'Impersonal' and 'reflexive' constructions: Verb features peculiar to Old and Middle English[1]

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When Old English appeared in a written form for the first time, it had already lost inflections like optative, hortative, perfective, passive, etc. Making up for these morphological forms, it started, again before it was written and preserved, using periphrastic expressions with modal auxiliaries, *habban*, *beon/wesan*, *utan*, *ongan*, etc. Without having middle voice, it used 'impersonal' and 'reflexive' constructions (the single quotes mean that they included quasi-impersonals and quasi-reflexives in the real sense of the words). In this paper I focus on some such verbs as *lician*, *lystan*, *sceamian*, *þyncan* and *wer(g)ian* with their native and/or loan synonyms like *(dis)plesen*, *joien*, *remembren*, *repenten*, *semen*, etc. and their constructions used in Old and Middle English so as to maintain that their peculiar features reflect compensatory devices of the lost function before the appearance of Old English.

Keywords: impersonal; reflexive; Old English; early Middle English

1. My definitions

'Impersonal' constructions are those which occur with the dative/accusative of person, like *me licaþ* and *him þinceþ*, with or without *(h)it*, so that they make a distinction from the real impersonal like *it rains* and *it snows*, which never turn into personal constructions. 'Reflexive' constructions are those which occur with a coreferential

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pronoun, like *he him ondred* and *he gewat him*, with or without *self*-, so that they make a distinction from the real reflexive, which is found in Modern English *behave yourself* and *he said to himself*.

2. A diachronic tendency

Tables 1a, 1b and 1c give the number of occurrences of 'impersonal' and 'reflexive' constructions in some Old and Middle English texts. Numbers of both constructions differ, according to the length of each text and owing to some stylistic preferences, but no clear tendency of diachronic decrease in the number of occurrences in three tables.[2]

Table 1a. Gospels in comparison

	'impersonal'	'reflexive'
WSCp	183	187
Wyc(EV)	185	187

Table 1b. Homilies in comparison

	'impersonal'	'reflexive'
BlHom	72	126
ÆCHom	276	637
ÆHom	175	306
WHom	153	150
VespD.Hom	147	210
BodHom	66	115
LambHom	61	62
TrinHom	70	141

Table 1c. Major texts in comparison

	'impersonal'	'reflexive'
OE Poetry	442	665
CP(H)	447	483
Or	95	223
Bo	287	154
GD(C)	583	483

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[2] Tables are based on Ogura (2003: 539, 541, 545 and 548).

Bede	201	167
ChronE	49	45
Orm	111	214
AncrW	90	226
Laȝ(C)	247	345
Laȝ(O)	146	211

As long as these constructions were kept in use during the medieval period, it would be better to examine if the same verb was used continuously or if the replacement among synonyms, including loan verbs, took place.

3. Verbs used continuously

Some Old English verbs, which showed 'impersonal' and/or 'reflexive' constructions could be kept in use in medieval contexts. In this section I pick out examples from *OED3*, *DOE, DOEC* and *MED* and exemplify the lexical continuity of these verbs.[3] Verbs which show phonetic-morphological-syntactic-semantic mergers from Old to Middle English periods are particularly on focus.

3.1. OE *sceamian* > ME *shamen*

This is one of the verbs of emotion used 'impersonally' and 'reflexively' throughout the medieval period. Examples are so many that I try to choose a few from both Old and Middle English.

'impersonal':
> (1)   CP 21.165.5
> Hwa bið medtru*m*, ðæt ic ne sie eac for his ðingu*m* seoc? Oððe hwa bið gescended, ðæt **me** forðæm ne **scamige**?

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[3] I have checked those examples I found in my previous studies, in which I used earlier editions of medieval texts. I also consult *BT* and see if the examples quoted there are attested in the *DOE(C)*. Here in this paper I try to follow dictionary quotations as faithfully as possible. Boldface in examples is mine to highlight the verb and construction.

'Who is weak and I am not weak; or who is shamed and I am not ashamed of it?' (tr. based on Sweet)

Cf. CP 16.101.4 (personal in a similar context)
Hwa bið geuntrumod ðæt ic ne sie eac geuntrumod; oððe hwa bið gesciended ðæt **ic** eac ðæs ne **scamige**?
'Who is infirm, and I am not sick on his account? or who is shamed, and I am not ashamed because of it?' (tr. based on Sweet)

(2)   LambHom 35.34
for-þi betere eow is þ*et* **eow sceamie** biforen þam preoste ane; þenne on domes-dei biforen c*ri*ste.
'therefore it is better for you to shame yourself before the priest alone than on Doomsday before Christ.'

'reflexive': the coreferential pronoun takes either the genitive or the dative.

(3)   CP 52.409.33-34
Ðios sæ cwið ðæt **ðu ðin scamige**, Sidón. Swelce sio burg ða wære ðurh ðæs sæs stemne to scame geworden.
'The sea says that you should be ashamed of yourself, Sidon, as if the city were ashamed at the sea's voice.'

(4)   GDPref and 4(C) 33.308.23
He scamode his wiþ men, gif he ne eode in to cyrcan in swa halgan dæge þara eastrena, gif he þonne þider eode, þonne **ondred he him** þone Godes dom.
'He was ashamed of himself against men, if he did not go into the church on such a holy day of Easter; then if he went there, he was afraid of the judgement of God.'

(5)   ÆLS (AshWed) 167
Ne sceamige nanum men þæt he anum lareowe his gyltas cyðe.
'Let no man be ashamed to make known his sins to a teacher.'

(6)   VespD.XIV 104.14-15

Se þe **hi*m* scamige**, þ he beforen mannen egen synegie, swyðer **him** sceal **scamigen**, þ he beforen Godes egen ænig unriht wyrcð.
'He who would be ashamed of committing sins before men's eyes must be very much ashamed of doing anything wrong before God's eyes.'

(7)   Owl & N (O) 161
       Schomye þe vor þine vnrede. Vn wryen is þi swikehede.
       'Shame on you for your bad counsel. Your treachery is revealed.'

