THE PARTICIPLE IN TWO CORPORA OF OLD ENGLISH. DESCRIPTIVE AND EMPIRICAL QUESTIONS

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Abstract: This article deals with the present and past participle of Old English. Its research method is based on the idea that the specific characteristics of a given corpus make it more suitable for certain types of analysis. In the analysis, the York Corpus of Old English is used for assessing the inflection of the participle with respect to tense, case and genre, while the Dictionary of Old English Corpus is searched for the present and past participles of strong verbs in all the inflections. The main conclusion on the descriptive side is that only 42.52 percent of the participles in the corpus are inflected, the ratio of inflection being lower in the past participle than in the present participle. On the empirical side, the main conclusion is that, of the variants considered, tense, morphological class and genre prove more useful than case and adjectival inflection, which are essentially contextual.

Keywords: corpus analysis, Old English, inflection, participle.

1. INTRODUCTION

This article deals with the morphology of the Old English participle and, to be more precise, with the coexistence of verbal and adjectival inflection in this part of the verbal morphological paradigm.[1] As an illustration of the question that is raised in this research, compare a form like *geboren* 'born', which presents the inflectional ending corresponding to the past participle; with a form like *geborenum* 'to the born', which shows, together with the inflection for the past participle, the same inflectional ending as adjectives case-marked as dative plural. The adjectival part of the inflection of participles was lost as was the rest of the adjectival inflections, as the review of the literature made in the next section shows.

Leaving aside this well-known aspect, what remains to be assessed is the degree of variation in the inflection of the participle so as to determine whether or not the change starts in the Old English period and, if this is the case, to quantify its impact. To answer such questions, the current practice in Historical Linguistics, also adopted in this article, is to carry out a corpus-based study. With corpus analysis, it will be possible to consider variants of the inflection of the participle like genre (prose and verse), tense (present and past), morphological class (weak *vs.* strong) and case (nominative, accusative, genitive, dative and instrumental). To deal with all these aspects, it turns out that two corpora of Old English are required, the *York Corpus of Old English*, both the prose and the poetry parts (hereafter YCOE) and the *Dictionary of Old English Corpus* (henceforth DOEC). The use of two corpora may allow us to draw conclusions regarding their compatibility as well as the suitability of each corpus to the study of the questions at stake.

This article is organised as follows. Section 2 reviews the relevant aspects of previous research and sets the background of the inflectional variation of the participle by discussing the types and contexts found in the corpus. Section 3 describes the method of analysis and makes special emphasis on the use of two different corpora and the research variants analysed with each one. Section 4 presents the results of analysis by corpus, present and past participle, case, morphological class and genre. To conclude, section 5 summarises the main conclusions of the work.

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2. THE OLD ENGLISH PARTICIPLES. STABILITY AND CHANGE

As Lass (1992: 144) remarks, Present-Day English verbs have four non-finite forms, of which the present participle and the gerund *are formally identical but functionally distinct*: the infinitive (*write*), past participle (*written*), present participle (*writing*) and gerund (*writing*).[2] The corresponding forms in Old English are the uninflected infinitive (*wrītan*), past participle (*gewritten*), present participle (*wrītende*) and verbal noun (*wrīting*). To these, the inflected infinitive (*to wrītanne*) must be added, in such a way that in Old English the infinitive and the participle can be inflected or not. Throughout linguistic evolution, the adjectival part of the inflection of the participle disappeared as a consequence of the generalised loss of inflectional endings, whereas the verbal part was kept. Put in other words, nominal inflections were drastically simplified whereas the inflectional morphology of verbs remained more distinctive and the inflectional morphology of adjectives was even more simplified than that of nouns, which has kept explicit inflections for the genitive and the plural. Against this background, the disappearance of the adjectival inflection of the participle and the pervivence of its verbal inflection were to a certain extent predictable. Moreover, the adjectival inflection was attached after the verbal inflection, which made the adjectival ending more prone to simplification.

