

**DISSERTATION ABSTRACT:  
THE NOMINAL MODIFICATION  
IN OLD ENGLISH PROSE**

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It has been said that the loss of inflections caused the fixation of word order during the Old English period. This appears to be true, when the word order of major elements (eg. Subject – Verb – Object) is studied. However, concerning nominal modifiers, one of the minor elements, the word order was completely fixed before inflections were lost. This dissertation shows that the word order is an important part of Old English syntax and that the roles of word order are not entirely equivalent to those of inflections. Hence this dissertation claims that there are rules governing the word orders even in synthetic languages which indicate the relation of words in a sentence largely by means of inflections.

**CHAPTER I**

In this chapter, the previous studies on the position of nominal modifiers and their problems are presented, followed by the purpose of the present study. Also, the literary and linguistic value of the texts which are used for the present study is presented.

Among the previous studies, the most important one is Carlton's theory on the order of the nominal modifiers, which is shown in the following table (Carlton 1963):

Table 1.

6th position	5th	4th	3rd	2nd	1st	Head
<i>mænig</i> <i>all</i> <i>sum, etc.</i>	pronoun	numeral	<i>oðer</i>	adjective, participle	nouns in genitive case	

Carlton's theory, as well as the other studies, is short of the structural analysis. It cannot explain the orders such as

genitive — adjective — Head Noun  
adjective — Head Noun — genitive.

Genitive modifiers should be examined separately, because within the genitive phrases modification structures similar to Carlton's Table can be formulated.

Concerning the position of genitive modifiers, there are theories claiming that all genitives had originally preceded the head noun (Behaghel 1932, Curme 1913 – 1914) or that all genitives had originally followed the head noun (Timmer 1939). Fries says that the position of Old English genitives is free (Fries 1940). But the structural analysis of expanded corpus shows that there are rules governing the position of genitive modifiers.

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the word order of Old English nominal modifiers and to explore to what extent that word order was a part of Old English syntax. The study includes an examination of the following points (1 through 6):

1. A comparison of four texts from different periods.
2. Applicability of Carlton's theory in the wider corpus.

Carlton's theory about nominal phrases which have both genitive modifiers and adjectives seems to be too simplistic. There are many counterexamples to Carlton's order, even in the surface linear order. For example, in

*Apollonius of Tyre*, the following five linear orders appear;

- Genitive — Adjective — Head noun (2 cases)
- Adjective — Genitive — Head noun (8 cases)
- Adjective — Head noun — Genitive (4 cases)
- Head noun — Adjective — Genitive (4 cases)
- Adjective — Head noun — Adjective — Genitive (3 cases)

According to Carlton, the order should be either

Adjective — Genitive — Head noun

or

Head noun — Adjective — Genitive

### 3. Structural analysis.

Previous studies lack a structural analysis, therefore they cannot explain the cases in which head nouns are modified by phrasal modifiers, such as genitive nouns with their own modifiers.

### 4. Characteristics of modifiers in the same group of Carlton's Table.

The order classes relate syntactic and semantic characteristics. The words in the same group (eg. Carlton's "6th" "5th"... ) do not only occupy the same position in noun phrases, but also behave in the same way even when they are not nominal modifiers.

### 5. Position of genitive modifiers and its development during the Old English period and the syntactic and semantic factors determining this position.

Though the position of genitive modifiers seems to be free, there are some rules, in each stage of Old English, governing their position.

### 6. Rules of coordination of the same kind of nominal modifiers.

Carlton's theory does not adequately explain the nominal phrases which

have two or more modifiers of the same group.