Concerning this verb (and similar verbs of emotion), the '*be* + past participle' construction is also important, now that participles function as predicative adjective.

(8)   Cursor 636
       G. **þai were** noght **schamed** par ma fay.
       T. **Ashamed were þei** not certeyn.

3.2. OE *þyncan* > ME *thinken*

This verb shows 'impersonal', 'reflexive' and '*be* + past participle' constructions throughout the medieval period. In example (9) we see 'impersonal' and personal reflexive constructions, in (10) '*be* + past participle' for *Lindisfarne* (obviously a faithful rendering of *uidetur*) and *West Saxon Corpus Christi* but 'impersonal' in *Rushworth 1*, in (11) '*be* + past participle', in (12) 'impersonal', and in (13) personal and 'impersonal'.

(9)   CP 17.113.10-12
       Æresð **him ðuhte selfu*m*** ðæt ðæt he wære suiðe unmedeme, ac siððan he understungen ⁊ awreðed wæs mid ðys hwilendlican onwalde, **he ðuhte him selfu*m*** suiðe unlytel ⁊ suiðe medeme.
       'At first he thought himself too incompetent, but when he was supported by this transitory authority, he considered himself very great and competent.'

(10)   Mt 18.12 [Quid **uobis uidetur** si fuerint alicui c*entum* oues et errauerit una ex eis]
Li: huæt **iuh is gesene ł <geðence>** gif he biðon ł weron ængum hundrað scipa � geduologia an of ðæm
Ru1:   hwæt **ðincaþ eow** gif hæbbe hwa hundteontig scipa � gedwalige an of ðara
WSCp: Hwæt **ys eow geþuht** gyf hwylc mann hæfð hund sceapa � him losað an of þam
AV: How thinke yee? If a man haue an hundred sheepe, nd one of them be gone astray[4]

(11)   ChronE 1106
Se steorra ætywde innon þet suðwest; he **wæs** litel **geþuht** and deorc.
'The star appeared in the southwest; it seemed small and dark.'

(12)   VspD.Hom XIV 83.38
�7 ic eam swa unroth, þ **me þincð** sar min lif, þ ic forneh dead eam.
'and I am so sad that my life seems to me painful, that I am nearly dead'

(13)   Ancr (Nero) 85.6
alle **heo þuncheð** wouh; � nout wunne.
Ancr (Nero) 86.22
auh **us þuncheð** gretture fleshliche temptaciuns.

3.2.1. OE *forþencan* > ME *forthinken*[5]

Here we see an obvious mixture of OE -*þencan* and -*þyncan*, personal and 'impersonal' verbs, most probably based on the morphological merger of preterite and past participle forms of both verbs. Syntactically, 'reflexive' constructions may continue, while 'impersonal'

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[4] Old English versions are quoted from Skeat (rpt. 1970). The Authorized Version is given as an early Modern translation.

[5] The *MED* has the headword *forthinken* only, though in the following explanation it refers to the apparent mixture of OE *forþencan* and unattested *forþyncan. The *DOE* has *for-þencan* only.

ones seem the result of the merger, when no example of the 'impersonal' was attested in Old English. In example (14) *sceamian* also appears twice in 'impersonal' and 'reflexive'. Example (17) is quoted in the MED under 1 (b) refl., but I take it as an 'impersonal' construction.

'reflexive' and '*be* + past participle':
(14)　Bo 8.19.29

þ is nu giet þinre unrihtwisnesse þ ðu *eart fulh*eah **forþoht**. Ac ic nolde *þ* **þu þe forþohte**, ac ic wolde þ *ðe* **sceamode** *swelc*es gedwolan; forðæm se **se ðe hine forþencð** se bið *on*mod, ac se **se hine sce***amað* se bið on hreowsunga.

'That is still part of your wrongfulness that you are almost completely in despair. But I wanted you to be ashamed of such folly, because one who despairs is dispirited, but one who is ashamed is penitent.' (tr. Godden & Irvine)

(15)　Ayenb. (Arun 57) 29.18

Þet is hua*m*ne man ordayneþ ine his herte þet he **hi***m* ne ssel naȝt **uorþenche** his ze*m*ne.

'That is when a man conforms in his heart that he shall not regret himself of his sin.'

(16)　Cursor (C) 24786

Of þis tiþand he **him for-thoght**
'About this tiding he displeased himself'

'impersonal':
(17)　PMor (Dgb 4) st. 131

Þo þet **vorþuhte ham** here sennen and here misdeden.
'Then their sins and their misdeeds were regrettable for them.'

　Cf.　PMor (Lamb 487) 131 .M*on*. of þinchþ his mis-dede.
'One repented of his misdeed.'

(18)　Cursor 20642

C: Bot þat **him forthinc** sar, O quatkin sinn it euer be,
G: Bot þat him of sin reu sare, Of quatkin sin it euer be,
'But that repents him sorely of what kind of sin it ever be.'

(19)   PPl.C 20.92
Sore **hit me forthenketh**; Of þe dede þat y haue do y do me in ȝoure grace.
'It repents me sorely; of the deed that I have done I betake myself in your grace.'

3.2.2. OE *ofþyncan* > ME *athinken*

This verb shows 'impersonal' constructions throughout medieval English.

'impersonal':
(20)   Bo 35.98.33
�7 þa <sceolde> **þæm gigantum ofþincan** þæt he hæfde hiera rice;
'and then it must be displeasing for giants at his having their kingdom'

(21)   HomU 45 (Nap56) 7-9
Ofðincð þe alles þæs, þe ðu to yfele hafst iðoht and icwæden and iworht? Gea leof, al **hit me ofðincð**.
'Does it repent you of all this, which you have thought and said and made too evil? Yeah, dear, it all repents me.'

