ALTERNATIONS, RELATEDNESS AND MOTIVATION: OLD ENGLISH *A-*[1]

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1. Introduction

Recent approaches to Old English (henceforth OE) lexicography that share a functional persuasion include the Functional Lexematic Old English Dictionary (FLOED, Cortés Rodríguez and Mairal Usón 2002), the Germanic Lexicon Project (GERMALEX, Díaz Vera 2002) and NERTHUS, the online lexical database of Old English that is being developed at the University of La Rioja (see Appendix 1). The theoretical and methodological underpinnings of FLOED, GERMALEX and NERTHUS can be traced back to the structural-functional tradition represented by Simon Dik and Leocadio Martín Mingorance, although both FLOED and NERTUS are increasingly shifting their sight to the theory of Role and Refernce Grammar (Van Valin and LaPolla 1997, Van Valin 2005), whose stronghold is the syntax-semantics interface and, ultimately, the functional motivation of linguistic structures. These three lexicographical projects are strongly committed to the descriptive adequacy of the model and favour "rich lexical entries with great predictive power as far as the syntactic and morphological behaviour is concerned" (Cortés Rodríguez and Mairal Usón 2002: 37). NERTHUS, being more focused on derivation and its semantic and syntactic motivation, is still laying its methodological and descriptive foundations, to which this paper contributes.[2] More specifically, I will bear on the notions of alternation, relatedness and motivation by examining verbal derivation in OE by means on *a-*. This paper is organized as follows: section 2 gives a blueprint for OE lexical derivation in NERTHUS; section 3 establishes the requisites for the existence of alternations and draws a distinction between lexical and morphological relatedness; section 4 seeks the motivation of OE *a-*; and section 5 summarises the main findings of this research. This paper would fulfil all its aims if its conclusions were also applicable to some extent to the methodological and descriptive apparatus of FLOED and GERMALEX.

2. Identifying items and processes

NERTHUS consists of three blocks of information. The first block is devoted to lexical derivation, including compounding and derivation (prefixation, infixation and suffixation). The second block contains morphosyntactic information, including inflectional morphology and syntagmatic features and the third block provides semantic information, including meaning definitions and semantic relations. The general organization is categorial and the Parallel Architecture of the Lexicon (Mairal Usón and Cortés Rodríguez 2002) has been adopted. The dictionary of reference at this stage is Clark Hall (1996). For the purposes of this paper, I will centre the discussion on some of the information available from the block of lexical derivation of NERTHUS, namely derivative chains. Derivative chains account for morphological processes of compounding and derivation and relate input basic or derived predicates to output derived predicates. For example, from the basic predicate *hreow* the compounds *hreowcearig* 'troubled' and *wælhreow* 'cruel' are formed. *Wælhreow* 'cruel' yields the derivative *wælhreowlic* 'cruel', which, in turn, gives *wælhreowlice* 'cruelly'. *Wælhreowlic* 'cruel', in the chain in (1.c) produces *wæl-hreowness* 'cruelty'. The chain in

[2] See Caballero González et al. (forthcoming).

(1.a) is therefore compositive (non-recursive) whereas the chains in (1.b) and (1.c) are both compositive and derivative (recursive in the sense that a derived predicate is inputed to another morphological process, even though the first process is compounding and the second derivation). There is recategorization Noun-Adjective in (1.a) and Noun-Adjective-Adverb in (1.b), whereas the category Noun remains invariable in (1.c).

(1)
a. *hreow* 'sorrow': *hreow-cearig* 'troubled'
b. *hreow* 'sorrow': *wæl-hreow* 'cruel': *wæl-hreowlic* 'cruel': *wælhreowlice* 'cruelly'
c. *hreow* 'sorrow': *wæl-hreow* 'cruel': *wæl-hreowness* 'cruelty'

The chains in (2.a), (2.b) and (2.c) are both derivative and non-recursive, turning out, respectively *hreowig* 'sad', *hreowness* 'penitence' and *hreowsung* 'sorrow'. There is recategorization Noun-Adjective in (2.a), whereas the category Noun remains invariable in (2.b) and (2.c).

(2)
a. *hreow* 'sorrow': *hreowig* 'sad'
b. *hreow* 'sorrow': *hreowness* 'penitence'
c. *hreow* 'sorrow': *hreowsung* 'sorrow'

The chains in (3) are both derivative and recursive, giving, respectively, *ofhreowan* 'cause or feel pity', *behreowsung* 'repentance', *hreowlice* 'cruelly' and *unbehreowsigende* 'unrepenting'. (3.a) does not change category. (3.b) involves recategorization Noun-Verb-Noun, while (3.c) displays recategorization Noun-Adjective-Adverb. (3.d) may show recategorization Verb-Adjective if the present participle were regarded as belonging to the latter category. Whatever the category involved in (3.d), we do come across another instance of an inflective form entering a derivation pattern, namely *behreowsigende* 'repenting' turning out *unbehreowsigende* 'unrepenting':

(3)
a. *hreow* 'sorrow': *hreowan* 'make sorry': *ofhreowan* 'cause or feel pity'[3]
b. *hreow* 'sorrow': *hreowsian* 'be sorry': *behreowsian* 'repent': behreowsung 'repentance'
c. *hreow* 'sorrow': *hreowlice* 'miserable': *hreowlice* 'cruelly'
d. *hreow* 'sorrow': *hreowsian* 'be sorry': *behreowsian* 'repent': *behreowsigende* 'repenting': *unbehreowsigende* 'unrepenting'

Derivative chains, as illustrated by the previous examples, cannot be formulated intuitively. On the contrary, clearcut criteria are needed that exclude items or processes which cannot be held on empirical grounds; or items or processes that do not satisfy the descriptive requirements of simplicity, exhaustivity and coherence. From the very begining of the project, it has been necessary to answer these questions: (i) What is an alternation?; (ii) How many types of alternations are there?; (iii) What is relatedness?; (iv) How many types of relatedness are there); and (v) Where is the motivation of affixal predicates to be sought? The remainder of this paper engages in these questions.