In order to investigate the problems which have been mentioned so far, the following four prose texts, each about 630 lines, have been chosen to represent each stage in Old English:

- (i) The text in the late ninth century  
630 lines of *King Alfred's West Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care Part I, Part II*, ed. by Henry Sweet, (1987) (= Pas.)
- (ii) The text in the late tenth century  
630 lines of *the Homilies of Anglo-Saxon. The First Part. Containing the Sermones Catholici, or Homilies of Ælfric, Vol. I, Vol. II*, ed. by Benjamin Thorpe, (1844, 1846) (= Cat.)
- (iii) The text in the early eleventh century  
The whole texts (628 lines) of *The Old English Apollonius of Tyre*, ed. by Peter Golden, (1958) (= Apo.)
- (iv) The text in the late eleventh century  
630 lines of *The Peterborough Chronicle 1070-1154*, ed. by Cecily Clark, (1970) (= Pet.)

## CHAPTER II

In this chapter, the position of adjectival modifiers is examined. The result is summarized as follows (1 through 6):

1. Adjectival modifiers seldom follow the head nouns.
2. Adjectival modifiers seldom precede the articles or possessives.

The exceptions are as follows:

- (i) *Eall* sometimes follows head nouns. Especially when the heads are pronouns, *eall* very often follows.  
 eg (1) him eallum (= all of them) <Cat. 1.15, p. 14, Vol. I>
- (ii) Some adjectives such as *eall* and *sum* precede any other modifiers, including articles and possessives.  
 eg (2) eall ða diogolnesse ðære wambe (= all the secrets of the belly)  
 <Pas. 1.10, p. 259>
- (iii) Some adjectives and numerals behave like nouns with partitive genitives. They mostly precede the genitives, but *hwelc* sometimes follows the genitives. In *the Peterborough Chronicle* there are two examples in which this kind of word is modified by an *of*-phrase, while one example is modified by a genitive.  
 eg (3) micelre mænio his manna (= great many of his men) <Apo. 1.6, p. 20>  
 (4) ðegna hwelc (= anyone of the thanes) <Pas. 1.10, p. 469>  
 (5) sume of ðam cnihtan (= some of the retainers) <Pet. 1.17, 1083>
- (iv) *An* has the same characteristics as numerals. The construction, *An* — Partitive Genitive, occurs sometimes in *Apollonius of Tyre* and the *Peterborough Chronicle*. The construction, *An* — *Of*-phrase, occurs in *Apollonius of Tyre* (1 case) and *the Peterborough Chronicle* (1 case).  
 eg (6) anum his manna (= one of his men) <Apo. 1.25, p. 20>  
 (7) an of heom (one of them) <Pet. 1.32, 1088>
- (v) *Sylf* almost always follows the head.  
 eg (8) hine sylfne (= himself) <Apo. 1.13, p. 4>
- (vi) *Aelmihtig* and superlatives of adjectives often follow the heads.  
 eg (9) Gode ælmihtegum (= almighty God) <Pas. 1.18, p. 3>
- (vii) Participle derivatives sometimes follow the head nouns.  
 eg (10) Apollonium lifigendne (= Apollonius alive) <Apo. 1.16, p. 10>

(viii) When two or more adjectives modify the head, they often follow the heads.

eg (11) *an hund manna mid him frencisce & flemisc* (= a hundred French and Flemish men with him) <Pet. 11.2–3, 1080>

(12) *godum fæder and arfæstum* (= good and merciful father) <Apo. 1.3, p. 6>

(ix) Adjectival phrases follow the heads.

eg (13) *his bosum full goldes* (= his bosom full of gold) <Pet. 1.91, 1087>

(x) *Healf* and adjectives in ~ *weard* tend to precede the articles and possessives.

eg (14) *healfne ðinne wæfels* (= one half of your cloak) <Apo. 1.14, p. 42>

3. When more than two modifiers of different groups occur together, and if all of them precede the head noun, there are very few counterexamples to Carlton's theory. (See Table 1)

4. *Micel* and *nan* do not always occupy the position of normal adjectives (Carlton's 2nd position). They precede *oðer*. *Micel* follows articles or possessives, therefore, it may be grouped with numerals. Also, it can be a head, like numerals, taking genitive modifiers. *Nan* can be grouped with numerals. But *nan* does not take genitive modifiers.

