 show that it exhibits a higher degree of consolidation than the indirect passive:

prepositional passives in the corpus not only outnumber indirect passives in all three subperiods, but they also exhibit a sharper increase in use (from 6 occurrences in E1 to 22 in E3). Also indicative of this high degree of integration of prepositional passives in EModE is the occurrence of coordinated prepositional passives and several instances of verb conjunction (Denison 1993: 480), where the passive prepositional verb appears coordinated with a passive non-prepositional verb, sharing the same subject and agent.

NOTES

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¹ Visser (1963-73: §1959) analyses some OE examples as indirect passives, and Lieber (1979: 681) also believes that dative indirect objects can become subjects of passives in OE. Their examples and evidence, however, have been refuted by Mitchell (1985: §840) and Russom (1982), among others.

² For a detailed analysis of the loss of the impersonal passive in ME, see Fischer and van der Leek (1983) and also van der Gaaf (1929: 2-6).

³ Apart from these two factors, loss of inflectional endings and preverbal position leading to re-analysis of IOs as subjects, Fischer mentions a semantic one: the fact that IOs function in the role typical of a passive subject, that of patient (1992: 385), which would lead to their eligibility as passive subjects. Jespersen (1909-49: III 303), on the other hand, claims that indirect passives are also due to a greater interest felt for the person at this period, which, he says, assisted other syntactic changes as well.

⁴ The coalescence of inflectional endings does not play a part in the development of the prepositional passive, as van der Gaaf (1930: 15) tried to show. The fact that prepositional objects lost their case marking is irrelevant here because OE did not have the prepositional construction *her was talked to* (cf. Denison 1985: 192-3 and Fischer 1992: 386).

⁵ Due to case syncretism and to the above mentioned loss of verbal prefixes, there is a great variety and frequency of prepositional use in ME. As a consequence, the number of new verb-preposition collocations available in ME increases notably, which either come from native sources, or are calqued on foreign models, or borrowed from them.

⁶ He applies the term to the "systematic combination of two clauses into one, with object(s) —and subject, if present— shared by two verbs" (Denison 1993: 480).

⁷ A preliminary overview of the corpus was necessary because, as Raumolin-Brunberg (1991: 53) points out, the sample size depends on the phenomenon under study, and "at the introduction of a syntactic study the researcher seldom knows the real frequency of the phenomenon under examination ... This is why it is difficult to know in advance how large one's sample should be".

⁸ Table 8 includes all passives formed from a ditransitive verb, irrespective of whether the benefactive complement (Denison 1993: 103) is realised by a NP (as in *Mary has given John some flowers*) or by a PP (*Mary has given some flowers to John*).

⁹ The distinction between phrasal verbs, i.e., the structure verb + adverb, in which the adverb is in constituency with the verb, and prepositional verbs, that is, the structure verb + preposition, in which the preposition forms a constituent with the following NP, seems to be clear in EModE. The following excerpt contains the passive of the phrasal verb *fasten on*. The verb is joined to the particle with a hyphen (*was fastened-on*), which might in fact indicate that the writer is conscious of the cohesion existing between the verb and the particle:

but that which is represented by E, I observed to be a very big Spark of Fire, which went out upon one side of the Flint that I struck fire withall, to which it stuck by the root F, at the end of which small Stem was fastened-on a (^Hemisphere^), or half a hollow Ball, with the mouth of it open from the stemwards, so that it looked much like a Funnel, or an old fashioned Bowl without a foot. (QE3_EX_SCIO_HOOKE: 3).

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