THE PASSIVE IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH

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This paper offers a description of passive constructions in early ModE. The development of passive sentences in OE and ME is outlined in the first section, specifically the constraints on what kind of NP could serve as the subject of a passive construction. Briefly, OE could only passivize accusative NPs; ME allows new passive types, namely personal passives of former dative-governing verbs, prepositional passives and indirect passives. In the second section, the hypothesis that there is a steady consolidation of the newly established forms in the early ModE period is confirmed by statistical data and examples drawn from the computerized *Helsinki Corpus*.

1. Introduction

This paper is divided into two main sections. The first section outlines the development of passive sentences in the history of English, concentrating on the constraints on what kind of NP could serve as the subject of a passive construction. The second section provides statistical data on the passive construction in the EModE period; for this purpose, a computerized corpus has been used, the *Helsinki Corpus*, as this is representative of the language of that period.

Before taking up the above mentioned issues, a few words seem in order concerning the criteria that have here been used to distinguish true passive constructions from copular constructions containing a participial adjective in predicative function. Essentially, the criteria are syntactic in nature, and follow, on the whole, those outlined by Quirk et al. (1985), and Huddleston (1984). These make it possible to regard sentence (1), below, as a passive construction but not sentence (2):

(1) The children were punished (by their teacher)

(2) The children were confused (by his actions)

The defining criteria are: 1.1 participial vs. adjectival status of the –ed form, and 1.2 possibility of correspondence with an active sentence.

1.1. *Participial vs. Adjectival Status of the –ed Form*

Adjectives in –*ed* have been traditionally described as 'verbal adjectives', because they share the properties of both verbs and adjectives. Despite the fact that there are problematic, marginal cases, where it is difficult to make decisions about the status of the –*ed* form, the application of the following syntactic tests about adjectival function may provide, nevertheless, clear evidence for an analysis of these forms as adjectives and not participles:

1.1.1. Premodification

Premodification of the –*ed* forms by intensifiers, comparatives and superlatives is an explicit indication that the forms are adjectives. Witness:

(1a) *The children were / got rather punished by the teacher

(2a) The children were / got rather confused

The applicability of this criterion depends on whether the –*ed* forms are gradable or not: an –*ed* form may disallow premodification by an intensifier not only because it may have participial status, but also because it may be a non-gradable adjective. In order to ascertain whether the –*ed* form is gradable or not, we must examine the characteristics of the verb it is derived from: if the verb allows intensification (intensifying adverbs such as *much* or *well*, which can themselves be premodified by, for instance, *very*) and its –*ed* form disallows an intensifier (e.g. *very*), the form in question is a participle. For example, in the passive sentence (3b) "loved" disallows the adjectival type of premodification "very":

(3a) They love you very much

(3b) *You are very loved

(3c) You are loved very much

As we can see from sentence (3a), the verb can be intensified by "very much" and so does the –*ed* form in (3c). This indicates that the form in question is a participle rather than an adjective.

1.1.2. No correspondence with a verb.

Some *–ed* forms have no corresponding verb:

(4a) All my teachers are talented (*to talent)
(4b) Her liver is diseased (*to disease)

These forms are mainly derived from nouns, and they are obviously not participles. Other adjectival *–ed* forms, such as *unexpected*, are derived from verbs. However, the process (*expect* > *expect-ed* > *un-expected*) involves not only so-called inflectional morphology, as it is the case with verbal *–ed* forms, but also a process of derivational morphology resulting in a semantic and syntactic change, as can be proved by the fact that *unexpected*, unlike *expected*, allows adjectival premodification by *very*. The nonexistence of the verb **to unexpect* and the addition of the adjectival prefix *un–* are further evidence of the adjectival status of this type of forms.

1.1.3. Predicative position after verbs other than be.

The essential test of adjectival function is the possibility of occurrence with copulative verbs other than *be*, such as *seem*, *become* or *look*. Hence, whenever *be* (or *get*) can be replaced by other lexical copular verbs, the *–ed* form that follows is functioning as an adjectival predicative complement:

(1b) * The children became / seemed / looked punished by the teacher
(2b)   The children became /seemed / looked confused

1.2. *Possibility of Correspondence with an Active Sentence*

The term 'passive' has always been defined in opposition to 'active'. For example, Huddleston (1984, 17 and 437) considers that the relation between them is a transformation by means of which the unmarked active construction becomes the marked passive term of the system of voice.[1] The purpose of such a transformation would be that of conveying a different thematic meaning, for the system of voice is one of the members of the

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[1] The transformation by means of which Huddleston associates active and passive bears no relation to that posited by transformationalists. It is a descriptive structural concept of transformation, which involves the addition of the passive auxiliary, the omission of the understood elements and the rearrangement and reassignment of grammatical functions.

thematic systems of the clause. In this section we shall refer to the correspondence, at surface level, between active and passive, independently of any theoretical analysis that might provide an explanation for the nature of such relation. This concept of correspondence, illustrated in:

(5a) The children were punished by the teacher
(5b) The teacher punished the children

makes it possible to relate a passive sentence to an active analogue.