eg (15) *miccle oðre ðing* (= other great things) <Cat. 1.3, p. 14, Vol. I>

(16) *nanre oðerre note* (= no other occupation) <Pas. 1.12, p. 7>

### CHAPTER III

In this chapter the position of genitive modifiers is examined, which makes the following points (1 through 14) clear:

1. In *Apollonius of Tyre and the Peterborough Chronicle*, genitives which have human meanings precede the head nouns, while genitives which have non-human meanings follow the head nouns. In *Pastoral Care*, however, this is not the case.

eg (17) *ðæs cyninges naman* (= the king's name) <Apo. 1.4, p 2>

(18) *ðam dæge minra bridgifta* (= the day of my marriage) <Apo. 1.26, p. 2>

(19) *searoðonca hord* (= treasure of skill) <Pas. 11.10–11, p. 9>

(20) *ðæt ingeðonc dæs leorneres* (= the learner's mind) <Pas. 11.16–17, p. 23>

2. In *Pastoral Care*, there is no other element between prenominal genitives and the head nouns. (See eg(19)). In other words, constructions like the following do not occur.

Genitive — (art. | poss | adj.) — Head Noun

On the contrary, in most of the cases with postnominal genitives, there are normally some elements between them and the head nouns (See eg(20)), hence the following construction does not occur.

Head Noun — Genitive

*Apollonius of Tyre and the Peterborough Chronicle* have similar tendency, but the semantic factor (1 above) plays a heavier role.

3. *Catholic Homilies* has both tendencies of 1 and 2 above. It takes a middle position between *Pastoral Care* and *Apollonius of Tyre or the Peterborough Chronicle*.
4. When a head noun has an adjective as its modifier, the order,
- (a) Adjective — Head Noun — Genitive
- eg (21) *ðære micclan lafe ðare clænnesse* (= the great love of chastity)

<Apo. 11.7–8, p. 36>

is seen in all of the four texts. The order,

(b) Genitive — Adjective — Head Noun

eg (22) his dohtor arleasan bridbeddes (= his daughter's wicked marriage-bed) <Apo. 1.17, p. 4>

is not seen in *Pastoral Care*, but in the other three texts. In *Apollonius of Tyre* and *Catholic Homilies*, if the genitive has a human meaning, the order is (b), and if it has a non-human meaning, the order is (a). But in *Pastoral Care*, the meanings of genitives do not determine their positions; order (a) is preferred. In the *Peterborough Chronicle* construction (b) is used for non-human prenominal genitive.

eg (23) manega rice men (= many powerful men) <Pet. 1.159, 1087>

5. When a genitive modifier has its own adjective modifier, both orders,

Adjective — Genitive — Head Noun

eg (24) his agenre dohtor wer (= the husband of his own daughter)  
<Apo. 11.15–16, p. 4>

Head Noun — Adjective — Genitive

eg (25) asmeagunge boclicre snotornesse (= application of scholarly wisdom) <Apo. 1.25, p. 4>

are seen in all the texts.

6. When both genitive modifier and head noun have their own modifiers, the order is,

Adjective — Head Noun — Adjective — Genitive

eg (26) ðone mæstan dæl deorwurðan reafes (= the best part of the valuable garment) <Apo. 1.29, p. 26>

The order,

Adjective — genitive — Adjective — Head Noun

eg (27) ealles landes buton sefon fotmæl (= only seven-foot measure of all the land) <Pet. 11.52–53, 1087>

appears only in one case in *Apollonius of Tyre* and in two cases in *the Peterborough Chronicle*. Longer modifiers tend to follow the head. Especially, this stylistic characteristic is the essential factor which determines the positions of genitive modifiers in earlier texts (Pas. and Cat.)

7. When a head noun has both adjective and genitive as its modifiers, only the order,

Adjective — Genitive — Head Noun

eg (28) se arwurða muneca feder & frouer (= the reverend father and consolation of monks) <Pet. 11.1–2, 1089>

can be seen in all the texts.