Some authors attribute the increase of the uses of participles during the Old English period to Latin influence (Callaway, 1901; Wedel, 1978; Mitchell, 1985; Ogura, 2009). Callaway (1901) focuses on the appositive participle, which he defines as "the participle that is equivalent to an adjectival clause as well as that which is equal to an adverbial clause. The uses of the appositive participle correspond closely to those of the subordinate adverbial clause" (1901:149). A similar line is taken by Mitchell (1985), who deals with the functions of the participle and draws a distinction between its adjectival and verbal uses, which he attributes to syntactic behaviour. Closs Traugott (1992) points out that the development of the auxiliaries may be related to the disappearance of the inflected participles, as the participles were reanalysed from adjectives into verbs. According to Closs Traugott:

> The inflected participial construction with BE was probably truly adjectival in PrOE. By Old English, however, it appears to have been reanalyzed as a verbal complex (as happened to *habban* during the Old English period), or at least to have been partially reanalyzed. The evidence for reanalysis is that the participle is typically uninflected […]. On the other hand, the –e plural inflection occurs quite frequently, suggesting that the construction was not fully verbal either. (1992:192-193)

Visser (1966) is concerned with the different uses and functions of the participle throughout time (Old English, Middle English and Modern English). According to this author, "in Old English the past participle appears with flexional endings; these gradually disappear in Middle English, so that subsequently the zero form is the normal one" (Visser, 1966:1280). Closs Traugott (1992:190) concurs in this respect and remarks that "the number of inflected constructions became less frequent during the Old English period". Lass (1992) takes issue with the evolution of the morphology of the participle and its relation with its contemporary form, thus focusing on the changes which took place in the Middle English period. Fischer (1992) analyses the development of the periphrastic constructions and remarks that by the Late Old English and Early Middle English period, the inflectional endings of some forms, including the present participle, began to be confused, which also led to syntactic confusion. In this respect, Ogura (2009) deals with the endings *-ende* and *-enne* of the present participle and the inflected infinitive respectively. She holds that, due to their phonemic resemblance, these endings became interchangeable as variant forms in late Old English (11th century). Wojtyś (2009) dates the loss of the past participle suffixes *-n* and *-d* in the 13th century and remarks that "the suffixal marking in Old English needs to be regarded as regular" (2009:48).

Overall, the non-finite verbal forms of Old English have been studied in connection with Present-Day English and the *-ing* forms. Its study has mainly been geared to syntax and related to the development of the periphrastic tenses and the passive construction. Most works are concerned with the individual uses of the participle throughout time, as well as with the different uses and functions conveyed by the participle and whether they are properly Germanic or derived from Latin influence. There is agreement on the loss of the inflection and the approximate dating of the change, while there is coincidence in some of the explanations for the change. Ultimately, the verb undergoes the same loss of inflectional endings as the adjective. The works reviewed in this section also point to a decrease in the inflection of the participle in Old English, although this aspect is not quantified, neither is it related to tense (present *vs.* past participle) and case (nominative, accusative, genitive and dative).

The relevance of this work lies in the fact that, as Mitchell (1985: 409) puts it, "there is no work which gives a complete treatment of the Old English participles". Such a study in the participle of Old English should start from a qualitative analysis of the morphological variation of the participles and then be based on the quantitative evidence available from a corpus, together with its interpretation. The remainder of this section deals with this question from the qualitative point of view, whereas sections 3 and 4 represent the quantitative part of this research, for which the YCOE and the DOEC have been used.

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[2] The following abbreviations are used in the article: nom. (nominative), acc. (accusative), gen. (genitive), dat. (dative), instr. (instrumental); sg. (singular), pl. (plural); wk. (weak declension), str. (strong declension); pres. part (present participle), past part. (past participle).