Passives with agents, like the one in (5a) above, can be straightforwardly related to an active counterpart. Agentless passives, on the contrary, cannot be similarly derived from any active clause, because the agent, and therefore the subject of the active, which in English is obligatory, is unknown:

(6a) The children were punished
(6b) *punished the children

However, the fact that the subject of the active cannot be syntactically recovered does not necessarily indicate that such a passive may not have an active correspondence, because the active subject can be pragmatically recovered, and, therefore, an active correspondence can be reconstructed (some verbs which can only appear in the passive and, consequently, do not have an active counterpart constitute an exception to the general active-passive correspondence, e.g. *be born, be drowned*).

Such active-passive correspondence is one of the basic characteristics of passive sentences as opposed to copular constructions, which cannot be related to an active counterpart because they are themselves active. In this respect some copular constructions with an *–ed* form functioning as subject complement are problematic, in the sense that, though they are adjectives, they apparently have active analogues. The following examples may serve to clarify this point:

(7a) The children were confused (by his actions)
(7b) His actions confused the children

The application of the tests of adjectival function in 1.1 proved that "confused" in (7a) is an adjective; however, it seems to have an active equivalent in (7b). But such equivalence does not really exist. Obviously, all deverbal *–ed* adjectives have a corresponding non *–ed* verb form from which

they are derived, but this morphological correspondence should not lead us to consider (7b) as a whole as equivalent to (7a). Sentence (7a), because it is a copular construction, merely attributes a certain property to the children, as can be proved by the fact that its verb can be paradigmatically replaced by another copular verb —as in sentence (2b)— with no semantic shift. Sentence (7b), on the contrary, indicates that a certain event took place, namely the disordering of the children's minds. With true passives, there is no such shift of meaning when passivization applies:

(8a) The children were punished by the teacher
(8b) The teacher punished the children

The only semantic difference between (8a) and (8b) is that of a shift in prominence or thematic meaning. Indeed, this is the main function of passives: "languages also possess several types of syntactic devices to express variations in the packaging of information. The most widely known of these are passives. . ." (Foley and van Valin 1985, 299).

Therefore, we must conclude that copular constructions with an adjectival -ed form do not have an active counterpart, because they are active themselves, and because what seems to be their active analogue is just a different construction from the point of view of semantics and syntax. It might be argued that there is a contradiction in this reasoning, because it posits that a sentence like "His actions confused the children", which has a transitive verb, could not be passivized. But the point is that passivization of such sentences yields constructions in which the -ed form has become a predicative adjective expressing the state in which the subject finds itself, and these constructions are, in our consideration, to be kept apart from real passives.

Authors have coined different terms for this type of constructions where the -ed form is an adjective but is apparently related to an active analogue. Quirk et al., for instance, define them as a ". . . 'mixed' or semi-passive class whose members have both verbal and adjectival properties" (1985, 168); Palmer (1987, 87) terms them 'semi-passives' too, and characterizes them as having " -en forms that appear to have corresponding actives, yet exhibit adjectival features". For Huddleston these are 'adjectival passives', because "The relationship with an active construction is less direct than with verbal passives, and cannot be plausibly mediated by any syntactic transformation" (1984, 443). Though Huddleston recognizes the marginality of these constructions, he nevertheless classifies them as passives. Contrary to his

opinion, I shall include them within copular constructions, for I think they are best analysed as containing a copular verb and a predicative complement.

2. The Passive Construction in the History of English

2.1. *Passive Constructions in Old English*

In OE, two different ways of expressing the passive were available: the synthetic passive and the analytical passive. The first was greatly restricted, as OE possessed only one verb with a synthetic passive, as a trace of the IE middle voice. It is the verb *hatan* 'to call, command', whose form *hatte* 'is/was called' was used with both present and past time reference, and normally without an agent phrase. Otherwise, the most common way of expressing the passive in OE was by means of an analytical periphrastic construction, which is the ancestor of the PE passive. It consisted of the appropiate tense of the auxiliaries *beon/wesan* or *weorþan* and the second participle of the main verb. Many scholars, such as Jespersen (1909-49, 2: 99), Mustanoja (1960, 438), Kisbye (1972, 133) and Traugott (1972, 82-3), postulate the existence of a semantic contrast between the auxiliaries *beon/ wesan* and *weorþan*, whereby *beon/wesan* + past participle denoted state and *weorþan* + past participle indicated action. However, the analysis of individual examples has led Mitchell (1985, 1: §§789-801) to believe that both *beon/wesan* and *weorþan* could express an action as well as a state.