3. Alternations and relatedness

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[3] But see Hallander (1966: 375).

Alternations, which have received close attention in recent times, especially within the framework of lexical semantics after Pinker (1989) and Levin (1993), do not constitute a new topic of linguistic research. On the contrary, it has long been accepted that morphemes like *thief* display an alternation of two alternants, one ending in a voiceless labio-dental fricative and another ending in the voiced counterpart, due to the voiced context resulting from the addition of the inflectional morpheme of the plural in *thieves*. As Bloomfield (1984: 164) would put it, the "morpheme (...) has two (or more) different phonetic forms, such as (...) each of these alternants appears under certain conditions". Bloomfield (1984: 211) also remarks that regular alternations play a great part in the morphology of most languages. A reapprisal of this clasical doctrine of alternations (Palgrem 1904, Bammesberger 1965, Kastovsky 1968), however, cannot leave aside the fact that some alternations do not have any impact on meaning, whereas others are meaningful. Consider the OE prefix *be-*, which shows at least three alternants (Clark Hall 1996: 48): *be-/bi:-/big-*. Example (4.a) illustrates the phonological side of the alternation, while (4.b) shows its morphological side, with impact on meaning: [4]

(4)
a.   *be-ganga /bi-ganga/bi:-genga* 'inhabitant' (Kastovsky 1968: 493)
b.   *be-fe:ran* 'surround' ~ *bi-fe:ran* 'feed'

The OE alternation *æd-/ed* does not imply meaning difference whatsoever, but qualifies as phonological, given that it involves different vowel qualities in instances like those rendered in (5):

(5)
a.   *æd-lean/ed-lean* 'reward'
b.   *æd-sceaft/ed-sceaft* 'regeneration'
c.   *æd-wit/ed-wit* 'reproach'

Neither is there meaning difference in the alternation *twi-/tui-*, which qualifies as merely orthographic:

(6)
a.   *twifeald/tuifeald* 'two-fold'
b.   *twifealdnesse/tuiefealdnesse* 'duplicity'
c.   *twispræce/tuispræce* 'deceitful'

The functional tradition of linguistics, as represented by Dik (1997a, b) and Van Valin and LaPolla (1997, 2005), has held that differences in linguistic form are due to (*motivated by*) differences in function is a broad sense, including meaning. In examples (4)-(6) certain recurrent formal patterns, such as OE *twi-/tui-,* do not bring about meaning differences, whereas others like *be/bi:/big* have impact on meaning. So far I have dealt with the meaning motivation of formal differences. The other perspective from which this question can be considered is to ascertain whether or not meaning differences are formally motivated. In this spirit, the next step in this discussion is to draw a distinction between alternation and relatedness. The question of lexical vs. morphological relatedness is is intimately associated with the paradigmatic relations of

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[4] OE data have been extracted from the dictionaries by Bosworth and Toller (1973), Clark Hall (1996), Pollington (1993), Roberts, Kay and Grundy (1995), from *The Helsinki Corpus of English Texts* (Rissanen et al. 1984-1990) and from the Dictionary of Old English Corpus (di Paolo Healey 2004).

hyponymy, near-synonymy (following Goldberg´s (1995) principle of non-synonymy), antonymy and meronymy.[5] These relations are illustrated below, with special reference to whether the alternations imply morphological relatedness or just lexical relatedness. As I have just remarked, for the existence of an alternation the two lexemes should exhibit morphological relatedness.[6] Example (7) shows three instances of hyponymy. Hyponymy is morphologically related in (7.a) and (7.b) and lexically related in (7.c):

(7)
a. *si∂* 'journey', *widsi∂* 'long journey', *carsi∂* 'painful journey', *earfo∂si∂* 'sad journey', *unsi∂* 'rash journey', *wilsi∂* 'pleasant journey'
b. *wita* 'wise man', *woruldwita* 'learned layman', *runwita* 'man acquainted with mysteries', *larwita* 'scholar'
c. *asyndrian* 'separate objects already connected', *asiftan* 'sieve', *temes* 'a sieve', *hærsyfe* 'hair sieve', *tæmespiele* 'sieve-support'

Asuming that compounding is a morphological process, which entails a theoretical debate that falls out of the scope of this piece of research, a compound like *carsi∂* 'painful journey' constitutes a hyponym of *si∂* 'journey', an alternation holding between both because there is (i) meaning difference and (ii) morphological relatedness between both lexemes. Example (8) illustrates near-synonymy. Near-synonymy is morphologically related in (8.a) and (8.b) and lexically related in (8.c) and (8.d):

(8)
a. *sælan*, *asælan* 'bind'
b. *spillan*, *aspillan* 'destroy'
c. *cwic, gemyndig, gleaw, scearp, gripul* 'intelligent'
d. *ahyred, forfaren, gehriered, oferhryred, onfordon, tohrered, tohroren, tostenced, toworpen* 'destroyed'

Antonymy is exemplified by (9). It may be morphologically related, as in (9.a) and (9.b), and lexically related, as in (9.c):

(9)
a. *eorl* 'noble man', *ceorl* 'common man'
b. *so∂fæst* 'righteous', *unso∂fæst* 'unrighteous'
c. *bredgan* 'move quickly', *creopan* 'move slowly'

The relationship of meronymy qualifies as morphologically related in (10.a) and as lexically related in (10.b) and (10.c):

(10)
a. *dæg* 'day': *ærnemergen* 'dawn', *mergen* 'morning', *middæg* 'midday', *æfen* 'evening', *niht* 'night', *middeniht* 'midnight'
b. *arm* 'arm': *hand* 'hand', *wrist* 'wrist', *eln* 'forearm', *elnboga* 'elbow'
c. *scip* 'ship': *mæst* 'mast', *segl* 'sail', *ar* 'oar'

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[5] Polysemy, in spite of being a cross-linguistic phenomena of paramount importance, resists a treatment in terms of alternations. I will only have to say that the motivation of polysemy is more obvious in instances like *re∂e*, than in *frod* 'wise, old, aged' or *draca* 'dragon, serpent, the devil': *re∂e* means 'cruel' when applied to people, 'wild' when applied to animals and 'severe' when applied to things.
[6] On lexical relatedness, see also Williams (1981).