It is generally accepted in Historical Linguistics (thus, for instance, Milroy, 1992:1; Pintzuk, 2003:509) that variation on the synchronic axis indicates linguistic change in progress on the diachronic axis. On the basis of this principle, the scope of this article is restricted to the Old English period. A full account of the loss of the adjectival inflection of the English participle would require the inclusion of data from Middle English, the period in which the simplification of inflections takes place. In Lass´s (1992:145) words, "the Middle English developments include loss of the infinitive ending, so that the infinitive comes to be the same as the bare stem; merger of the original *–ende* present participle with the *–ing* noun; and loss of *ge-* prefix. All of these are virtually complete by about 1500 […] as in most major changes there was a long period of complex variation". Given this evolution, focusing on the Old English period offers a new perspective on the question of the development of the participle because this historical stage of the English language is often characterised as displaying full inflection. In this respect, the degree of variation shown in Old English by the adjectival inflection of the present and the past participle is not matched by the declension of the adjective, which remains stable throughout the period. Therefore, while it is worth while looking at the variation of the participle in Old English, the outcome of the evolution as attested by Present-Day English demonstrates that variation has resulted in a morphological change that can be described as the partial *deflexion* (Norde, 2001; Allen, 2003) of the participle involving the loss of adjectival morphology.

According to Paolillo (2002:23), linguistic variation deals with forms displaying "variant realizations that are more-or-less equivalent in different contexts, in such a way that the distribution of the variants is not categorically predicted by any known linguistic factors". By drawing on this concept of variation, this section shows variant realizations in several areas of the morphology and the syntax of the present and past participles as attested by Old English. In general, the variation between the uninflected and the inflected participle can be illustrated with instances like those in (1)[3].

1. (from Wedel 1978: 395-396)

     a. Uninflected present participle
         Apol. (2, 8)
         Þa gyrnde hyre maenig maere man micele maerða beodende.
         Then, many a famous man desired her, offering many wonderful things.

     b. Inflected present participle
         Apol. (10, 16)
         Swa hwilc man swa me Apollonium lifigendne to gebringð...
         Whoever brings Apollonius to me alive...

     c. Uninflected past participle
         Apol. (8, 4-5)
         ...se waes Thaliarcus gehaten.
         ...who was called Thaliarcus.

     d. Inflected past participle
         Apol. (18,6)
         Gemiltsa me, þu ealda man, sy þaet þu sy; gemildsa me nacodum, forlidenum, naes na of earmlicum birdum geborenum.
         Have pity on me, old man, whoever you may be; have pity on me, naked, shipwrecked, and not born from poor origins.

As can be seen in (1), the participle receives both verbal and adjectival inflection in instances like *lifigendne* 'living' and *geborenum* 'born', so that the participle agrees in case, number and gender with the noun in apposition (*Apollonium lifigendne* 'Apollonius alive') or with the antecedent (*man micele maerða beodende* 'men who offered many wonderful things'). On the other hand, the participle presents verbal inflection only in instances like *beodende* 'offering' and *gehaten* 'was called'.

Variation also arises with the same verb, as can be seen in example (2), which displays the inflected past participle of *bindan* 'bind' *gebundenne* in (2a) and the uninflected form *gebunden* in (2b).

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[3] The references of the examples that follow correspond to the *Dictionary of Old English Corpus* (Mitchell *et al.,* 1975, 1979) unless the textual material has been drawn from secondary sources, whose reference system has been kept. Examples have been translated with the help of the Clark-Hall, Sweet and Bosworth-Toller dictionaries, as well as the *Dictionary of Old English A-H.*

2. (from Closs Traugott, 1992:190)

    a. [Or 6 031100 (37.156.6)]

       ... þa þa ge hiene gebundenne hæfdon.

       ... when you had bound him.

    b. [ÆCHom I, 31 003600 (441.63)]

       Ic hæbbe gebunden þone feond þe hi drehte.

       I have bound the enemy who afflicted them.

Variation also takes place in the same text, as example (3) illustrates. In this example, the inflected past participle of *āflieman* 'to flee' appears in (3a) and the corresponding uninflected form in (3b).