(22)   LaȝBrut 3364
C: for ofte hit ilimpð; þat eft **hit him of-þincheð**.
O: for hofte hit bi-falleþ; þat eft **hit him aþincheþ**.
'for often it befalls that again it repents him'

(23)   Wyc(EV) Gen 6.7
It othenkith [var. athinkith; LV repentith] **me** to haue maad hem.
'It repents me to have made them.'
Cf. Hept Gen: **me ofðingð** soðlice ðæt ic hi worhte.

3.3. OE *becuman* > ME *becomen*

Verbs of happening like *gelimpan* and *becuman* are likely to show 'impersonal' constructions. *Becuman* may have reflexive constructions occasionally and contextually, and later *becomen* and *(be)fallen* can be used in the '*be* + past participle' as the perfective.

'impersonal':
(24)   ÆLS (FortySoldiers) 324
       Yfele wæron þa ehteras and þa arleasan cwelleras þe ða martyras ofslogon, ac swa þeah **hit becom ðam halgum** to wuldre and to ecum wyrðmynte,
       'Evil were the persecutors and the impious murderers who slew the martyrs, but nevertheless it became glory and everlasting worship to the saints'

(25)   LS5(InventCrossNap) 120 (= HRood)
       Sonæ swa heo on þa gyrde bisægen ða **bicom heom** feringa on ane tid dæges þær heo stoden þæt heoræ naðor nan word cwæðen ne mihte.
       'As soon as they looked on the rods, it came upon them suddenly where they stood, during one hour of the day, that neither of them could utter a word.'

'reflexive':
(26)   ÆLS (FortySoldiers) 348
       þæt þæt **ðu þe sylfum** nelt on þinum life **becuman**, ne do ðu þæt oðrum men. þis cwæð drihten sylf.
       'you should not do to another man what you do not wish to befall to yourself in your life, this said the Lord himself'

'be + past participle':
(27)   Cursor (G) 13748
       "wo*m*man," he said, "quar **es bicome*n***
       Cf. (C) "Wo*m*man," he said, "q*u*ar **ar þai cu*m*men**
       (T) Wom*m*on he seide where **beþ bicomen**

(28)   Exodus (Coverdale) 32.1

We can not tell what **is become** of this man Moses.
Cf. Hept: we nyton hwæt Moyses **gefaren hafð**
Wyc*EV*: to this man Moyses ... we known not what **is fallyn** [*LV*: befelde]

3.3.1. OE *cuman* > ME *cumen*

The non-prefixed synonym *cuman* can also be used, though not so frequently, in 'impersonal' and '*be* + past participle' constructions.

'impersonal':
(29)   HomS 41 73
Hit is swiðe unþæslice and pleolic þæt we on Godes huse idele spellunga and hlacerunga began, forði þe **hit cymð us** to mycelan hearme;
'It is very inappropriate and dangerous for us to do idle speech and unseemly behaviour, because it becomes as great pain for us.'

(30)   Orm 9897
For þa **wass cumenn** to, þatt Crist
Þa shollde cumenn newenn,
'For it has arrived (= the time has come) that then Christ should come again.'
Cf. Orm 12842
Þatt ta **wass cumenn time** to Þatt men þa sholldenn blinnenn,

'personal' i.e. with the dative of person and the nominative of thing:
(31)   Vices &V(1)(Stw 34) 29/6-7
Ðanne **ðe cumþ** eft sum euel oðer sum unȝelimp, an hwilche(s) kennes wise ðe **hit æure cumþ**, ne ȝelief ðu naht al swa sume, ðe naure wel ne ȝeliefden, seggeð þat hie imetten euel fot, priest oðer munec;
'When again some evil or some mishap comes to you, in whatever way it comes, do not believe as some, who have never believed well, say that they met evil foot, priest or monk.'

3.4. OE *(a)grisan* > ME *(a)grisen*

Only a few examples are found in Old English texts: *WHom 10c* 182 *Ondræde man domdæg ⁊ for helle agrise* 'Let one fear for doomsday and dread of hell', *HomU 5.3* 16 *þe heom sore grulde, þet ham gros þe agan* '(anger) which annoyed them so much that they shuddered at you'. The 'impersonal' construction seen in *HomU 5.3* continues and 'reflexive' and '*be* + past participle' constructions are also found in the thirteenth century texts.

> *'impersonal'*:
> (32)   TrinHom 165
>   Of swilch mai **grisen men** þe ani god cunnen.
>   'To men who know any good it may be afraid of such.'
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> (33)   Laȝ 13328
>   *C*: þer uore **me a-griseð**
>   *O*: her vore **me agriseþ**
>   'therefore it fears me'
>
> *'reflexive'*:
> (34)   Laȝ 11976
>   C: haȝel & ræin þer aræs; **þe** hit i-seh **him agras**.
>   O: reyn and hawel þar a-ros; þat hit iseh sore **a-gros**.
>   'hail and rain there arose, whoever saw it became afraid'

3.5. OE *hreowan* > ME *reuen*[6]

These 'impersonal' verbs are not frequently used in Old English but, as some verbs of the same feature, their occurrences grow from early Middle English.

> *'impersonal'*:

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[6] OE *hreowsian* > ME *reusen*, a synonym, occurs in the present participle: *CP* 49.379.22 *hreowsigende hine selfne tælde* and *Vices &V.(1)* 63/26 *riewsiende ðe seluen to helpe*. Reflexives found in these contexts go with *tælan* and *helpen* respectively.

(35)   GenB 819b
Swa **me** nu **hreowan** mæg
æfre to alder   þæt ic þe minum eagum geseah.
'So now I have cause to regret forever and ever that I looked upon you with my eyes.'

(36)   CP 52.411.3
ꝺ oft ða, ða ðe on clænnesse hiora lichoman gehealdenne habbað, swa swa hi læsse ongietad ón him selfum ðæs ðe **him hreowan** ðylfe, swa swa hie swiður wenað ðæt hi*m* genog sie ón hira lifes clænnesse, 'and often, those who have kept their bodies in purity, the less they perceive in themselves of what they need repent, the more they expect that the purity of their life will suffice them'

(37)   Orm 5576
Himm reoweþþ þatt he dwelleþþ her
'It repents him that he dwells here'

(38)   Vices &V. (1) 65/3
Ða*n*ne **ðe** wile sare **rewe*n*** ðat tu ðe selue*n* ne haddest betere iholpe*n* ðare hwile ðe ðu mihtest.
'Then you will sorely repent that you have not helped yourself better while you could.'