As is the case with some PE *-ed* forms (discussed in the introduction to this paper), the second participle in the periphrases with *wesan/weorþan* had characteristics of both (i) predicative adjectives, in that it frequently appeared declined, and (ii) verbal participles, in that it could be accompanied by an expression of agency or instrumentality and also in that it was always derived from verbs. Whenever it was declined, it was declined strong, but very often (especially when the subject with which it agreed was masculine, feminine or neuter singular and neuter plural) it is impossible to determine whether the participle is inflected or not, due to the zero-morpheme characteristic of these inflections.

In addition, as is well known, OE could achieve thematic effects similar to those we now associate with the passive by using a construction with the indefinite pronoun *man*. However, since we here take the view that passive involves explicit morphological marking on the verb group, the

constructions with *man, men(n)*, and *we*, and related structures fall outside the scope of our study.

The range of prepositions which could express agency in OE was very wide, and their meaning very often overlapped with that of instrumentality. The OE agentive prepositions most frequently used were: *fram/from*, the most frequent and unambiguous of all, originally denoted the idea of 'motion from', but in passive contexts such an idea yielded to that of causality, so that it came to express the cause or agent of the action; *mid*, when followed by a NP referring to persons, is often regarded as expressing agency; *of* shares with *fram* the idea of origin or separation, which very easily gave way to causality and agency; *þurh* expressed, when followed by a NP denoting persons, the intermediate agent responsible for the action, rather than the immediate cause of it.

Other prepositions, namely *æt, be, for*, and *wiþ*, have also been regarded as expressing agency in certain OE passive examples (Mitchell 1985, 1, §§808-32). Such multifunctionality in the use of prepositions has led Mitchell to conclude that:

> the great overlap in the use of those prepositions in apparently similar functions in the same texts suggests that the Anglo-Saxons made distinctions at whose significance we can only guess, . . . my own investigations described above have led me to doubt whether any of the OE prepositions through, fram and of, ever expressed personal agency in the sense in which we understand it. (1985, 1: 348)

OE distinguished only two broad types of passive construction, namely the 'personal passive' and the 'impersonal passive'. The norm for OE is that only accusative NPs could be promoted to subject position through passivization. The resulting construction is the so-called 'personal passive', illustrated in (9):

(9) Solil 2.14:
    þa bec *sint gehatene* Soliloquorum.
    'Those books are called Soliloquorum.' (Mitchell 1985, 1: §749).

The terms 'subjectless passive' (Bennet 1980, 102) and 'impersonal passive' (Mitchell 1985, 1: §749) are both used to cover all other passive types, in which the verb is morphologically passive, but lacks a surface nominative subject, as in (10):

(10) Ælfred: Bede (Miller) 266, 34:
    Swa him to cweden wæs.
    'So (it) was said to him.' (Visser 1963-73, 3: §1933)

This second type was available with verbs which took complements in dative and genitive, and could not, therefore, become the subject of passives. Instead, an impersonal passive was used, wherein the active subject came to be governed by a preposition expressing agency and the verb had the regular passive morphology, but the dative or genitive complement remained in the same case.

As regards OE verbs governing only a PP, the lack of an intimate connection in OE between the verb and the preposition it governed is generally considered as the main reason for the non-occurrence of the prepositional passive in OE.

OE tenses distinguished only two forms: present vs. preterite, which were used to express all kinds of temporal reference. In the case of passives, Traugott describes the form of expression of perfective and progressive time reference as follows: "Passives with perfective meaning were simply expressed by the passive auxiliary with past tense; those with progressive meaning were expressed by the passive auxiliary with the non-past tense" (Traugott 1972, 84). Therefore, the maximal sequence of auxiliaries in a passive sentence in OE was: *(Modal) Passive + V* (Traugott 1972, 201).

2.2. *Passive Constructions in Middle English*

The OE synthetic passive form *hatte* still lingers on in ME. Only the form *hight* survives, but even this form is rare by the end of the period. The periphrastic passive in ME is still made up of two different auxiliaries. The **wes–* and **bheu–* roots represented by OE *wesan/beon* continue to exist under the form *be*, and the OE passive auxiliary *weorþan* survives as the auxiliary *wurthe*. Throughout the period, *be* is by far the commoner of the two. In fact, *wurthe* becomes obsolete after the eleventh century; by the end of the fourteenth century it dies out in all functions, even though its cognate *werden* has become essential in the grammar of German.

For many scholars (see 2.1), the disappearance of *wurthe* meant the loss of a means of distinguishing between 'actional' and 'statal' passive (i.e., between true passives and copular constructions with an *–ed* form), which has led to the PE ambiguity of sentences such as "the glass was

broken", where the passive form can refer either to the action of having broken the glass or to the state of the glass as broken. Other scholars, such as Mitchell, are of the opinion that there was not such semantic distinction between *beon/wesan* and *weorþan*. He interprets the loss of *wurthe* as the preference that ME writers showed for the passive auxiliary that was bound to survive until PE (1985, 1: 326-33).

Due to the loss of inflectional endings in ME, the second participle in the passive periphrasis ceases to show any kind of agreement in this period, and so loses its former predicative, adjectival character, and eventually comes to be regarded, together with the passive auxiliary, as a true verb unit.