3.

    a. [Or 1 029600 (10.29.14)]

       On þære ilcan tide wurdon twegen æþelingas afliemde of Sciþþian, Plenius & Scolopetius wæron hatene.

       At that same time two noblemen were banished from Scythia, who were called Plenius and Scolopetius.

    b. [OrHead 001000 (1.10)]

       & hu ii æþelingas wurdon afliemed of Sciþþium.

       And how two noblemen were banished from Scythia.

Variation also arises when the same function is involved, including the predicative construction in (4a) and (4b) as well as the passive construction shown in (4c) and (4d).

4.

    a. [Beo 051300 (1817)]

       Beowulf maþelode, bearn Ecgþeowes: Nu we sæliðend secgan wyllað, feorran cumene, þæt we fundiaþ Higelac secan.

       Beowulf, the son of Ecgthow, spoke: 'Now we seafarers, come from far away, will say that we are eager to seek Higelac'.

    b. [ApT 024100 (48.12)]

       Ic fram cildhade wæs Apollonius genemnod, on Tirum geboren.

       I was called Apollonius from my childhood, born in Tirum.

    c. [Æ LS (Edmund) 004800 (181)]

       Eac swilce þa wunda þe þa wælhreowan hæþenan mid gelomum scotungum on his lice macodon, wæron gehælede þurh þone heofonlican God.

       And the wounds that the cruel heathens made in his body with repeated shots had been healed by the heavenly God.

    d. [Æ LS (Edmund) 003900 (145)]

       Wæs eac micel wundor þæt an wulf wearð asend, þurh Godes wissunge to bewerigenne þæt heafod wið þa oþre deor, ofer dæg and niht.

       It was also a great miracle that a wolf was sent by God's guidance to protect that head against the other animals by day and night.

Variation between the adjectively uninflected and inflected participle turns up even in the same sentence, as is the case with example (5), containing *gesewen* (uninflected past participle) as well as *cumende* (inflected present participle).

5.

[ÆCHom I, 38 020000 (518.334)]
Æfter þysum wordum wearð gesewen leoht micel of heofenum færlice cumende to þam apostole.
After these words a great light was seen coming from far away in heaven onto the apostle.

Originally, *beon/wesan* 'to be' and *habban* 'to have' in combination with the past participle of the lexical verb had a stative meaning (Rydén and Brorström 1987: 16), although *beon/wesan* in more consistent than *habban* in taking an inflected participle (Mitchell, 1985 vol. I:283). Nevertheless, the participle with adjectival inflection also follows *habban* 'to have', as can be seen in (6).

6.

[ChronA (Bately) 043500 (893.27)]
Ac hie hæfdon þa heora stemn gesetenne & hiora mete genotudne.
But they had already done their duty and used up their food.

The evidence gathered in this section indicates that the inflection of the participle is unpredictable and that the phenomenon seems to be generalised. It seems necessary, therefore, to consider the morphological differences as to the inflection of the participle a case of variation and to assess their impact. As has been said above, variation in synchrony corresponds to change in the diachrony, given the ultimate disappearance of the adjectival part of the inflection of the English participles.

3. METHOD

The research method of this article is based on the idea that the specific characteristics of a given corpus make it more suitable to certain types of analysis than to others. More specifically, two widely different corpora have been selected for this study. From the quantitative point of view, the DOEC comprises around three million words and about three thousand texts and, containing nearly all existing records, it represents the most authoritative corpus in the field of Anglo-Saxon studies. On its part, the YCOE consists of around 1.5 million words distributed in about one hundred texts, if both prose and poetry are taken into account. On the qualitative side, the DOEC is annotated at text level only whereas the YCOE contains morphological tagging and syntactic parsing. For the aims of this work, the YCOE can be searched by morphological tag whereas the DOEC cannot. Queries on the DOEC have to be conducted by indirect means. Another advantage of the YCOE is that the poetry and the prose are in fact searched in two different corpora, in such a way that obtaining partial results is a more straightforward process. However, the DOEC can turn out more reliable quantitative results, given that it has approximately twice as many words than the YCOE.