8. When a genitive has another genitive as its own modifier, the order,

Head Noun — Genitive 2 — Genitive 1

eg (29) ðone dom mynra dohtor gifta (= the condition of my daughter's marriage) <Apo. 1.8, p. 6>

appears in all the texts except *the Peterborough Chronicle*. The order,

Genitive 2 — Genitive 1 — Head Noun

eg (30) minre dohtor modes willan (= wish of my daughter's mind) <Apo. 1.25, p. 34>

is not seen in *Pastoral Care* and *the Peterborough Chronicle*, but does appear in the other two texts. The order,

Head Noun — Genitive 1 — Genitive 2

eg (31) getacnunge ðære halgan gelaðunge ealles cristenes folces (= a type of the holy church of all Christian folk) <Cat. 11.1–2, p. 586, Vol. II>

appears only in *Catholic Homilies*. The order,

Genitive 1 — Genitive 2 — Head Noun

is not seen in any text, though it is theoretically possible.

9. In *Pastoral Care* and *the Peterborough Chronicle*, when a genitive modifies a noun phrase which consists of a noun and a genitive, the order is,

Head Noun — Genitive 1
 
 — Genitive 2

eg (32) *ða adle ðæra undeawa monigra monna* (= the diseases of the vices of many men) <Pas. 11.2–3, p. 457>

But the following orders do not appear:

Genitive 2 — 
 Head Noun — Genitive 1

Genitive 2 — 
 Genitive 1 — Head Noun

Genitive 1 — Head Noun
  — Genitive 2

In *Apollonius of Tyre* and *Catholic Homilies*, there are no phrases with this kind of construction.

10. When two appositional genitives modify the same head noun, the order is,

Genitive A — Head Noun — Genitive B

eg (33) *Antiocus rædels ðæs cynges* (= the riddle of Antiocus, the king)  
<Apo. 11.17–18, p. 36>

in *the Peterborough Chronicle*, *Apollonius of Tyre* and *Catholic Homilies*.

The following orders do not appear in any text:

Head Noun — Genitive A — Genitive B

Genitive A — Genitive B — Head Noun

11. As seen in 4, 6 and 8 above, the word order in a noun phrase is more fixed in *Pastoral Care* (the earliest text).
12. In the simple phrases, (art. | poss.) Genitive — Head Noun, the article or possessive generally agrees with the genitive noun. But in special cases such as *Godes* ~ and *Dryhtnes* ~, it agrees with the head noun in *Pastoral Care*.  
eg (34) *ðære Godes ceastre* (= the city of God) <Pas. 1.20, p. 253>
13. Semantically, the usage of the genitive is less limited in early Old English than in late Old English. For example, in *Pastoral Care* anything can take the genitive, but in *Catholic Homilies* and *Apollonius of Tyre* the genitive tends to have human meanings. In *the Peterborough Chronicle* the majority of genitive examples have human meanings and the other usages are very limited.
14. In *the Peterborough Chronicle*, *of*-phrases sometimes substitute for the genitive modifiers.  
eg (35) *xii ða beste of ðes cynges healfe* (= twelve of the best men on king's side) <Pet. 1.18, 1091>

#### CHAPTER IV

This chapter presents the rules governing the order of two or more modifiers which belong to the same group. They are summarized as follows (1 through 4):

1. *Pastoral Care, Catholic Homilies and the Peterborough Chronicle* have one of the coordinate constructions, Genitive — Head — Genitive (a construction similar to Adjective — Head — Adjective See eg(12)).  
 eg (36) *ðæs cynges land & ðæs arcebiscopes* (= the king's land and archbishop's) <Pet. 1.37, 1088>
  
2. The difference of usage between the above constructions and the ordinary construction such as Adjective — *and* — Adjective — Head, and Genitive — *and* — Genitive — Head cannot be found. It seems to be a stylistic difference.  
 eg (37) *mænifealdum and genihtsumum reafum* (= manifold and copious clothes) <Apo. 11.20–21, p. 8>  
 eg (12) *godum fæder and arfæstum* (= good and merciful father) <Apo. 1.3, p. 6>
  