Some of the OE agentive prepositions soon became obsolete in the ME period, namely *for*, which becomes rare in ME and finally disappears by the fourteenth century; *mid*, which is found only in EME and even then only occasionally, and *þurh*, a preposition which also loses ground as agent in the ME period. On the contrary, the preposition *wiþ*, which occurred seldom with the agent in OE, begins to be used in the thirteenth century and its use spreads throughout the period. There is still in ME a great diversification of functions for the most favoured Ps. This is the case of *by* and *of*, the Ps most commonly employed with the agent in ME. The real ancestor of the PE agentive preposition, *by*, became more and more widespread to mark the agent unambiguously from the fourteenth century onwards.

During the ME period new passive types begin to occur, because the OE constraint whereby only active accusative objects could become subjects of the passive no longer held in ME. Most important among them are the so-called 'indirect passive' (IPass) and prepositional passive (PrPass), whose emergence is made possible by the two different processes outlined below.

2.2.1. The indirect passive

OE verbs taking a dative complement, such as *help* or *thank*, begin to occur in personal passives in ME. This process is brought about by the progressive decay of the OE inflectional system, which blurred the formal distinction between accusative and dative and made them appear as merged in one oblique case. In this way, the old dative became reinterpreted as the DO of a transitive verb and could therefore be promoted to subject position when passive applied. As one would expect, the loss of dative case-marking affected IOs as well, so that both the personal object (IO) and the DO could

become subject of the passive in ME. Thus, from the fourteenth century onwards, the IPass begins to be recorded.

Another plausible explanation for the emergence of these two types of passive has been adduced. As was mentioned before, intransitive verbs taking a dative complement already had a passive in OE, in which the dative complement retained its dative case and normally occupied preverbal position. It has been argued that, once this complement had lost its case-marking, given its preverbal position, it came to be reanalysed as the passive subject, so that it was attributed the status of a new active DO. Concerning the IPass, it was frequent in OE for indirect objects to be topicalized to the front of the sentence, a position which led to their reanalysis as passive subjects.

2.2.2. The prepositional passive

This type begins to appear about the thirteenth century, and its use becomes finally established by the end of the fourteenth century. The theory most generally agreed on concerning its emergence is that of a structural reanalysis whereby the preposition enters into constituency with the verb rather than with the following NP. Van der Gaaf (1930, 1-21), Mustanoja (1960, 441), Bennet (1980, 106-7), and Denison (1985, 189-200), among others, analyse the factors that made the V+P combination in ME be felt as intimately connected, and the syntactic evidence that indicates that reanalysis of these collocations has taken place.

Among the factors that contributed to the reinterpretation of the structural status of the preposition, the following can be mentioned:

1. Obsolescence of the OE prefixal system, which served the purpose of making an intransitive verb-stem into a transitive compound verb. When Germanic prefixes were no longer a productive system, the V+P collocation came to fulfill their function, as a manifestation of the general tendency in ME to substitute analytical constructions for synthetic forms. These newly developed constructions soon occurred with a very specialized lexical sense, so we must suppose that they became deeply entrenched in the language. Consequently, the prepositions in these new V+P combinations were probably viewed as still forming a compound verb rather than as forming a constituent with the following NP.

2. There is an increased use of prepositions due to case syncretism. Consequently, the co-ocurrence of V+P increases, sometimes forming a lexical unit, as detailed in 1.

3. Preposition stranding, whereby the P came to be attached to the verb, was very common in OE and ME, especially in relative and infinitive clauses. It brought about a positional association between the V and the P and, consequently, a dissociation of the preposition and the object NP.

4. It has also been claimed that the fixing of S-V-O order assisted in the establishment of the V-P order in preposition stranding, with the consequent consolidation of prepositional verbs in general.

As regards the syntactic evidence that indicates that reanalysis of these collocations has taken place, we can mention the following:

1. Verb-preposition collocations form a semantic unit and can often be paradigmatically replaced by a one-word transitive verb. Another feature that seems to prove this point is that the meaning of the V + P combination is different from the sum of the meaning of its parts.

2. Another proof is the occurrence of V+P collocations coordinated with transitive verbs and sharing the same object.

Such reanalysis indicates that the NP following the preposition is now considered a verbal complement in its own right, which may, therefore, be turned into the subject of a passive sentence.

The complex prepositional passive, the pattern illustrated in (11),

(11) C1380 Wyclif, Wks. (ed. Matthew) 369:
þes oþer wordis of is bischop ougte to *be taken hede to.*
(Visser 1963-73, 3: §1986)

enters the language some 150 years after the simple PrPass. As for the phrasal-prepositional passive, Visser's first instance —sentence (12) below— dates back to 1502.