Considering these characteristics of the YCOE and the DOEC, the variants that have been studied with each corpus are the following. The YCOE has been used for assessing the inflection of the participle with respect to tense (present participle *vs.* past participle), case (nom., acc., gen., dat., inst.) and genre (prose *vs.* poetry). The results of this analysis have been checked with the DOEC in order to determine whether the variant of morphological class (strong verb *vs.* weak verb) is relevant; and, in general, to compare the results of the analysis based on the YCOE.

The prose and poetry files in the YCOE have been searched by the morphological tags corresponding to the present and the past participle, both uninflected and inflected. The tags considered in the searches for the present participle are VAG (uninflected pres. part.), VAG^N (inflected pres. part., nom.), VAG^A (inflected pres. part., acc.), VAG^G (inflected pres. part., gen.), VAG^D (inflected pres. part., dat.), VAG^I (inflected pres. part., instr.). The past participle has been searched with the tags VBN (uninflected past part.), VBN^N (inflected past part., nom.), VBN^A (inflected past part., acc.), VBN^G (inflected past part., gen.), VBN^D (inflected past part., dat.), VBN^I (inflected past part., instr.)

The DOEC has been searched for the present and past participles of strong verbs, in all the inflections. This corpus is not tagged and, consequently, inflectional endings have to be found indirectly. To decide whether or not the variant of morphological class is relevant for the inflection of the participle, the searches have been conducted on the strong verbs. The strong classes constitute a representative subset of the verbal category (about one fourth of verbs) consisting of approximately one thousand five hundred verbs that can be broken down by class as follows: strong I (263), strong II (226), strong III (338), strong IV (93), strong V (150), strong VI (156), and strong

VII (272). Strong verbs have been selected because their inflectional paradigm is more transparent than that of weak verbs, which make use of the same dental suffix for the preterite and the past participle and, above all, do not exhibit ablaut. The ablaut patterns in the seven classes of Old English strong verbs are presented in Figure 1.

	INFINITIVE	FIRST PRETERITE	SECOND PRETERITE	PAST PARTICIPLE
I	*scīnan*	*scān*	*scinon*	*(ge)scinen* 'to shine'
II	*crēopan*	*crēap*	*crupon*	*(ge)cropen* 'to creep'
III	*feohtan*	*feaht*	*fuhton*	*(ge)fohten* 'to fight'
IV	*beran*	*bær*	*bǣron*	*(ge)boren* 'to bear'
V	*giefan*	*geaf*	*geafon*	*(ge)giefen* 'to give'
VI	*standan*	*stōd*	*stōdon*	*(ge)standen* 'to stand'
VII	*slǣpan*	*slēp*	*slēpon*	*(ge)slǣpen* 'to sleep'

Figure 1. The *Ablaut* patterns of the seven classes of strong verbs.