The lesson that can be learned from this revision of the paradigmatic relations of hyponymy, near-synonymy, antonymy and meronymy is that the identification of an alternation requires morphological relatedness, not simply lexical relatedness. This is tantamount to saying that only when formal distinctions are functionally motivated and, conversely, functional differences are matched by a formal correlate, do alternations exist.

4. The motivation of morphological alternations: *a-/ø*

Section 3 has engaged in the requisites that related forms must satisfy for there to exist an alternation: the related forms must be functionally contrastive and hold a morphological (rather than simply lexical) relation. The next question that I raise in this paper is, by carrying on the best tradition of the functional school, whether alternations are motivated. More specifically: are morphological alternations motivated? or, put another way, Can morphological structure be wholly or partly derived from syntax and/or semantics? To begin with, I will take a look at the inter-linguistic dimension in the belief that cross-linguistic data may shed some light on this issue. Davis and Demirdache (2000: 100) remark that free roots in St'át'imcets, a Salish language spoken in southwest interior British Columbia, are invariably intransitive. All transitive verbs are morphologically derived by suffixation of a free or bound transitivizer of the root. This is illustrated by pairs like the following, in which the verbal suffix *-en* in (11.a) and (11.b) codes full control, whereas *-ts* in (11.c) expresses neutral control:[7]

(11)
a.   √ats'x 'be visible' ~ √ats'x-**en** 'see something'
b.   √mays 'be fixed' ~ √mays-**en** 'fix something'
c.   √kwis 'fall' ~ √kwis-**ts** 'drop something'

Travis (2000: 155), in a similar vein, points out that in Tagalog and Nalagas there are morphologically encoded alternations of transitivity like the one exemplified by (12):

(12)   (Maclachlan 1989 in Travis 2000)
a.   t-**um**-umba 'fall down' ~ **m-pag**-√tumba 'knock down'
b.   l-**um**-uwas 'go to the city' ~ **m-pag**-√luwas 'take to the city'
c.   s-**um**-abog 'explode' ~ **m-pag**-√sabog 'scatter'

The examples show that the root √*tumba* may acquire both a meaning of 'fall down' or 'knock down', depending on whether the intransitive infix *-um-* or the transitive prefix *m-pag-* is attached to it. Other languages, like OE, do not show such a transparent form-to-function mapping, but motivation, however partial, must be sought, given that one of the basic philosophical underpinnings of the functional tradition is that differences of form are (at least, partly) due to differences in function (or meaning). This is in line with recent contributions like Baker (2003), Ackema and Neeleman (2004) or Lieber (2004), all of whom try to derive morphological structure from syntax or semantics. Baker´s (2003: 280) remarks on this question, while encouraging the quest for the motivation of morphology, set the limits of this endeavour:

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[7] The notation √ expresses the root morpheme.

Much of surface morphological patterning is derivable from syntactic structure (...) But once the syntactically predictable morphology has been stripped away, there remains a residue of morphology that seems to have nothing to do with syntax. This residue includes a rather wide range of not-very-productive and semantically idiosyncratic derivational morphology, as well as root compounding and those language-particular aspects of inflection that revolve around grammatical gender, concord, and purely formal matters of inflection.

The Aristotelian *via media* approach would hold at this point that to look for partial motivation is a realistic research objective, but a good deal of work is still needed in this area. If one´s aim is to make a contribution in this direction, it is difficult to resist the temptation of considering an affix that shows remarkable transparency, as *un-* in example (13), where the prefix *un-*provides a negative meaning:[8]

(13)
a. *unabeden* 'unbidden'
b. *unaberendlic* 'unbearable'
c. *unabindenlic* 'indissoluble'
d. *unablinnend* 'unceasing'

Instead, I will look at affixes that display semantic opacity in the morphological processes in which they take part, in which it is hard to distinguish the meaning of the affix from the meaning of the derived predicate. Opacity is thus understood as total or partial lack of analysability of derived predicates, whereas it usually entails a high frequency of use. The prefix *ge-* is probably the paramount example of opacity in OE lexical derivation. In some instances it is doubtful whether or not the presence of the prefix is relevant for the meaning of the derived predicate. An illustration of this point follows in (14), including the categories Noun in (14.a), Adjective in (14.b) and Verb in (14.c):[9]

(14)
a. *canc* 'scorn' ~ *ge-canc* 'scorn'
b. *fægen* 'glad' ~ *gefægen* 'glad'
c. *rihtan* 'set stright' ~ *gerihtan* 'set stright'

There are other instances, however, where regularities seem to arise:

(15)
a. *brecgan* 'move to and fro' ~ *gebregdan* 'draw'
b. *habban* 'have' ~ *gehabban* 'hold'
c. *restan* 'rest' ~ *gerestan* 'set'
d. *risan* 'rise' ~ *gerisan* 'seize'

In example (15) the basic predicate can be described as a formative of the causative (simplified) logical structure of the derived predicate, as is **gerisan'** (x) [CAUSE (y)

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risan']. Since much attention has already been paid to *ge-*, I will not have much more to say about it, in order to concentrate on *a-*.[10] Without engaging in the question of productivity, it can be safely stated that *a-* (along with *ge-*) was the most frequent prefix in OE, that is, it was prefixed to more different basic predicates than any other prefix (see Appendix 1). Opacity and type analysis (as different from frequency) go hand in hand. Kastovsky (1992: 378) points out that "it is questionable whether a- was still productive in OE in view of its many shades of meaning". De la Cruz (1975: 73) remarks that "this prefix dies out in Early Middle English and most of the structures that we come across during this period ace cases inherited from Old English such as *abreiden* (OE *abregdan*)."