(12) Townley, in Plumpton Correspondence (Camden) 164:
There was a servant of yours, and a kynsman of myne *was* myschevously *made away with* (OED).
(Visser 1963-73, 3: §1958)

The close intertwining that existed between morphology and syntax over the ME period determined the development of a much fuller range of

active periphrastic forms, so that they became almost symmetrical with the simple forms. From the end of the fourteenth century we find extensions of the perfective periphrastic forms into passive constructions. Van der Meer's description of the passive tenses in *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, illustrate their use in the literature of the period:

> The tenses of a passive verb differ from those of an active one in that the present of a verb with a perfective meaning is often used to denote the bearing of a past action on the present, while a preterite is frequently found where in the active voice a pluperfect would be preferred. A present perfect of a passive verb is sometimes used, however, especially when qualified by an adjunct denoting frequent repetition or when the perfect is continuative. A pluperfect is very rare. (1929, 53)

In the light of this statement, we can conclude that the ME passive tenses, present and preterite were still conferred a larger set of functions than they have in PE. Although the current forms already existed in that period, writers only used them marginally and without a clear notion of their exact syntactic and semantic function. The maximal sequence of auxiliaries in a passive sentence in ME was, as Traugott puts it: *(Modal) (have + PP) Passive + V* (1972, 201).

3. Passive Constructions in early Modern English. Data from the *Helsinki Corpus*.

The EModE section of the *Helsinki Corpus* is divided into three subperiods, as illustrated in Table 1, which lists the total number of words investigated in each subperiod, together with the number of passive constructions found in them. The percentages refer to the relative frequency of passive constructions with respect to active ones.

Table 1	WORDS	ACTIVES	PASSIVES	% (PASS.)
1: *1500-1570*	42404	2046	496	19,5
2: *1570-1640*	41468	2349	658	21,8
3: *1640-1710*	46660	2386	754	24,01
TOTAL	130532	6781	1908	21,9

For obvious reasons, the count of active sentences has been restricted to those for which a passive counterpart would be possible (i.e. intransitive active clauses, for instance, have been excluded from the count). As can be seen in Table 1, there is an increasing frequency in the use of passives in the EModE period. Various reasons have been adduced to explain such spread in the use of the passive over this period: the influence of classical languages, because translators were often concerned to render not only the sense but also the grammatical constructions of their models, and the greater rigidity or word-order in ModE, which created the necessity for alternative means of topicalization, one of them being the passive transformation. Though this is something we cannot yet ascertain at this stage, it is possible that such an increase in frequency may also signal a parallel tendency in the language to thematize clause constituents other than the subject.

Since, as is well known, the passive, like any other thematic device, is closely interrelated with style, a number of variables have been taken into account when selecting the corpus, namely, the type and register of writing, in order to obtain data representative of formal and informal settings, of written and orally-based texts, and of sociolinguistic variables: different sexes, ages and social ranks. For reasons of space, I shall not specify the results obtained with regard to all such variables. Table 2 provides the breakdown of the type of texts that have been studied and the number of passive constructions found in them. As Table 2 shows, statutes, which are formal and bear no relationship to the spoken language, and for which an educated author must be assumed, contain more than 50% of the passives. It is something of a paradox, then, that, next to statutes, it is private letters which contain most of the passive constructions, despite the fact that this genre stands in the opposite pole as regards text-type and sociolinguistic characteristics. Undoubtedly, this is an aspect that deserves further investigation and will be tackled in future research.

Table	STATUTES		PRIVATE LETTERS		SERMONS		FICTION		DRAMA / COMEDY	
2	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1: *1500-1570*	241	12,6	92	4,8	62	3,2	43	2,2	58	3
2: *1570-1640*	379	19,8	136	7,1	44	2,3	62	3,2	37	1,9
3: *1640-1710*	412	21,5	160	8,3	87	4,5	50	2,6	45	2,3
TOTAL:	1032	54	388	20,3	193	10,1	155	8,1	140	7,3

Table 2 also shows that, even though there is an increasing frequency in the use of passives in EModE in general (as Table 1 illustrates), this is not true for each text-type independently. We can see that in both statutes and private letters there is a steady increase in the use of the passive, but this is not the case for other text-types, such as sermons, drama/comedy and fiction. Obviously, it is possible that the analysis of larger samples, as the ones that will be used in future research, might still modify our data and show a more regular picture for the distribution of the passive in all types of text.