First of all, the list of strong verb lemmas has been retrieved from the lexical database of Old English *Nerthus* (Martín Arista *et al.,* 2016; consulted in May 2017)[4]. Secondly, the DOEC has been searched for all the inflections of the present and past participles of strong verbs. The analysis has been restricted to the canonical inflectional endings of the present and past participle as well as the weak and the strong declension of the adjective, as described in Campbell (1987) and Hogg and Fulk (2011). The following verbal endings have been considered: *-end* (pres. part), *-en* (past part.). Regarding the adjectival part of the inflection of the participle, the following adjectival case endings have been taken into account: *-a* (nom. sg. wk.), *-ne* (acc. sg. str.), *-u* (nom. sg. str.), *-es* (gen. sg. str.), *-ra* (gen. pl. wk.; gen. pl. str.; comp.), *-um* (dat. pl. wk.; dat. sg. pl. str.), *-an* (acc., gen., dat., instr. sg. wk.; nom., acc., pl. wk.), *-re* (gen., dat. sg. str.), *-e* (nom., acc., sg. wk.; nom. sg. str.; nom., acc. pl. str.). As for the adjectival gradation of the participle, these endings have been included in the analysis: *-ra, -er, -r, ra-a/-an/-ra/-um/-e, er-a/-an/-ra/-um/-e, r-a/-an/-ra/-um/-e* (comparative); *-ost, -est, -ost-a/-an/-ra/-um/-e, -est-a/-an/-ra/-um/-e* (superlative). For instance, the set of types corresponding to the verb *cuman* 'to come' includes the inflectional forms *cumen, cumena, cumenan, cumendan, cumende, cumendne, cumendra, cumendre, cumendum, cumene, cumenne, cumenum*. The other forms in the paradigm are not attested in the corpus, at least in the canonical forms corresponding to the endings listed above. With these endings, it turns out that certain inflections are distinctive, thus *-end-a, -end-an, -en-a, -en-an* (weak declension) and *-end-ne, -end-es, -end-u, -end-re, -en-ne, -en-es, -en-u, -en-re* (strong declension); whereas others are ambiguous between the strong and the weak declension (*-end-ra, -end-um, -end-e, -en-ra, -en-um, -en-e*). The results from the analysis of the YCOE corpus compensate for this shortcoming of the indirect approach adopted to search morphologically an untagged corpus like the DOEC. However, it has been possible to distinguish number (singular *vs*. plural) with this set of endings, whereas the YCOE does not make this distinction.

Once the data have been gathered in the two corpora, the final step of the analysis consists of a quantification of the inflection of present and past participles and the comparison of the results obtained from the two corpora, which are given in the next section.

4 THE PARTICIPLE IN THE YCOE AND THE DOEC

This section presents and discusses the results of the general search launched on the YCOE and the specific query for strong verbs that has been conducted on the DOEC. It must be borne in mind that, in this section, the term uninflected is used to refer to the participle that does not show adjectival inflection, but presents verbal inflection. Conversely, the inflected participle displays both verbal and adjectival inflection.

A total of 35241 instances of the participle have been found in the YCOE, 6811 corresponding to the present participle and another 28430 to the past participle. By genre, 33655 appear in prose texts and 1586 in poetry texts. Out of the total 35241 instances, 20256 are uninflected participles, the rest (14985) are inflected for the five morphological cases. This means that, overall, only 42.52% of the participles in the corpus are inflected.

A total of 6811 forms have been found in the corpus that correspond to the present participle. Of these, 6612 appear in prose texts while 199 have been extracted from poetry texts. In prose texts, a total of 2241 present participles are not inflected, as opposed to 4371 inflected present participles. That is to say, 66.1 of the present

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participles in prose texts are inflected, with the corresponding 33.9% of uninflected forms. The distribution by case shows a preference for the nominative, with the dative and the accusative also presenting a considerable number of occurrences. Turning to poetry, out of 199 instances, 105 are inflected (57.2%) and 94 uninflected (47.3%). The nominative and the accusative stand out with respect to the other cases in poetry texts. The instrumental is negligible in prose and does not have any occurrences in poetry. These results have been tabulated in Table 1.

Table 1. The present participle in the YCOE.

	Prose	Poetry	Total
Uninflected total	2241	94	2335
Nom.	2631	61	2422
Acc.	542	13	555
Gen.	312	17	329
Dat.	885	14	899
Instr.	1	0	1
Inflected total	4371	105	4476
Grand total	6612	199	6811

Regarding the past participle, a total of 28430 occurrences have been found in the corpus. Out of these, 27043 have been identified in prose texts, poetry texts presenting the much lower figure of 1387. In prose texts, the number of uninflected past participles is 17062, a much higher figure than that of the inflected past participles, 9981. The uninflected past participle represents 63% whereas the inflected past participle reaches 37% only. In poetry, the figures are comparable. 859 past participles do not receive adjectival inflection (62%) while 528 do (38%). By case, the nominative stands out in prose and poetry, with the accusative and the dative also scoring high in the prose and the nominative outnumbering all the other cases in the poetry. These results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The past participle in the YCOE.