3. When a nominal phrase has two adjectives which belong to the same group, it has a coordinate construction. (See eg(37) (12).) (There is one exception in *the Peterborough Chronicle*.) On the other hand, two adjectives which belong to different groups (eg. *mænig* and *oðer*) are never coordinated by a conjunction.  
 eg (38) *ealle oðre men* (= all other men) <Apo. 1.13, p. 22>
  
4. Among all the groups of nominal modifiers, only pronouns (article — possessive, or possessive — article) can be connected without conjunctions.  
 eg (39) *ðysum urum gebeorscipe* (= this our feast) <Apo. 1.2, p.24>
  
5. There seems to be no clear rule governing the word order of two adjectives and two genitives in the same group.

## CHAPTER V

This chapter presents the other minor modifiers not included in Chapters II to IV.

Infinitive modifiers and dative modifiers appear only in *Pastoral Care*.

eg (40) *mioloc drincan* (= milk to drink) <Pas. 1.18, p. 459>

(41) *onlicnesse ðæm kokkum* (= a resemblance to cocks) <Pas. 1.31, p. 459>

There are many prepositional phrases only in the *Peterborough Chronicle*. Especially *ymbe*, *wið*, *æt*, *to*, *ær*, *æfter*, and *ofer* (as nominal modifiers) appear only in the *Peterborough Chronicle*. The most striking point is that in the *Peterborough Chronicle*, *of* is used as a substitute for a genitive modifier.

eg (42) *fela of ða oðre gærsume* (= much of the other treasure) <Pet. 1.52, 1070>

## CHAPTER VI

This chapter starts with the summary of the findings in Chapters II to V, which leads to the conclusion of this dissertation.

### [1] Findings

1. The comparison of the four texts has made the following points clear.
  - (i) It cannot be said that word order in the earlier texts was freer than in the later texts. For example, constructions of nominal phrases which include genitives are more fixed in *Pastoral Care*, the earliest text.
  - (ii) The position of genitive modifiers is determined by syntactic factors in early Old English, while it is determined by semantic factors in late Old English. (See 5, (i) & (ii) below.)

- (iii) In the latest Old English text, the usage of genitives is extremely limited.  
(See 5, (iii) below.)
- (iv) In all periods, the longer modifiers, such as adjectival phrases, genitives with their own modifiers and prepositional phrases, tend to follow the head nouns. This is a stylistic device rather than a strict syntactic rule, because those phrasal modifiers do not always follow the heads. For example, genitive phrases either precede or follow the head nouns.  
eg (30) *minre dohtor modes willan* (= wish of my daughter's mind)  
<Apo. 1.25, p. 34>  
(29) *ðone dom mynra dohtor gifta* (= the condition of my daughter's marriage) <Apo. 1.8, p. 6>
- (v) There are nominal modifications by infinitives and datives only in the earliest text, *Pastoral Care*.

2. Carlton's Table (Table 1) should be revised as Table 2 shown below.

**Table 2.**

g	f	e	d	c	b	a		A	B
<i>eall</i> <i>sum</i> <i>mænig</i> <i>ælc</i> <i>gehwelc</i> ( <i>mycel</i> ) ( <i>healf</i> )	(~ <i>weard</i> ) <i>midd</i> (present participle)	posses- sive	article	numeral <i>nan</i> ( <i>mycel</i> )	<i>oðer</i>	adjective, participle ( <i>healf</i> ) ( <i>mycel</i> )  ( <i>Ælmihtig</i> )	HEAD	<i>silf</i> (~ <i>weard</i> ) ( <i>Ælmihtig</i> ) (superative) (participle) ( <i>eall</i> ) ( <i>mænig</i> ) ( <i>sum</i> ) ( <i>an</i> )	preposi- tional phrase

cf. Table 1. (Carlton's Table)