(39)   Laȝ (C) 16049
ich þe wulle suggen; ah æuere **hit** wule **þe reouen**
'I will say to you, but it will ever rue you'

3.6. OE *lician* > ME *liken*, OE *mislician* > ME *misliken*

OE *lician* can be called the representative of medieval 'impersonal' verbs, although it often occurs with the nominative of thing. OE *gelician* and *mislician* show the same feature.[7]
   'impersonal':

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[7] *Mislician* often occurs in the same context, as seen in examples (41), (46) and (47), while *gelician* is often used in the Psalter glosses as a rendering of *conplacere*.

(40) CP 21.165.13
forðam nu ða recceras ætiewað sua strang[ne] andan ðy hie wiellað ðæt hie hiene eft hæbben ob ðæm ecan life betux him ⁊ hiera hieremonnum to isernum wealle, ðæt is to gewitnesse ðæt **hit him ne licode**, ðeah he hit gebetan ne meahte.
'because the rulers show such severe zeal now, since they wish to have it afterwards in eternal life as an iron wall between themselves and their subjects, to show that they did not approve of it, although they could not reform it.' (tr. by Sweet)

(41) CP 54.425.6
ðeah we næbre eft swa ne don, gif we ðæt gedone mid nanum ðingum ne betað ne ne hreowsiað, ne bio we no ðæs sicore, gif **us** ðæt **ne mislicað** ðæt **us** ær **licode**,
'even if we never do so again, unless we somehow atone for and repent of what we have done, we are not sure, unless we are displeased with what had pleased us,'

'impersonal' emphasised by *self-* (*innian* is used 'reflexively'):
(42) ChronE 1048.22
Þa hi þider common, þa woldon hi innian hi þær **heom sylfan gelicode**.
'When they arrived thither, they wished to dwell where they pleased.'

(43) Orm 17584
Þær þær he shapeþþ sawle off nohht,
All alls **him sellfenn likeþþ**;
'Where he creates soul from nothing, all as it pleases him,'

(44) Laȝ (C) 22511
Likien swa **me liken**; nulle ich þe nauere swiken.
'Be pleased as I am pleased; I will never betray you.'

(45) Gawain 2307
No meruayle þaȝ **hym myslyke**, Þat hoped of no rescowe
'No wonder though he should be displeased, who had no hope of escape'

'reflexive':
(46)   CP 32.209.14
        Ac ðæm lareowe is swiðe smealice to underseceanne be ðæm
        weorcum ðara ofertruwedena, ðæt hie him gecyðen ðætte on ðam
        ðingum ðe hie **him selfum** sua suiðe **licigað**, ðæt hie Gode misliciað.
        'But the teacher must very narrowly investigate the works of the
        presumptuous, that they may show them that in the things wherein
        they please themselves so much they displease God.' (tr. by Sweet)

(47)   Bede 5 14.436.24
        Ac swa swiðe swa he for ðære utran geornfulnesse weoruldlicra
        dæda þam cynge wæs liciende, swa swiðe he for ðære innlican
        gemeleasnesse Godes herenisse **him seolfum mislicade**.
        'But in proportion as he was acceptable to the king for his external
        zeal in worldly things, so he was, because of his inward carelessness
        in obeying God, unacceptable to himself.'

(48)   Cursor (C) 28336
        I ha **me liked** ai vm-quile In vnnait words, lath and vile,
        'I have pleased myself frequently in useless words, evil and idle'

(49)   Cleanness 435
        Bot quen þe Lord of þe lyfte **liked hymselven**
        For to mynne on his mon his meth that abydez,
        'But when the Lord of the sky pleased himself to remember his
        servant who awaits for his mercy.'

3.6.1. OE *lystan* > ME *listen*, *lusten*

Like OE *lician*, *lystan* is used denoting 'to please' in 'impersonal'
constructions. As for the ME form *lusten*, the *OED3* explains from a
dialectal feature, which represents West Midland [ü] pronunciation,
while the *MED* states from the development of a noun *lust + lystan*.
(See *OED3* list *v*². and lust *v*., and *MED* listen *v*. (1), lusten *v*., and lust *n*.)

'impersonal':
(50)   HomS 14 (BlHom 4) 218

Hwæt æghwylc mon wile þæt him Drihten selle ealle his þearfe, ⁊ **hine ne lyst** his willan wyrcean þæt he on his naman dæle þæt he him ær dealde.
'Lo! Everyone desires that the Lord should give him all that is needed, and it does not please him to do His will by dividing on His will what He had given him.'

(51)   LambHom 103.28
Þeo sixte is ihaten. *Desidia*. þet is slewðe on englisc þenne **þan mon ne lust** on his liue nan god don. *and* bið eure unʒearu to elchere duʒeðe.
'The sixth is called Desidia, that is, sloth in English; when the man desires not to do any good in his life, and is ever unready for any good deed.'

(52)   Orm 8119
⁊ seʒʒde þatt **him lisste** þa
Wel etenn off an appell;
'and said that then it should please him well to eat of an apple'

(53)   Laʒ (C) 30253
þa*m* kinge luste slepe; þe riche weoren at rede.
'it was pleased for the king to sleep; the nobles were at counsel.'

(54)   Cursor (T) 22601[8]
No creature shal **luste** [C, G, F: **list**] play,
Seint petur shal be doumbe þat day.
'To no creature it should be pleased to play, St. Peter shall be dumb that day.'

'reflexive':
(55)   Fates 97a
Her mæg findan   foreþances gleaw,
se ðe **hine lysteð**   leoðgiddunga,
hwa þas fitte fegde.