	Prose	Poetry	Total
Uninflected total	17062	859	17921
Nom.	6852	423	7275
Acc.	1617	82	1699
Gen.	335	13	348
Dat.	1171	10	1781
Instr.	6	0	6
Inflected total	9981	528	10509
Grand total	27043	1387	28430

In the DOEC, a total of 4783 participles of strong verbs have been found, of which 2208 are inflectional forms of the present participle and the others (2575) are past participles. Beginning with the present participle, 1496 out of 2208 are inflected, that is to say, 67.75%. This figure can be broken down as shown in Table 3 (positive grade) and Table 4 (comparative and superlative grade). In the weak declension, the ending *end-an* clearly stands out because it corresponds to most cases in the inflectional paradigm. In the strong declension, the endings for the accusative, genitive and dative (*-ne*, *-es* and *-re*, respectively) outnumber the nominative-accusative neuter ending *-u*. The ending *-e*, ambiguous between the nominative, the accusative and the instrumental, is the most frequent. In the comparative, the inflected for both grade and case ending is far more frequent that the participle inflected for just grade (71 *vs.* 118 instances). The figure of participles in the superlative grade is so low that it can be ignored.

Table 3. The inflection of the present participle in the DOEC. Positive grade.

Weak declension	Number of instances
-end-a	29
-end-an	108
Total	137

Strong declension	
-end-ne	34
-end-es	54
-end-u	9
-end-re	46
Total	143

Ambiguous strong / weak	Number of instances
-end-ra	71
-end-um	172
-end-e	712
Total	955

Table 4. The inflection of the present participle in the DOEC. Comparative and superlative grade.

Comparative	Number of instances
-end-ra	71
-end-er	0
-end-r	0
-end-ra-a/an/ra/um/e	0
-end-er-a/an/ra/um/e	0
-end-r-a/an/ra/um/e	118 (-a: 71; -an: 1; -e: 46)
Total	118

Superlative	Number of instances
-end-ost	0
-end-est	1
-end-ost-a/an/ra/um/e	0
-end-est-a/an/ra/um/e	0
Total	1

If we consider the past participle, 1238 out of 2575 are inflected. This corresponds to 48.1% of the past participles found in the corpus, with the 51.9% being uninflected. In the weak declension, there is no significant difference between the ending *-a* and *-an* (73 *vs.* 88 instances respectively). In the strong declension, the accusative ending outnumbers the occurrences of the other cases (nearly three quarters of the inflected weak past participles are in the accusative case). This is shown in Table 5. As is the case with the present participle, the ambiguous *-e* ending of the present participle is the most frequent among the inflected participles, although the *-um* ending, ambiguous between the dative singular and plural, is also worth considering, given its 123 occurrences. As tabulated in Table 6, the comparative endings *en-r-a/an/ra/um/e* are the most frequent with the inflected past participle.

Table 5. The inflection of the past participle in the DOEC. Positive grade.

Weak declension	Number of instances
-en-a	73
-en-an	88
Total	161

Strong declension	
-en-ne	294
-en-es	36
-en-u	17
-en-re	53
Total	400

Ambiguous strong / weak	
-en-ra	32
-en-um	123
-en-e	400
Total	555

Table 6. The inflection of the past participle in the DOEC. Comparative and superlative grade.

Comparatives	Number of instances
-en-ra	32
-en -er	0
-en -r	0
-en-ra-a/an/ra/um/e	0
-en-er-a/an/ra/um/e	0
-en-r-a/an/ra/um/e	89 (-a: 32; -e: 53; -an: 4)
Total	121

Superlatives	Number of instances
-en-ost	0
-en-est	0
-en-ost-a/an/ra/um/e	0
-en-est-a/an/ra/um/e	1 (-e)
Total	1

Overall, the present participle accounts for 34.75% of the uninflected forms (712 out of 1337), while the past participle accounts for 65.25% (1337 out of 2049). Considering the inflected forms, the present participle shows 1496 (out of a total of 2208), that is to say, 54.71% of all the instances, whereas the past participle evinces a total of 1238 instances, 45.28%. By tense, the inflected instances reach 67.75% of present participles (1496 out of 2208), and 48.11% of past participles (1238 out of 2575). This summary is offered in Table 7.