Before seeking motivation, it is necessary to decide if *a-* meets the criteria for identifying affixal predicates, namely morphological relatedness and meaningful alternation. Considering morphological relatedness first, we come across pairs defined by the presence or absence of *-a* like:

(16)
a.   *blacian* 'turn pale' ~ *ablacian* 'turn pale'
b.   *flowan* 'flow' ~ *aflowan* 'flow'
c.   *risan* 'rise' ~ *arisan* 'rise'
d.   *swindan* 'languish' ~ *aswindan* 'fade away'
e.   *metsian* 'supply with food' ~ *ametsian* provision

As for alternations, even though the previous examples do not provide enough evidence of meaning/function consistent differences between the presence and the absence of *-a*, there exist other pairs like the following ones:

(17)
a.   *belgan* 'be angry' ~ *abelgan* 'make angry'
b.   *breo∂an* 'decay' ~ *abreo∂an* 'destroy'
c.   *cweccan* 'quiver' ~ *acweccan* 'shake'
d.   *cwician* 'quick' ~ *acwician* 'quicken'
e.   *cuman* 'come' ~ *acuman* 'bring'
f.   *dysgian* 'be foolish' ~ *adysgian* 'make foolish'

A revision of previous studies in *a-* prefixation turns out, in the first place, that Marchand (1969: 140) draws a distinction between the preverbal *a-*, as in *ablaze*, and the preadjectival *a-*, as in *asymmetric*. I will be concerned with *a-* as a verbal prefix. Sprockel (1973: 29) remarks that "its general function seems to be to give perfective aspect to verbs so as to express an idea of completed action or the result of an action." According to Sprockel, with some verbs the prefix *a-* "is merely an intensifier". Quirk and Wrenn (1994: 109) basically concur with Sprockel when they hold that *a-* "in many cases changes the aspect from durative to perfective, in many it is a mere intensifier, and in many others it appears to have no semantic function". Hiltunen (1983: 48), by drawing on Bosworth-Toller (1973), states that "the unaccented *a-* sometimes denotes negation, deterioration, or opposition." Hiltunen goes on to say that "it may add a connotation of intensity", whereas the accented *a-* "may have several shades of meaning" ('out', 'up'). Díaz Vera (2002: 64), taking the same line as Hiltunen, states that "the idea of 'outward direction' or physical separation from the subject is especially

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[10] I refer the reader to Weick (1911), Samuels (1949), Pilch (1953), Lindemann (1970), de la Cruz (1975) and Hiltunen (1983).

clear in OE *a:hrinan*, a verb indicating the action of extending a part of the body (such as an arm, hand or finger) towards an object in order to touch it." After this revision of the literature, we are left with two functions of *a-*: to express intensification and to express outward direction or separation. The notion of intensification, to begin with, is not easy to grasp. Let us consider the following examples:

(18)
a.   *bitan* 'bite' ~ *abitan* 'bite to pieces'
b.   *dreosan* 'fall' ~ *adreosan* 'fall to pieces'
c.   *dilegian* 'destroy' ~ *adilegian* 'anihilate'

De la Cruz (1975: 49) identifies the function of intensive/perfective *Aktionsart* in *a-*. Díaz Vera (2002: 64), in a more formalized approach, adds a feature of completeness to the frame of vebs like *adrygan* 'dry up'. I basically agree with de la Cruz and Díaz Vera, but it is my contention that the notion with which we are dealing is not a syntagmatic feature, as PrepP<completely> in Díaz Vera (2002: 64) seems to indicate; neither is it simply a question of perfectivity, as de la Cruz suggests. I would rather describe the function of *a-* in instances like (18) as a morphological expression of telicity. The predicates *bitan* 'bite', *dreosan* 'fall' and *dilegian* 'destroy' display the feature [-telic], whereas *abitan* 'bite to pieces', *adreosan* 'fall to pieces' and *adilegian* 'anihilate' contain the feature [+telic]. In the system of *Aktionsart* representation adopted by Van Valin and LaPolla (1997), *bitan* 'bite' is an Activity, depicted as (19.a), whereas *abitan* 'bite to pieces' is a causative accomplishment, depicted as (19.b):[11]

(19)
a.   **do'**(x, [**bitan'** (x,y)])
b.   [**do'**(x)] CAUSE [BECOME **biten'** (y)]

Notice that in pairs like *dreosan* 'fall' ~ *adreosan* 'fall to pieces', *a-*, along with telicity, may express punctuality, thus drawing a difference between an Activity and an Achievement. This analysis is terms of telicity is probably preferrable to the one based on direction in instances like those in (20), where the presence of the prefix *a-* seems to indicate termination rather than outward direction or separation, both with intransitive verbs like *berstan* 'burst' and transitive verbs like *sendan* 'send':

(20)
a.   *berstan* 'burst' ~ *aberstan* 'burst out' (Díaz Vera 2002: 64)
b.   *faran* 'set forth, go travel' ~*afaran* 'go out, depart'
c.   *sittan* 'sit, remain' ~ *asittan* 'settle'
d.   *sendan* 'send' ~ *asendan* 'send away'
e.   *wendan* 'turn' ~ *awendan* 'turn aside'
f.   *teon* 'pull ~ *ateon* 'draw up'

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[11] Although I have tried to clarify the notion of intensification with reference to *a-* prefixation, I must admit that the whole approach is biased to a certain extent, given that our meaning definitions are heavily dependent on the lexicographical tradition. Not less importantly, there remains the question of the nature of the phenomenon. I have considered it semantic, by focusing on logical structures, event structure and selection restrictions. If the phenomenon were pragmatic, as it may well be, Dik´s (1997a, b) Functional Grammar has defined pragmatic operators of intensification and mitigation. It is true that this has been done at clause level, but it might be possible to apply them to the level of the complex word.