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[8] See *OED3* lust, *v.* †3.a.: "In the first quotation the verb may be impersonal: cf. LIST v.¹ 1."

'Here the person clever at deduction, and who takes pleasure in the recitation of lays, can find out who composed this poem.'

(56)   Ayenb. 246
þer he hi*m* uetteþ. þer he **hi*m* losteþ**. þer he hi*m* resteþ. þer he hi*m* slepþ.
'there he feeds himself, there he pleases himself, there he rests himself.'

'be + past participle':
(57)   NV Psalter (Vsp D.7) 76.3
I was mined of god with me, And I **am lusted** [L *delectatus sum*].

3.6.2. OE *cweman* > ME *quemen*

In Old English *cweman* is a personal verb in contrast with lician, although they sometimes can be used in pairs (e.g. *CP* 19.147.20 *Ic wilnige on eallum ðingum ðæt ic monnum cueme ⁊ licige* [L. *placeo*].). In the fourteenth century texts the *MED* finds 'impersonal' constructions, probably due to the rivalry in the preceding period.

personal:
(58)   Laȝ (O) 25492[9]
þorh Waweyn was Modread; manne wel þe leauere.
and Arthur þe kene; fole wel **him cwemde**.
'through Gawain Modred was well the more beloved by men, and Arthur the keen was pleased with him very well.'

'impersonal':
(59)   Gower CA (Frf 3) 3.902
And loke how wel **it scholde hem qweme** To hinder a man that loveth sore.

(60)   Floris (Eg 2862) 945
Or we hem to deth deme, Lat vs hem see, ȝif **it þe queeme**.

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[9] This is quoted in the *MED* under "*quemen* v. 1c. In impersonal constructions."

3.7. OE *mænan* > ME *menen*

BT has three headwords for OE *mænan*: 'to mean', 'to tell' and 'to lament, complain'. The *OED3* puts the first two under *mean* v.[1] and the last under *mean* v.[2] The *MED* gives *menen* v. (1) 'to mean; to remember' and *menen* v. (2) 'to complain.' Some editors, however, give their own opinions.

'reflexive': 'to mean'
(61)   ÆCHom I,40 529.140
> we þe lybbað: ne **mænde** he **hine sylfne** mid þam worde, ac þa ðe on life þurhwuniað oð geendunge þyssere worulde.
> 'we who live: he did not mean himself with those words but those who live through in life till the ending of this world.'

(62)   Mannyng Chron.Pt.1 (Lamb 131) 3493
> In þer resting, þey gan **hem mene**, A parlement made þem bitwene.
> 'there in the resting place they began to take counsel, made a parliament between them'

'impersonal': 'to mean'
(63)   PPl.C (Cmb Ff5.35) 6.53
> More-ouer now **me meeneth** wel.
> 'Moreover now it seems to me well.'

'reflexive': 'to remember' (*MED* menen v. (2) 'to complain')
(64)   PMor (Lamb 487) 168
> ne scal **him na mon mene** þer of strengþe ne of wronge.
> 'no man shall remind him (God) there of violence nor of wrong.' (tr. by Morris)

'impersonal': 'to remember'
(65)   Cursor (C) 16889
> **Vs meins** quils he was in lijf þat we herd him sai
> 'we remember while he was in life that we heard him say'

'reflexive': 'to complain'
(66)   LambHom 17.7

men þe to halie chirche. þet is to þan preoste *and* to þan folke.
'complain yourself to holy church, that is to the priest and to the congregation.'

(67)   Laʒ (C) 31481
And heo gunnen wende*n*, to þa*n* kinge Pendan.
and **mende*n* heom** to Pendan; of Oswy þan kinge.
'and they began to proceed to the king Penda, and complained (themselves) to Penda about the king Oswy.'

(68)   Cursor (C) 15118
Bituix þam, þaa cursed men, **Mened þam** þair care.
'Between them, those cursed men, complained themselves their grief.'

'be + past participle': 'to lament'
(69)   Willam of Palerne 1490
&whan hit was wist in rome þat will*ia*m was sek,
mochel **was he mened** of more & of lasse;
'and when it was known in Rome that William was sick, he was pitied much by everyone;'

'impersonal': 'to lament'
(70)   Guy of Warwick (Auch) 433
Sore **me meneþ**, for me smert.
'It grieves me sorely, for it causes me pain.'

3.8. OE *wendan*, *windan* and *turnian*

Two verbs of motion, OE *wendan* 'to turn, go' and OE *windan* 'to move quickly, wind' show merger, mixture, or alternative uses in late Old English through the transitional period, leaving their forms in the preterite form of *go* and MnE *wind* [waɪnd]. They can also be used in parallel or in pairs with ME *turnen* (OE *turnian* + OF *to(u)rner*) (e.g. (73)).

3.8.1. OE *wendan* > ME *wenden*

'impersonal':
(71)   Bo 39.125.7
        Ac ic wundrie swiðe swiðlice forhwi **hit** swa **went** swa hit <nu> oft
        deð,
        'But I wonder very much why it so turns around as it now often does'

'reflexive':
(72)   ÆCHom I,28 417.212
        He **wende hine** to wage þær hi him æt wæron. he wende eft ongean
        þær he hi funde.
        'He turned himself to the wall where they were present to him; he
        turned back again where he found them.'

(73)   BodHom 26/33
        Ðá ilyfde þe king þæs Hælendes præce, ⁊ **wende him** hamweard, ⁊
        hopode to þám.
        'Then the king believed the Saviour's words, and turned home, and
        trusted in them.'

(74)   Orm 11396
        Himm wennde aweʒʒ þe deofell, ⁊ enngless comenn sone anan
        'the devil went away, and angels came immediately'

'be + past participle':
(75)   Gen & Ex 1429
        Eliezer **is went** his wei. And haueð hem boden godun dai.
        'Eliezer has gone his way and has bid them good day.'