Table 7. The participle in the DOEC. Summary by tense.

	Present Participle	Past participle	Total
Uninflected	712	1337	2,049
Inflected	1496	1238	2,734
Total	2208	2575	4,783

By case, ambiguous endings are, as a general rule, far more frequent, thus the endings -*e* (nom., acc., sg. wk.; nom. sg. str.; nom., acc. pl. str.), -*um* (dat. pl. wk.; dat. sg. pl. str.) and -*an* (acc., gen., dat., instr. sg. wk.; nom., acc., pl. wk.). Nevertheless, the accusative ending -*n*e also stands out as very frequent.

Table 8. The participle in the DOEC. Summary by case.

Inflectional endings	Present participle	Past participle	Total
-*a* (nom. sg. wk.)	29	73	102
-*ne* (acc. sg. str.)	34	294	328
-*u* (nom. sg. str.)	9	17	26
-*es* (gen. sg. str.)	54	36	90
-*ra* (gen. pl. wk.; gen. pl. str.; comp.)	71	32	103
-*um* (dat. pl. wk.; dat. sg. pl. str.)	172	123	295
-*an* (acc., gen., dat., instr. sg. wk.; nom., acc., pl. wk.)	108	88	196
-*re* (gen., dat. sg. str.)	46	53	99
-*e* (nom., acc., sg. wk.; nom. sg. str.; nom., acc. pl. str.)	712	400	1112
Total	1496	1238	2734

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This article has dealt with the inflection of the participle as reflected in the data gathered in two corpora of Old English, the YCOE and the DOE. The article has raised two questions, to wit, to assess the degree of variation of the participle in Old English, with a view to deciding whether or not the loss of the adjectival part of the inflection starts in this historical stage of the English language; and, if such a change can be said to be taking place, to measure its impact on the basis of the variants of tense, case, morphological class and genre.

On the descriptive side, it can be said that the degree of variation presented by the participle in Old English indicates that diachronic change is clearly underway. Considering the results of the searches in the YCOE, 42.52% only of the participles in the corpus are inflected. In other words, more than half of the participles do not show the adjectival part of the inflection although they keep the verbal part. The presence of the adjectival inflection is weaker in the past participle than in the present participle. This result is confirmed by the two corpora. If we look at the prose, the number of uninflected forms of the past participle is almost that same as that of the inflected forms whereas the situation in the present participle is a reversal: the number of inflected forms is nearly twice as many as that of uninflected forms. The results in poetry are slightly different. The past participle behaves exactly as in prose, but the present participle evinces practically the same figure for inflected and uninflected forms. That is to say, the present participle in the poetry texts shows approximately the same figure of uninflected and inflected forms, in contradistinction to the prose texts, in which the number of inflected forms duplicates the one of uninflected forms. In sum, the inflection is to be expected for the present participle in prose texts. The past participle and the poetry clearly reflect loss of inflection. The analysis carried out with the DOEC confirms that no significant differences arise if the variant of morphological class is considered. Indeed, the quantification of the participles of strong verbs indicates that approximately the same degree of variation is found in this morphological class as in the whole corpus.

On the empirical side, the YCOE can be considered a subset of the DOE and, consequently, it is not surprising that the overall results coincide. However, the fact that two corpora which differ as to tagging and annotation have been used has allowed us to check the results and to raise additional research questions. Of the variants that have been considered, tense, morphological class and genre have proved more fruitful than case and adjectival inflection, which are essentially contextual and their figures must be taken with caution.

To conclude, the task which remains for future research is to deal with the question of variation from the textual point of view, so as to determine whether variation in the inflection of the participles in Old English can, at least partially, be attributed to different texts or authors.

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