I provide two kinds of evidence in favour of this argument. In the first place, pure State verbs, which are incompatible with the feature [+telic], do not get *a-*. Relevant examples are:[12]

(21)
a.　　*hreowan* 'repent'
b.　　*hyngrian* 'be hungry'
c.　　*licgan* 'lie'
d.　　*manigfealdian* 'abound'
e.　　*trumian* 'grow strong'
f.　　*onhagian* 'be pleased'
g.　　*∂yrstan* 'be thirsty'

The existence of defective derivative chains like *tind* 'spike': *timplian: atimplian* 'provide with spikes', in which the causative Accomplishment gets *a*-prefixation reinforces this explanation, because in instances like *atimplian* 'provide with spikes', the logical structure contains the element CAUSE BECOME **'habban**, as is characteristic of causative Accomplishments, while the predicate does show the feature [+telic]. The same explanation is applicable if we come across defective derivative chains like *fersc* 'fresh': *ferscan: aferscan* 'become fresh' or *dumb* 'silent': *dumbian: adumbian* 'become silent': the Accomplishment verbs *aferscan* 'become fresh' and *adumbian* 'become silent' display the feature [+telic] while their logical structure contains the element BECOME **'fersc** and BECOME **'dumb** respectively.[13]

　　Pure Activity verbs do not get *a-* prefixation either, these verbs being semantically incompatible with the feature [+telic]:

(22)
a.　　*grunian* 'grunt'
b.　　*hrutan* 'snore'
c.　　*rinan* 'rain'
d.　　*sceawian* 'look'
e.　　*stridan* 'stride'
f.　　*wandrian* 'wander'
g.　　*wealcan* 'wonder'

When *a-* is prefixed to Activity verbs, the prefix probably has the function of marking the verb as an Activity that is likely to display the [+telic] and [+punctual] features, thus qualifying as an Achievement. This is the case with pairs like the ones given in (23) and with the *a*-prefixed verb in the defective derivative chain *ceoce* 'cheek' : *ceocian: aceocian* 'choke':

(23)
a.　　*hweorfan* 'wander' ~ *ahweorfan* 'turn aside'
b.　　*li∂an* 'glide' ~ *ali∂an* 'separate'
c.　　*seacan* 'shake'~ *asceacan* 'desert'

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[12] See Pentillä (1956) on verbs of vision and Weman (1967) on verbs of motion in OE. For the so-called *impersonal verbs*, see Ogura (1986).

[13] These derivative chains tend to be defective. The only exception I have found is the one that turns out the pair *fulian* 'be foul' ~ *afulian* 'to become foul'.

Examples (21)-(23) and the defective derivative chains discusses apropos these examples constitute evidence in favour of considering the prefix a- a marker of telicity. The other kind of evidence I provide is not lexical, but syntactic. If the prefix *a-* is a directional, verbs to which *a-* is prefixed should not take more directionals or, at least, they should not take other directionals meaning 'out'. Instances of this, however, are not rare:[14]

(24)
a. **Dan A1.3**
   Gefrægn ic Hebreos eadge lifgean in Hierusalem, goldhord dælan, cyningdom habban, swa him gecynde wæs, si∂∂an ∂urh metodes mægen on Moyses hand wear∂ wig gifen, wigena mænieo, and hie of Egyptum **ut aforon**, mægene micle.
b. **Phoen A3.4**
   ∂onne of ∂am ade æples gelicnes on ∂ære ascan bi∂ eft gemeted, of ∂am weaxe∂ wyrm, wundrum fæger, swylce he of ægerum **ut alæde**, scir of scylle.
c. **PPs A5**
   Mu∂ ic ontynde minne wide, ∂æt me min oro∂ **ut afæmde**, ∂ær ic ∂in bebod efnede mid willan.

Along with expressing [±telicity], the pairs of basic and derived verbal predicates by means of *a-* prefixation given in (17), as well as the ones that follow in (25), are consistent in displaying a non-causative predicate and a causative one with the prefix *a-* whose logical structure is of the type **predicate$_\alpha$** (x) [CAUSE (y) **predicate$_\beta$**]. The (simplified) logical structure of the causative predicate is given for the first pair:

(25)
a. *sleacian* 'slack' ~ *aslacian* 'make slack'
a'. **aslacian** (x) [CAUSE (y) **sleacian**]
b. *wacian* 'be awake ' ~ *awacian* 'awake'
c. *weaxan* 'grow up' ~ *aweaxan* 'grow'
d. *seacan* 'shake' ~ *asceacan* 'cause to shake'
e. *leoran* 'depart' ~ *aleoran* 'drive away'

In the following pairs it is not as clear as in the ones in (25) that the non-causative predicate is an argument of the logical structure of the causative predicate. Nevertheless, we are dealing with a monoargumental basic predicate of the type **predicate$_\alpha$** (x) and a biargumental derived predicate of the type **predicate$_\alpha$** (x, y):

(26)
a. *feohtan* 'fight' ~ *afeohtan* 'attack'
b. *fleotan* 'float' ~ *afleotan* 'skim'
c. *gyltan* 'be guilty' ~ *agyltan* 'offend'
d. *smugan* 'creep' ~ *asmugan* 'look for, consider'
e. *slæpan* 'sleep' ~ *aslæpan* 'dream'
f. *swogan* 'sound' ~ *aswogan* 'choke'

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[14] The only exception involves *fram* 'from' introducing directionals of origin, which are not incompatible with locatives meaning 'out of'.