3.8.2. OE *windan* > ME *winden*

'reflexive':
(76)   Cursor (C) 6540
        Ne he ne wist queþer it bett*ur* war
        To turn or **winde** [G: wend] **him** forþar mare.
        'He did not know whether it would be better to turn or wind his way
        furthermore.'

(77)   Trev. Barth. (Add 27944) 218/24
        Bestes þat fooldiþ and **wyndiþ himself** round as a ring hauen none
        necke distinguid fram þe body.
        'Beasts that fold and wind themselves round as a ring have no neck
        separated from the body.'

'be + past participle':
(78)   Nicod (1) 833
        We ne wate how he **es wonden** oway.
        'We do not know how he has gone away.'

3.8.3. OE *turnian* + OF *to(u)rner* > ME *turnen*

'reflexive':
(79)   Cursor (C) 2391
        Abram **turned him** to þe south, To see þat land was him vn-cuth,
        'Abram turned himself to the south to see that the land was
        unknown to him.'

(80)   Wyc (Bod 959) Prov. 26.15
        As a dore **is turned** in his heenge, so a slow man in his little bed.

3.9. OE *gamenian* > ME *gamen*

According to the *DOE* there are only six occurrences of OE *gamenian*,
which do not show the constructions under investigation, but in the
MED examples are attested.

'impersonal':
(81)   St. Marg. (Bod 34) 24/34
        Me gomeneð & gleadeð al of gasteliche murhden.
        'I rejoice all of spiritual joy.'

'reflexive':
(82)   Laȝ (C) 4587
        Godlac hauede a god scip; ne **gomede him** no with.
        'Godlac had a good ship; he was not merry at all.'

(83)   Cursor (C) 4210
       Might na man **gamen him** no gleu.
       'No one could make entertainment at all.'

3.10. OE *gramian* > ME *gramen*

There are only two instances according to the *DOE*, although a synonym *gremman* or *gremian* has 150 occurrences (e.g. *CP* 28.189.23 *ne gremigen ge eowre bearn*). In the transitional period we find 'impersonal' constructions. The verb shows a tendency to make a pair with *shamen* in a negative sentence.

'impersonal':
(84)   PMor (Lamb 487) 165
       For **him** ne scameþ ne ne **gromeð** þe sculen bon iborʒen.
       'For to him who shall be saved it neither is shamed nor troubled.'

(85)   TrinHom 69
       þanne ne **þarf us** noðer **gramien**. ne shamien.
       'then it is not necessary for us to be irritated or shamed.'

(86)   Laʒ (C) 25216
       ful swiðe us mæi scomien; and ful swiðe **us mæi gromien**.
       'very greatly it may shame us and very greatly it may anger us.'

3.11. OE *wergian* > ME *werien*

According to *BT* and the *DOEC*, this verb is found in *Bede* twice in the infinitive as a rendering of *lassescere* (*Bede 1* 16.78.21 *wærigian* and *Bede 3* 7.178.19 *wergian*), and once in the *Lives of Saints* in '*be* + past participle', as in (87).

(87)   LS 8 (Eust) 34
       Witodlice þurh godes fore-stihtunge, ne hors ne he sylf **gewergod wæs**.
       'Verily through God's predestination neither his horse nor he himself was tired.'

but after the transitional period it occurs in 'reflexive' and 'impersonal' as well as '*be* + past participle'.

'reflexive':
(88)   St. Marg (Bod34) 42/27
        Þu swenchest te swiðe, ⁊ ne spedest nawiht for te wurchen on me, meiden an þ*et* ich am; ah **wergest þe seoluen**.
        'You trouble too much, and do not succeed to work on me, maiden alone that I am, but weary yourself.'

(89)   Ayenb. (Arun59) 99/13
        He wolde þet hit were ssort / uor þet non ne ssolde **hi*m* werye**: hit uor to lyerny.
        'He (= God) intended that it (= the prayer) should be short, because no one should be wearied to learn it.'

'impersonal':
(90)   Chaucer CT.CY (Manly-Rickert) G.1304
        It werieth me to telle of his falsnesse.

'be + past participle':
(91)   PDidax. (Hrl 6258b) 43/25
        He **byþ** on ælce lime **ȝwerȝi**.
        'He is weary on each limb.'

3.12. OE *werian* > ME *weren*

This is a verb often used reflexively in Old and Middle English. There is morphological similarity between this and the previous verbs throughout the medieval period, but they differ syntactically, that is, taking the dative for the previous one and the accusative for this verb.

'reflexive':
(92)   Beo 541a
         wit **unc** wið hronfiras
         werian þohton
         'we intended to protect ourselves against whales'

(93) ChronA 755.13
ᄀ þa ongeat se cyning þæt ᄀ he on þa duru eode ᄀ þa unheanlice **hine werede**
[E: werode]
'and then the king perceived that and he went to the door and then gallantly defended himself'

(94)   Orm 1406
Acc þu mihht **werenn þe** fra þeʒʒm
Þurrh rihhte læfe o Criste.
'But you cannot protect yourself from them through right belief on Christ.'

(95)   Ancr (C) 152/14
ʒef þu þurh þi ʒemeles **werest te** earst wacliche. ᄀ ʒeuest to þe feond inʒong to forð iþe frumðe
'if through your negligence you first defend yourself weakly and make the devil going in too far at the beginning'

3.13. OE *ofdrædan* > ME *ofdreden*

OE *ondrædan* occurs frequently in 'reflexive' constructions and in late Old English is contracted morphologically into *adrædan*, while *ofdrædan* is mostly used in the past participle. The verb shows various constructions in Middle English.

'be + past participle':
(96)   ÆCHom II,39.1 290.67
Ða befran se seaða þe hine onsundron heold hwæt he manna wære. oððe **wære ofdræd**.
'Then the robber, who held him apart, asked him which of men he were or (he) were afraid.'