In EModE the synthetic form *hight* is only used as a conscious archaism. The periphrastic passive continues to be formed solely with the auxiliary *be*, though Trnka (1930, 62) classifies as passive auxiliaries in this period also the verbs *wax*, *stand* and *become*, which are used, he says, only occasionally. *Wax* and *become* are considered here as resulting copular verbs taking an *–ed* form as subject complement (Quirk et al. 1985, 1172), and not as true auxiliary verbs. However, I have found one instance of *stand* as a passive auxiliary. Witness:

(13) (1570-1640):
      Provided alsoe That noe Person shall bee discharged out of Prison or
      have any Benefitt or Advantage by force or virtue of this Act who shall
      bee really and (\bona fide\) indebted in more than the Su^m of One
      Hundred Pound^ Principal Money for Debt or Damages or shall *stand
      charged* with any Debt to His Majestie.
      (IQE3_STA_LAW_ STAT7: sample 1, p. 4)

A significant development is the emergence, in the sixteenth century, of the intransitive use of *get*, for this would lead, in time, to the formation of the *get*-passive. The origin of this structure is found in the seventeenth century pattern *got acquainted*, in which the predicative adjective could be interpreted as a participle. But it is not until late ModE —end of the eighteenth century— that we find unmistakable *get*-passives. Our data prove it, as no instance of a *get*-passive has been found. In fact, all the instances of copular constructions with *acquainted* as predicative adjective have *be* or *become* as their copular verb. A couple of examples follow here:

(14) (1570-1640):
      Thus they *became acquainted* even with the secret and hidden counsels
      of God.
      (IQE2_IR_SERM_HOOKER: sample 1, p. 4)

(15) (1640-1710):

    (^Jone.^) Why I think that Mr. Cornue had best to marry us, for I *am* well *acquainted* with him.

    (IQE3_NI_FICT_PENNY: sample 3, p. 129)

In EModE *of* and *by* were still the most frequently used prepositions to mark the agent in passive constructions. But at the beginning of the seventeenth century *of* became limited to uses equivalent to the Latin genitive and to certain idiomatic expressions, following the general tendency in the language to restrict and specify the range of meanings which had been so far attributed to prepositions. Jespersen (1909-49, 3: 317) argues that PE verb groups such as *be beloved of* and *be born of* clearly illustrate that the ME and early ModE meaning of the preposition *of* has been retained until PE, though its occurrence is now restricted to literary and archaic use.

The same restrictions affected *with*, which is used with increasing frequency to mark means or instrument and not agency. Partridge (1969, 107) provides several examples of *with* representing the agent in early ModE literary works. It is highly remarkable that most of them show a semantic blend of agent with instrument. The following example corresponds to Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing* (1600):

(16) *Much Ado* II.I.64:

    would it not grieve a woman to be overmastered *with* a peece of valiant dust. (Partridge 1969, 107)

This sentence could have two active counterparts: one of them would have the complement of *with* as subject ('A peece of valiant dust overmasters a woman') and so *with* in (16) would be interpreted as an agent marker. The other plausible active counterpart of (16) would have an indefinite subject of the type "they" or "someone" ('Someone overmasters a woman with a peece of valiant dust'), *with* thus retaining its instrumental meaning, to which it was evolving.

On the contrary, from the seventeenth century onwards the use of *by* was considerably extended to indicate the agent, and finally it came to be regarded as the only preposition available to govern the agent NP.

As can be seen in Table 3, the agentless passive is the unmarked term with respect to agent passives (i.e., passives with an explicit agent) in EModE. As was mentioned before, the use of *with* and *of* as agentive prepositions is greatly restricted, for only 9 and 5 instances have been found respectively.

For example:

(17) (1500-1570):

> I trust there is no true crysten man but that he *wyll be moued with the testimonye of all these.*
> (IQE1_IR_SERM_FISHER: sample 1, p. 8)

(18) (1570-1640):

> For this cause the spirit of the Lord is in the hand of Iude, the servant of Iesus and brother of Iames, to exhort them that *are called, and sanctified of God the father.*
> (IQE2_IR_SERM_HOOKER: sample 1, p. 1)

As was the case with Partridge's example, all instances of *with* as agent marker show a semantic blend of agency and instrumentality, with the possibility of two active counterparts.

Table 3	AGENTLESS		AGENT	
	No.	%	No.	%
1: *1500-1570*	410	82,6	86	17,3
2: *1570-1640*	556	84,4	102	15,5
3: *1640-1710*	629	83,4	125	16,5

The frequency of the agentless passive seems to be genre-determined, as Table 4 shows. Here we find that the agentless passive is most frequent in private letters, drama/comedy and fiction, maybe because the writer and reader in the first case, and the speakers intervening in the comedies and fiction, know each other and their extralinguistic context better than in formal texts, namely statutes and sermons, where the agent passive is most common. The lack of connection between the writer of these formal text-types and the reader makes it necessary for the writer to specify the agent of the action denoted by the verb. At any rate, determining why the agent passive is chosen in each case instead of the active construction, which does always specify the agent, must at present remain a topic for further research. Undoubtedly, the principles of end-focus and end-weight, together with the degree of definiteness of the agent vs. subject, the organization of new and given material, and other related factors are directly responsible for the choice between active and agent passive. Sentences (19) and (20) are examples of agentless and agent (*by*-phrase) passives respectively:

(19) (1570-1640):

I thinke it's not to *be slighted* considering his present meanes are [{so{] competent by his prefession and [{his{] likelyhood to rise so greate, considring how he is befreinded.
(IQE2_XX_CORP_TBARRING: sample 5, p. 396)