Some of these pairs might also be accounted for on the grounds of the contrast between activities and accomplishments, including *fleotan* 'float' ~ *afleotan* 'skim' and *swogan* 'sound' ~ *aswogan* 'choke'; others entail a contrast between states and activities, like *slæpan* 'sleep' ~ *aslæpan* 'dream' and *gyltan* 'be guilty' ~ *agyltan* 'offend'.[15] If my previous resoning is correct, it turns out that transitivization of OE intransitive verbs took place along three differents paths: zero morpheme, *-i-* infixation and prefixation, including *a*-prefixation. Visser (1963-1973: 99) identifies a process of transitivization through which monoargumental predicates became biargumental by means of zero-morpheme derivation. Among the verbs that underwent the transitivization process through zero morpheme, the following can be singled out:[16]

(27)
a.   *bendan* 'bend' ~ *bendan* 'bind'
b.   *cyrran* 'turn' ~ *cyrran* 'cause to turn'
c.   *dragan* 'go' ~ *dragan* 'drag, pull'
d.   *geotan* 'flow' ~ *geotan* 'pour'
e.   *horsian* 'mount' ~ *horsian* 'set on a horse'
f.   *mirran* 'wander' ~ *mirran* 'hinder'

The third path of transitivization was *-i-* infixation. In the context of the generalized process of *i*-mutation undergone by OE and the other Germanic languages (Palgrem 1904, Bammesberger 1965), the infix *-i-* turned out transitive verbs out of intransitive ones, which can be described as an argument of a causative logical structure. The following ones are cases in point:[17]

(28)
a.   *licgan* 'lie' ~ *lecgan* 'lay'
b.   *latian* 'be slow' ~ *lettan* 'cause to be slow'
c.   *ræran* 'to raise' ~ *ræsan* 'to rush'
d.   *racian* 'to take a direction' ~ *reccan* 'to guide'
e.   *sincan* 'sink' ~ *sencan* 'cause to sink'
f.   *springan* 'spring ~ *sprengan* 'cause to spring'

5. Conclusion: The limits of synchronic morphology

In the preceding sections I have managed to provide a partial motivation of the morphological alternation *a-/ø*. Idiosyncrasy and inconsistency, if they arise, are nothing but too familiar to lexical inquiry. Apart from the fair share of irregularity, the existence of three transitivization paths, two of which represent such generalized phenomena as zero morpheme derivation and *-i*-infixation, must have resulted in a good deal of overlapping and obscurity. Nevertheless, tentative explanations can also be provided in the diachronic dimension. It might have been the case that the transitivization of the non-derived verbal predicate took place after *a*-prefixation, in such a way that the stage depicted by (29.a) preceded the one rendered in (29.b). The same hypothesis is applicable to the cases of *wyrttrumian* 'take root' with respect to *awyrttrumian* 'root out' and *blissian* 'be glad' versus *ablissian* 'make glad', in which the

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[15] I must admit that others, like *smugan* 'creep' ~ *asmugan* 'look for, consider', *slean* 'throw' ~ *aslean* 'strike' resist classification.
[16] See Martín Arista (2001).
[17] See also Kastovsky (1968).

process of transitivization might have obscured the pattern *ø*-intr. ~ *a*-tr., thus causing semantic opaqueness:

(29)
a.   **stage 1**: *windan* (intr.) 'turn' ~ *awindan* (tr.) 'wind'
b.   **stage 2**: *windan* (tr./intr.) ~ *awindan* (tr.) 'wind'
c.   **stage 1**: *wyrttrumian* (intr.) 'take root' ~ *awyrttrumian* (tr.) 'root out'
d.   **stage 2**: *wyrttrumian* (tr./intr.) 'take root, root out' ~ *awyrttrumian* (tr.) 'root out'
e.   **stage 1**: *blissian* (intr.) 'to be glad' ~ *ablissian* (tr.) 'to make glad'
f.   **stage 2**: *blissian* (tr./intr.) 'to be glad, to make glad' ~ *ablissian* (tr.) to make glad

Although -*i*-infixation is prehistorical and Germanic and *a*-prefixation is historical and OE native, the moments of productivity of *a*- and -*i*- must have coincided partly. Evidence in favour of this argument comes from the existence of doublets like:

(30)
a.   *drincan* 'drink' vs. *drencan/adrencan* 'submerge'
b.   *licgan* 'lie' vs. *lecgan/alecgan* 'lay'
c.   *stincan* 'spring' vs. *stencan/astencan* 'scatter'
d.   *glidan/aglidan* 'slip' vs. *aglædan* 'cause to slip'

It seems as if *a*- and -*i*- affixation might have competed for the expression of transitivity. This competition would have been solved in favour of -a in instances like (30.d). This brief diachronic discussion, although necessarily hypothetical, has shown that *a*-prefixation lies at the very boundaries of synchronic morphology. Although *a*-prefixation does not have Germanic cognates, its overlapping with opaque morphological processes like *ge*-prefixation and -*i*-infixation points at this direction. In the synchronic dimension, the prefix -*a* expresses telicity and represents a transitivization device along with zero morpheme derivation and with -*i*-infixation, on the condition that the latter was still in progress. *A*-prefixation maintains or augments the predicate valence. It never reduces it. Although the comparison is by no means conclusive, Marchand (1969: 139) remarks that "in its PDI usage, the prefix selects intransitive verbs". In OE I have found some counterexamples to the argument that the morphological alternation *a/ø* expresses telicitiy, and some others may be found. I have found no countexamples, on the other hand, to *a/ø* as a valence augmenter. There are pairs of two intransitive verbs like *bifian* 'tremble' ~ *abifian* 'shake', *slidan* 'slide' ~ *aslidan* 'slide' and *sican* 'sigh' ~ *asican* 'sigh'; pairs of two transitive verbs like *beran* 'bear' ~ *aberan* 'bear', *timbran* 'build' ~ *atimbran* 'erect' and *wytrwalian* 'plant' ~ *awyrtwalian* 'root out'; and pairs of two transitive/transitive verbs like *blawan* 'blow' ~ *ablawan* 'blow', *ridan* 'ride' ~ *aridan* 'ride' and *wascan* 'wash' ~ *awascan* 'wash'; but there are no pairs in which the basic verb is transitive and the *a*-prefixed derived verb is intransitive.