(97)   Peterb.Chron. 1135.4
Wurþen men suiðe ofuundred ᄀ **ofdred**,
'Men were greatly astonished and afraid,'

'reflexive':

(98)   PMor (Trin) 159
        Þar we muȝen ben sore offerd and harde **us ofdrade**.
        'There we should be very much terrified and afraid greatly.'

(99)   Horn (C) 307
        Sore ihc **me ofdrede** He wolde horn misread.
        'I was very much afraid. He intended to misread Horn.'

'impersonal':
(100)   Horn (L) 1250
        Wel sore **hyre of dradde** Þat horn child ded were,
        'She was so much afraid that Horn Child were dead.'

(101)   Reinbrun (Auch) p. 656
        Me of-drede sore þe kniȝt him haue take
        'I was very much afraid the knight to have taken him'

4. Verbs borrowed in the Middle English period

Old English has many synonyms in each semantic field. Verbs used in 'impersonal' and/or 'reflexive' constructions in the Old English period can be used continuously into the next period, as seen in section 3. Verbs which are used infrequently in these constructions sometimes show frequent uses in Middle English, as a result of semantic rivalry which may or may not be traced in written documents. In addition, synonyms can be borrowed from Old Norse or Old French (or Anglo-Norman French in earlier days) and used either alternatively, with slightly different nuances, or with a force of replacement. Here in this section I choose some verbs typically used in Middle English contexts and survived into Modern English.

4.1. ME *semen* > MnE *seem*
According to the *OED3*, ON *søma* is borrowed *c.* 1175 and used as a semantic-syntactic rival of *þinken/þenken* in 'impersonal' constructions.

'impersonal':

(102) Orm Ded. 66
⁊ te bitæche icc off þiss boc,
Heh wikenn **alls itt semeþþ**,
All to þurrhsekenn illc an ferrs,
'and I entrust you of this book, as it seems a noble charge, all to seek through each verse,'

(103) Wohunge I.271
For he þurh þe *þat* wisdom art al þis world wrahte *and* dihteð hit *and* dealeð **as hit** best **semeð**.
'For he, through you, who are wisdom, created all this world and orders it and divides it, as it seems best.'

(104) Gen & Ex 2169
It semet wel ðat ge spies ben, And in-to ðis lond cumen to sen.
'It seems well that you are spies, and come into this land to see.'

(105) Cursor (C) 3284
þe formast was vnlaghter milde, **Hir semed** na wight to be wilde.
'the first was not prone to laughter, she seemed not at all to be wild.'

'reflexive': 'to make oneself appear'
(106) Cursor (C) 26386
Sua dos mast þis ypocrites
þ*at* wald ai wrenk þair aun wites,
 For to **sem þam-self** god and lele,
'As most these hypocrites do, who would always twist their own thoughts, to make themselves appear good and virtuous.'

4.2. ME *plesen* > MnE *please*

AN *plaiser*, with various forms borrowed c1350, become a rival of OE *lician* and is used in similar contexts, 'impersonally', 'reflexively' and in '*be* + past participle'. *Plesen* is often found in the Bible, especially in the Wycliffite, to render *complacere*; in some examples the dative of person is governed by the preposition *to*.[10] It seems curious to see that

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[10] For the use of '*to* + dative' in the Earlier Version of the Wycliffite Bible, see Ogura (2019).

the *MED* used 'impersonal' under the headword *plesen*, while the *OED3* does not use the term for both *please* and *displease*.

'impersonal':
(107) Wyc Esth.1.19
> If **it please to þee**, go þer out a maundement fro þi face.
> 'If it pleases you, let there go a commandment from your face.'

(108) MPPsalter (Add 17376) 39.18
> **Please it**, Lord, **to þe** [L. Complaceat tibi Domine], þat þou defende me.
> 'Be pleased, Lord, to protect me.'

(109) Wars Alex (Ashm 44) 4368
> Bot quen **vs pleses** to play, we passe & we rede
> Of þe actis of oure auncestours & of þaire athill thewis.
> 'But when it pleases us to play, we move on and study of the acts of our ancestors and of their noble qualities.'

'reflexive':
(110) Wyc (Dc 369(2)) 2 Cor.12.10
> **I please to me** [WB(2): Y am plesid; L. placeo mihi] in myn infirmitees,
> 'I take pleasure in infirmities.'

'be + past participle':
(111) Wyc (Bod 959) Exod. 32.14
> Þe lord **was pleisid** [L. placates], þat he dyde not þe harme þat he speke aȝeinst his people.
> 'The Lord was pleased that he did no harm of speaking against his people.'

(112) Wyc Ecclus. 25.1
> In þre thingis **plesid is** [L. placitum est] to my spirit.
> 'In three things it is pleased to my spirit.'

4.2.1. ME *displesen* > MnE *displease*

OF *desplaisir*, borrowed *c.* 1374, is used 'reflexively' or in '*be* + past participle' constructions, but often used intransitively (according to the *OED3* definitions. In example (115), The *MED* defines the use as 'reflexive', while Gordon/Davis (1930, 1972) considers it as 'impersonal'.[11]

intransitive:
(113) Pearl 422
        "Blysful," quoth I, "may þis be trwe,
        Dysplesez not if I speke errour."
        '"Blissful," says I, "could this be true? Do not be displeased if I say what is wrong."'

(114) Patience 1
        Patience is a point, þaʒ **hit displease** ofte.
        'Patience is a virtue, though it would often displease.'

'reflexive':
(115) Gawain 1839
        And þerfore, I pray yow, **displese yow** noʒt!
        'And therefore, I pray you, let it not be displeased to you!'
(116) Gawain 2439[12]
        Bot on I wolde yow pray, **displeses yow** neuer:
        'But one thing I would pray you, do never be offended'

'be + past participle':
(117) Chaucer CT. CY 457
        Beeth no thing **displesed**, I yow preye.

(118) Chaucer CT. Mel. B.2888
        Dame, I pray yow that ye **be** not **displesed** of thynges that I seye.

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[11] For this discussion see Ogura (1991).

[12] This is not quoted either in *OED3* or *MED*. Gordon/Davis takes this form the imperative plural.