(20) *(1640-1710):*

Be it further *enacted by the Authority aforesaid* That if any Popish Bishop Priest or Jesuit whatsoever shall say Masse or . . .
(IQE3_STA_LAW_STAT7: sample 5, p. 25)

Table	STATUTES		PRIVATE LETTERS		SERMONS		FICTION		DRAMA / COMEDY	
4	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
AGENT	227	21,9	27	6,9	42	21,7	11	7	6	4,2
AGENTLESS	805	78	361	93	151	78,2	144	92	134	95,7

With regard to passive types, in ModE there is a growing acceptance of transformations with the IO of the corresponding active taking on the subject role, so that in the course of the sixteenth century the IPass is used side by side with the passive in which the DO becomes the subject. The progressive acceptance of this transformation is one aspect of a wider tendency in Modern English to prefer human, and among them first person, subjects if possible. It is for this reason, Strang argues, that in PE, unlike early ModE, the IPass is imposed on most ditransitive sentences. She illustrates this point as follows: "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" (1970, 151).

Söderlind (1951-58, 24) makes the same claim in the light of the evidence from John Dryden's prose, where, he concludes, the passive of ditransitive active verbs with the DO as passive subject is more common than in PE. He adduces several examples, such as this one:

(21) XIII Sat 15: Now if it may be permitted me to go back again to the consideration of epic poetry. . . . (1951-58, 23)

where the verb 'permit' is used with the DO as subject more readily than in PE. The data found in the EModE section of the *Helsinki Corpus* coincide

with these statements. As can be seen in Table 5, among the passives of active ditransitive verbs, the type with the DO promoted to subject position is more frequent, with 76,9% of the total, i.e., only 23% of passives from ditransitive actives have the active IO as subject. Sentences (22) and (23) illustrate both types:

(22) (1570-1640):

> I have nowe sent you downe a cocke, ij payre of gloves, ij dosen of poyntes, ij small books for a token, *the one of them was gyven me* that day that they rann at tilt.
> (IQE2_XX_CORP_GAWDY: sample 7, p. 405)

(23) (1640-1710):

> I presume *you were shewed y=e= fine things y=r= father brought me*:
> (IQE3_XX_CORP_EHATTON: sample 4, p. 389)

Table 5	Other Passives	PrPass	Dit.Active:	IPass-IO	DO
1: *1500-1570*	454 - 91,5%	2 - 0,4%	40 - 8 %	2 - 5 %	38 - 9,5%
2: *1570-1640*	599 - 91 %	20 - 3,0%	39 - 5,9%	9 - 23 %	30 - 76,9%
3: *1640-1710*	698 - 92,5%	14 - 1,8%	42 - 5,5%	18 - 42,8%	24 - 57 %
TOTAL	1751 - 91,7%	36 - 1,8%	121 - 6,3%	29 - 23,9%	92 - 76 %

As for the PrPass, the reasons for its rapid spread can be outlined as follows. The original ME alternation between prefixal Vs and V+P combinations was regularized in favour of postposition in EModE. Parallel to this development there is a clarification of the distinction between the structures V+Adv, that is, a phrasal verb in which the adverb is in constituency with the verb, and the structure V+P, in which the preposition does not form a constituent with the verb, but with the following NP. The increasing clarity with which these structures and their uses developed helped postposition of the preposition to become very frequent in the language, not only with the passive, but also with fronted or topicalized objects and with relative clauses, among other structures. Indeed, pre-position of Ps came to be regarded as archaic or poetic from the late sixteenth century.

There are 36 instances of PrPass in our corpus, but, as was the case with the IPass, the percentages can be related to the text-type rather than to

date, as no clear differences can be seen on the diachronic dimension (see Tables 5 and 6). Statutes and sermons contain the greatest percentage of PrPass and IPass, while the variety in drama/comedy is minimal. These data concide with those found by Söderlind in John Dryden's prose, where, he says, "The passive of verb + prepositional object . . . is very frequently met with" while the passive of ditransitive active verbs with the IO as subject is not so common, for "the impersonal passive [i.e., the passive with the active DO as passive subject] seems to be more in favour than nowadays" (Söderlind 1951-58, 24). The following sentence shows the use of the PrPass in the corpus:

(24) (1640-1710):
        So *are* the proprieties of a Wife *to be dispos'd of* by her Lord;
        (IQE3_IR_SERM_JETAYLOR: sample 1, p. 140)

Table 6	STATUTES	PRIVATE LETTERS	SERMONS	FICTION	DRAMA/COMEDY
Other Pass	980 -94,9%	325 -83,7%	161 - 83,4%	145 -93,5%	137 -97,8%
PrPass	5 - 0,4%	18 - 4,6%	12 - 6,2%	0	1 - 0,7%
Dit. Active	47 - 4,5%	45 -11 %	20 - 10 %	10 - 6,4%	2 - 1,4%
IPass - IO	15 -31 %	7 -15,5%	4 - 20 %	2 -20 %	1 -50 %
DO	32 -68 %	38 -84 %	16 - 80 %	8 -80 %	1 -50 %