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Appendix 1: Weak, strong and irregular verbs to which *a-* is prefixed.[18]

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[18] From *Nerthus, an online lexical database of Old English*, by Javier Martín Arista, Laura Caballero González, Elisa González Torres and Ana Ibáñez Moreno.

Weak verbs: *(e)rian, æ:ðan, æ:lan, æ:lan, bæ:dan, bæ:ran, bæligan, bærnan, barian, be:gan, be:owan, beðecian, bed(+)ecian, beho:fian, beofian, bicgan, bicgan, bifian, bilgan, birgan, bisgian, biterian, blæ:can, blæ:can, blændan, bla:cian, blendan, bli:sian, blicgan, blindan, blindian, blissian, blycgan, blysian, bodian, borgian, borian, bracian, bradwian, bras(t)lian, bre:gan, bredwian, bry:tan, bryrdan, by:gan, by:sgian, by:wan, byffan, byl(i)gan, bylgan, byrgan, cæ:gan, cæannan, cærran, can, ccutian, ce:apian, ce:lan, ce:lan, ce:ocian, cealdian, cennan, cerran, ci:gan, cirran, clænsian, cleopian, cnys(s)an, co:lian, cofrian, colmo:dian, cordan, cordian, cost(n)ian, cræftan, cramian, cre:op(i)an, cucian, cusan, cwæncan, cwacian, cwec(c)an, cwellan, cwencan, cweorran, cwician, cwucian, cwylan, cwylman, cyðan, cyrran, cyrran/cierran, dælan, de:adian, de:afian, de:man, ðe:odan, ðe:ostrian, ðecgan, ðenian, deorcian, derian, di:dan, ði:edan, ði:estran, di:legian, ði:strian, ðiddan, ðierran, dihtan, dimmian, ðistrian, ðolian, dræ:fan, ðræ:stan, ðracian, ðre:atian, dre:fan, drencan, ðreotan, ðrescan, ðri:etan, dri:gan, ðri:strian, ðriostrian, ðro:wian, dru:gian, druwian, ðry:ccan/ðreccan/ðryccan, dry:gan, dry:snan, ðrysman, ðryzian, du:strigan, dumbian, dwæ:scan, dwe:scan, dwelian, dwellan, ðy:an, dy:dan, ðy:dan, dy:fan, dy:lgian, ðy:strian, ðy:tan, ðy:wan, ðylgian/ðyldian/ðyld(i)gan/ðyl(de)gian, ðynnian, e:htan, eargian, ebbian, ettan, fæ:dan, fæ:grian, fæ:man, fæ:ran, fæ:ttian, fælan, fæstan, fæstnian, fandian, fe:dan, fe:gan, feccan, fellan, feormian, feorran, feorsian, feran, fercian, ferian, ferran, ferscan, fersian, festnian, fetigan, fierran, firhtan, firran, firsian, flian, flieman, fligan, fly:man, fre:fran, fre:frian, fre:oðan, fre:on, fremdan, fy:ran, fy:san, fyllan, fyran, fyrhtan, fyrsian, gæ:lan, gælwan, ga:lian, ge:omian, ge:tan, gearwian, gelwan, geolwian, geornan, gi:emele:asian, giltan, gnian, gra:pian, gre:tan, gry:ndan, grymetian, gy:man, gyldan, gyltan, habban, hæbban, ha:tan, ha:tian, haccian, hangian, hansian, he:nan, he:rian, healtian, heardian, hefan, hefigian, hellian, heolorian, heordan, herian, hi:erðan, hiðan, hicgan/hycgan, hierdan, hildan, hiscean, hlæ:nan, hlæ:nsian, hle:fan, hle:oðrian, hlinian, hlocian, hlu:ttrian, hnestian, hnyscan, hogian/hegan, holan, holian, hopian, hræ:can, hræscian, hre:ofian, hre:ran, hreddan, hrepian, hry:ran, hrysian, hsian, huðan, hwæ:nan, hwelfan, hwerfan, hwettan, hwi:tian, hwierfan, hwylfan/hweolfan, hwyrfan, hwyrfan/hweorfan, hycgan, hy:ðan, hy:dan, hy:ran, hyldan, hyltan, hyrdan, hyrian, hyrsian, hyrstan, hyspan, i:dan, i:dlan, i:dlian, i:eðan, ierlan, læ:dan, læ:dan, læ:nan, læ:ran, læccan, lænan, la:ðian, la:dian, laðian, langian, le:fan, le:fian, le:ofian, le:san, leðran, lecgan, lefan, lenian, leoðian, leofian, leonian, li:efan, li:esan, li:htan, liðian, libban, lifian, lisian, loccian, lu:tian, ly:dran, ly:fan, ly:man, lybban, lyhtan, lynian, lynnan, lysan, lystan, mæ:nsumian, mæ:ran, mællian, mæstan, ma:nsumian, magian, manian, marian, masian, meallian, mearcian, melian, mendian, merran, metsian, mi:dlian, mi:rian, mierran, molsnian, mundian, myltan, myrðran, myrdrian, myrgan, myrian, myrran, pæ(:)ran, pæ:can, parian, pinsian, plantian, pluccian, priccan, pullian, pundrian, py:tan, pyffan, pyndrian, ræ:can, ræ:dan, ræ:fan, ræ:man, ræ:ran, ræ:san, ræfnian, ræpsan, ra:fian, ra:sian, re:acian, re:cele:asian, re:fnan, re:fnan, re:odian, re:tan, recan, reccan, reccan, reccean, reddan, redian, rendan, rengan, ri:ddan, ri:man, rian, rian, ryddan, rydecian, sæ:lan, sæcgan, sændan, sa:nian, sadian, scadan, scamian, scealian, sceaman, sceamian, scearpan, sceortian, scerian, scerpan, sci:mian, scian, scihtan, scilian, scindan, sciran, scirpan, scortian, scre:adian, screncan, scru:tnian, scunnian, scylfan, scylian, scyndan, scyrian, scyrpan, secgan se:ðan, se:arian, se:dan, se:owan, sealcan, secgan, sellan, sencan, sendan, sengan, seorcan, seðan, settan, si:can, siftan, sinðan, sindrian, slæ:pan, slæ:wan, slæ:wian, slæccan, slæcian, slacian, sme:agan, sme:an/sme:agan, smiðian, smirian, smorian, snæ:dan, solian, sparian, spe:dan,*