4.3. ME *remembren* > MnE *remember*

AN *remembrir* in various forms is borrowed *c.* 1350, replacing OE *geþencan*, *beþencan*, and *munan*.

'reflexive':
(119) Apocalypse St. John: A Version (Harl. 874) 42
       Þe seuen holy gostes lowen hem whan **þai remembren hem** of [v.r. how] þat Iesus crist suffred.

'be + past participle':
(120) Wyc EV (Douce 369(1)) Psalms 77.35
       Thei **be remembrid** [LV: thei bithouȝten that; L. rememorati sunt quia] God is ther helpere.

'impersonal':
(121) Chaucer CT.Pars (Hengwrt) § 85
       At euery tyme þ' **me remenbreth** of the day of dome, I quake.

4.4. ME *repenten* > MnE *repent*

AN & OF *repenter* is borrowed *c.* 1300 and used in various contexts.

'reflexive':
(122) SLeg. (LdMisc 108) 52/173
       Of hire misdedes **heo repented hire** sore.
       'Of her misdeeds she repented herself sorely.'

(123) Shoreham *Poems* 39
       For so may man **repenti hym**, Þat þer uolȝeþ no peyne.
       'For a man can repent himself so that there no pain will follow.'

(124) Cursor (C) 7308
       Ful sore yee sal **repent yow**.

'be + past participle':
(125) Glo. Chron. A (ClgA.11) 7194
       of þe sunne þat hii inne **beþ Repenti** mowe.

'of the sin that they should be repented.'

'impersonal':
(126) Pearl 662
      Grace innogh þe mon may haue
      Þat synnez þenne new, ȝif **him repente**.
      'Sufficient grace the man can have, who sins then anew, if he would
      repent.'

4.5. ME *anoien* > MnE *annoy*

OF *anuier*, *enuier*, or the like, comes in rather early, *c.* 1250.
'be + past participle':

(127) Laȝ (O) 2259
      Corineus **was anued** [C: un-eðe]; and wo on his mode.
      'Corineus was uneasy, and sorrowful in his mind.'

(128) SLeg.Becket (LdMisc 108) 1003: *forthinchen* is used 'impersonally'.
      Ȝe **beoth a-nuyd**, and þat us for-þinchez sore;
      'You are annoyed, and that is very regrettable for us.'

'impersonal':
(129) Elde makiþ me (Hrl 913) p. 170
      Moch **me anueþ** Þat mi dribil druiþ And mi wrot wet.
      'It annoys me so much that my saliva dries and my nose wet.'

'reflexive':
(130) WPal. (KC 13) 4373
      Anoie þe na more. Ne need schalt þou haue,
      ne to hire do no duress. as þou me derli louest.
      'Be not feel offended any more, you shall have no need, or do no
      harm to her, as you love me dearly.'

4.5. ME *paien* > MnE *pay*

In Middle English contexts this verb means 'to appease, satisfy',
borrowed from AN *paier* or OF *paiier*, as early as a 1200.

'be + past participle':
(131)   TrinHom 179.12
          and giet ne wile þe lou*er*d **ben paid** mid his rihete mol.
          'and yet the lord will not be pleased with his just portion.'

(132)   Ancr (Nero) 127/7
          Sulement luue is god. **beo wel ipaied** [C: wilcweme] ⁊ gled þerof.
          'Only love is good; be well pleased and glad of it.'

'impersonal':
(133)   Laȝ 10535: contexts differ in two manuscripts
          C: Þis ihærde Cyrian; speken þene swikeful mo*n*.
          O: Þis ihorde þe kaiser; and **him paide** swiþe wel.
          'The emperor heard this, and it pleased him very well.'

(134)   Pearl 1177
          Me payed full ille to be outfleme
          'I was ill content to be dispossessed'

'reflexive':
(135)   SLeg.Becket 1577
          Do he al-so aȝen me nouþe, and **ich me paiȝe** wel i-novȝ.
          'Let him also do instead of me now, and I am pleased very much.'

5. Summary

I have given examples of 'impersonal', 'reflexive', and '*be* + past participle' constructions concerning the verbs in Old and (early) Middle English, although many are left unillustrated due to the space. There are three points to be noted:

1) Synonyms may have the same or similar syntactic environments by affecting one another. OE *lician* and *lystan* are used 'impersonally', for instance, in contrast with personal *cweman*, while ME *quemen* shows an 'impersonal' use. Changes of syntactic environments are found among the synonyms from Old to Middle English.

2) Morphological merger becomes obvious towards late Old English. ME *listen* and *lusten*, *wenden* and *winden*, *forthenken* and *forthinken*, *menen* 'to remember' and *menen* 'to complain' are those examples. Formal and semantic resemblances may lead to syntactic shifts, and as a result, 'impersonal' and 'reflexive' constructions continue. Since past participles function adjectivally, '*be* + past participle' constructions can be seen with verbs used intransitively or 'impersonally'[13] and syntactically considered as '*be* + adjective'; thus 'him wearies' and 'he is wearied' are equal to 'he is weary'.

3) Loan verbs join in the rivalry between Old English synonyms and start to share syntactic environments. ME *plesen* takes part in the semantic-syntactic conflict between OE lician and lystan, becomes used alternatively, and partly replaces the 'impersonal' use of lician. ME *semen* comes in, shares the 'impersonal' use with OE *þyncan*, which has conflicts with personal *þencan*, and finally survives into MnE *seem* with personal and 'impersonal' uses.

We cannot exemplify middle voice in the history of English, but these three constructions, 'impersonal', 'reflexive', and '*be* + past participle' constructions are devices of English syntax to show semantic-syntactic differences in the course of rendering Latin texts. In the transitional period onwards it becomes obvious that written and spoken varieties of English come closer, with the co-operation of Old Norse and Anglo-Norman or Old French loan verbs.

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[13] For the discussion of '*be* + past participle' constructions with 'impersonal' verbs, see Ogura (1986).

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