The Old French (OF) contribution to the ME language can be seen not only in the vocabulary ME adopted from OF, but also in a group of OF highly idiomatic phrases which were reproduced by ME equivalents, such as 'take notice (of)' or 'give offence (to)'. Though the pattern already existed in OE (for instance OE *niman geme*, 'take heed'), the corresponding OF use seems to have encouraged the increasing frequency of such idioms after the Norman Conquest. There is a strong connection between the verb and the object in these structures, and so, they are currently regarded as being constituted by a highly lexicalised unit followed by a prepositional adjunct. In early ModE the passive of these structures was apparently just beginning to appear, as has been demonstrated by Söderlind (1951-58, 27-8), who only records three instances in John Dryden's prose, while our section of the *Helsinki Corpus* has yielded no instances. However, they expanded all throughout the period.

In EModE the range of verb forms had not been fully expanded as regards tense and aspect, and the functional distinctions found in PE had not been established either. For this reason, in the sixteenth century and even later the present tense still occurs in contexts where PE would demand the presence of a present perfect or pluperfect respectively. Indeed, as can be seen in Table 7, 48,9% of the passives occur in the present tense, while only 2,6% and 0,4% of the total are present or past perfect tenses respectively.

Table 7	1: *1500-1570*		2: *1570-1640*		3: *1640-1710*		TOTAL	
PRESENT	189	38 %	322	50,2%	436	58 %	947	48,9%
PAST	99	19,9%	77	12 %	73	9,7%	249	12,8%
PRESENT PERF.	8	1,6%	26	4 %	17	2,2%	51	2,6%
PAST PERF.	4	0,8%	2	0,3%	3	0,4%	9	0,4%
PR. SUBJUNC.	101	20,3%	70	10,6%	141	18,7%	312	16,3%
NON-FINITE	95	19,1%	161	25,1%	84	11%	340	17,5%

As an illustration of the unstable functional potential perfective periphrases had in ME and ModE, Traugott, among others, quotes examples from that period where the simple past tense is used in sentences containing a clause or phrase governed by *since*, sentence (25). Sentence (26) is an example from our corpus where a simple present is used with a perfective sense:

(25) Walpole I.131.12 (1761):
       their very language *is polished since* I lived among them
       (Traugott 1972, 179)

(26) (1640-1710):
       All that I bought at the faire I lost, which was an elle of hollond cost four shillinges and much mischife *is done* to my house by the high wind one St Paule.
       (IQE3_XX_CORP_EOXIDEN: sample 3, p. 84)

However, throughout the ModE period we find developments which tend to make the system of verb contrasts more regular, the most remarkable being the growing use of the already existing periphrastic forms, as in, for instance, sentences (27) and (28):

(27) (1570-1640):

Some letters *hathe bene intercepted* of late.
(IQE2_XX_CORP_GAWDY: sample 7, p. 139)

(28) (1500-1570):

Father, if all the worlde *had be geuen* to me, as I be saued it hadde ben a small pleasure, in comparison of the pleasure I conceyved of the treasure of your letter . . .
(IQE1_XX_CORP_MROPER: sample 3, p. 120)

The continuous or durative periphrasis begins to appear in the passive voice at the end of the ModE period. It was not until the end of the eighteenth century that this form came to the open. No instance of passive sentences in the progressive form has been found in the corpus. However, the occurrence of 'covert passives' (Strang 1982, 445) such as the following is worthy of mention:

(29) (1570-1640):

For newes the Kings Chappell at Whithall *is* curiously painted and all the images newe made and a silver crusifix *amaking* to hange therin, . . .
(IQE2_XX_CORP_KNYVETT: sample 1, p. 71)

where, instead of the continuous passive form 'a silver crusifix is being made', the equivalent active form occurs "a silver crusifix [*is*] *amaking*". This example is illustrative of the deficiency that existed in the tenses of the passive voice.

As we would expect, non-finite passive structures of the type 'having been made' or the passive perfective + continuous type 'had been being made' are not found in the corpus, for they are nineteenth century developments, and represent the generalization of the whole auxiliary system to the passive. Some of these highly complex forms are still today making their way in the English language, as can be inferred from, for instance, Palmer's description of their use: "perfect and progressive forms in the passive are rare and improbable" (1987, 77). "There is a place for them semantically, but they often seem to be avoided, presumably because of their complexity" (1987, 34).

To conclude, this paper has analysed passive constructions in early ModE. The study has been supported by statistical data from the early ModE section of the *Helsinki Corpus*. A variety of text-types was carefully selected from the corpus in order to obtain data which could reliably offer

an objective view of the use of the passive in the period in question. The data have shown that passive constructions are used more and more frequently in early ModE and also that the profound formal changes passives undergo in ME as regards passive types, the agent phrase and passive tenses, are steadily being consolidated in the period under study.

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