spelian, spendan, sperian, spillan, spirian, splæ:tan, spre:adan, sprengan, sprettan, spritan, spyrgan, spyrian, spyrian, stæ:wan, stæ:lan, stæ:nan, stæ:nan, ste:apan, ste:opan, ste:pan, stellan, stemnnian, stencan, sterian, sti:fian, sti:fician, stiðian, stigian, stihtan, stillian, stintan, stirian, stræ:fian, streccan, strehdan, stri:enan, stry:nan, stry:ran, stundian, sty:fecigan, sty:pan, styllan, styltan, styntan, styntan, styrian, su:rian, sundran, sundrian, swæ:dian, swæ:man, swa:mian, swa:rcian, swa:rnian, sweartian, swebban, swefecian, swencan, swenwan, swerian, swerian, swician, swician, sworettan, swornian, swunan, swyðerian, syndran, tæfran, tæsan, te:orian, teallan, telan, tellan, ðencan/ðancan/ðuncan, tendan, tenian, terian, ti:drian, ti:efran, ti:wan, tian, tiarian, tihtan, tillan, timbr(i)an, timplian, tolhi:wian, tolian, torfian, treddan, tredlian, trian, ty:dran, ty:fran, ty:nan, ty:nan, ty:rian, tyhtan, tymbran, tyndan, wæ:ccan, wæ:lan, wæcnan, wæcnian, wæltan, wæmmian, wændan, wænian, wærlan, wæstan, wæwan, wa:cian, wa:rnian, wacian, wacnian, wandian, wanian, wannian, wansian, weaxan, we:nan, we:odian, we:stan, weardian, wearpan, weccan, wecgan, wemman, wendan, wendan, wenian, wenian, werdan, wergian, werian, wersian, wi:dlian, wi:tegian, wian, wierdan, wiergan, wildian, wilwan, winwian, wirdan, wirgan, wirgean, wisnian, wistlian, wlætan, wlacian, wlancian, wlencan, wlodian, wlyspian, wo:gian, woffian, wræ:nan, wræ:nsian, wræ:stan, wreðian, wreccan, wrestan, wriðian, wriohan, wuldrian, wundrian, wunian, wurtwarian, wyllian, wyltan, wyndwian, wyrcan, xian, y:tan, yldan, yttan.

Strong verbs: *bacan, bannan, be:atan, belgan, be:odan, be:ogan, beligan, beornan, beran, bernan, berstan, bi:dan, biddan, bilgan, biran, bi:tan, bla:wan, bli:can, blinnan, blo:tan, blynnan, bræ:dan, brecan, bregdan, bre:oðan, bre:otan, breatan, bru:can, bu:gan, bycgan, calan, ce:orfan, ce:osan, cle:ofan, cna:wan, crimman, cuman, cunnan, cweðan, cwelan, cwi:nan, cwincan, delfan, ðerscan, dræ:dan, dra:wan, dragan, ðræ:wan, dre:ogan, dre:ohan, dreopan, dreosan, dri:fan, drincan, ðringan, ðringan, ðrintan, driogan, dwy:nan, etan, ettan, faran, feallan, fehtan, feohtan, findan, fle:an, fle:on, fle:otan, fli:egan, flo:wan, fo:n, ga:lan, galan, geldan, ge:otan, giefan, gieldan, gifan, gildan, gilpan, ginnan, gitan, gi:tan, glæ:dan, gli:dan, gli:pan, gni:dan, grafan, gre:tan, gro:wan, gy:tan, gyfan, gylpan, hæbban, ha:tan, healdan, he:awan, hebban, helpan, hladan, hne:apan, ho:n, hry:nan, hweorfan, hweorfan, hycgan, iernan, irnan, le:on, le:oran, lesan, le:tan, licgan, licgan, linnan, meltan, metan, niman, re:osan, scadan, scieppan, screpan, scrincan, secgan, sendan, seon, settan, sincan, sittan, spannan, sprecan, sprecan, springan, springan, standan, standan, stingan, stregdan, strican, sugan, swellan, sweltan, sweorcan, sweorfan, swindan, swingan, te:on, ðeotan, teran, tredan, wæcnan, wacan, wascan, weallan, weaxan, wefan, wegan, wegan, weorðan, weorpan, windan, windan, winnan, wre:on, wrecan, wringan, hle:apan, hle:apan, hlehhan/hlyhhan, hlo:wan, hnidan, hre:osan, hri:nan, hri:nan, lætan, le:odan, le:ogan, limpan, limpan, lu:can, lu:tan, ma:wan, me:tan, melcan, munan, ræ:dan, reddan, ri:dan, ri:dan, ri:san, ri:san, ry:pan, sa:wan, scacan, scafan, sce:adan, sce:ofan, sce:otan, sce:otan, sceacan, sceafan, scellan, sceppan, screopan, scripan, scu:fan, scyhhan, scyran, se:can, se:ordan, si:gan, sle:an, sli:dan, sli:dan, sli:tan, slu:pan, smu:gan, spi:wan, spornan, spreotan, sprincan, spru:tan, spryngan, spy:wan, sterfan, sti:gan, sti:gan, styrfan, su:can, swa:pan, swa:rcan, swi:can, swi:fan, swo:gan, wæ:can, wæscan, werpan, wrihan, wri:ðan, wri:tan, wurpan, wurðan, wyllan, yrnan, y:rnan.*

Irregular verbs: *beon, do:n, gan, willan.*