6th position	5th	4th	3rd	2nd	1st	Head
<i>mænig</i> <i>eall</i> <i>sum</i> , etc.	pronoun	numeral	<i>oðer</i>	adjective, participle	nouns in genitive case	

- (i) Genitive phrases should not be included in this kind of table. (See 3, (i) below.) They could be placed in various positions, not necessarily Carlton's 1st position.

eg (43) *ðæs cynges iunge dohtor* (= the king's young daughter) <Apo. 1.27, p. 22>

(21) *ðare micclan lufe dare clænnesse* (= the great love of chastity) <Apo. 11.7–8, p. 36>

In (43) above, the genitive modifier is followed by the adjective (position a in Table 2), while in (21) the genitive modifier is preceded by the head.

- (ii) Pronouns (Carlton's 5th position) should be divided into two positions, positions d and e, because the possessive and the article belong to different classes. But possessives and articles are interchangeable.

eg (44) *min se leofesta freond Stranguilio* (= my dearest friend Stranglio) <Apo. 1.10, p. 14>

(39) *ðysum urum gebeorscipe* (= this our feast) <Apo. 1.2, p. 24>

- (iii) *Nan* should be included in numeral class (position c).
- (iv) *Mycel* could take positions g, c, and a.
- (v) The words in the *eall, mænig* group (Carlton's 6th position) take the postnominal position.
- (vi) Participles and superlatives of adjectives could precede or follow the head.
- (vii) *Midd*, ~ *weard* and present participles could precede possessives and/or articles. But position f is not decisive, because there are no examples in which they occur together with the words from the *eall, mænig* group.
- (viii) *Oðer* could precede *mænig*. But whether *oðer* could precede group g or *mænig* could take position a is not decisive.

### 3. Structural analysis of noun phrases reveals the following:

- (i) The word order of nominal modifiers follows Table 2 only when all the modifiers modify the same head, in other words, only within one noun phrase (consisting of one noun and its modifiers). Therefore, genitive modifiers should be excluded from such a table. They should be dealt with separately, because within the genitive phrases modification structures similar to Carlton's Table can be formulated.
- (ii) Adjectives precede the head nouns as a general rule, which is kept in the complex constructions such as;

Adjective — Head — Adjective — Genitive

eg (26) *ðone mæstan dæl deorwurðan reafes* (= the best part of the valuable garment) <Apo. 1.29, p. 26>

or

Head — Adjective — Genitive

eg (25) *asmeagunge boclicre snotornesse* (= application of scholarly wisdom) <Apo. 1.25, p. 4>

4. The words in the same group (i.e. the same order class) have the same characteristics.
  - (i) The semantic characteristics are obvious. For example, the *mænig, eall* group consists of the adjectives which have the meaning of quantity.
  - (ii) Syntactically, the words in the same group could be coordinated by conjunctions. (See 6 below.) Also, numerals and the words in the *mænig, eall* group can be head nouns taking partitive genitives.
  
5. The position of genitive modifiers varies in each period.
  - (i) The distinction between a human “~ ‘s” and non-human “of ~” in Modern English clearly appears as a human genitive = prenominal, and a non-human genitive = postnominal in *the Peterborough Chronicle* and *Apollonius of Tyre* and partly in *Catholic Homilies*, but not in *Pastoral*

*Care.*

- (ii) Before the development mentioned in 5-(i) above, there was an even earlier stage in which the position of genitives was determined, not semantically, but syntactically, (or stylistically); a simple genitive phrase (eg. article and noun) or only one word (in the genitive case) precedes the head and more complex genitive phrases tend to follow the head.
  - (iii) The semantic usage of genitives became more limited in the later texts. In late Old English, genitive modifiers mostly have human meanings (possession). There are few other usages such as number or amount and place names. In the earliest text, *Pastoral Care*, genitive cases are used purely syntactically; that is, any noun can take the genitive case according to the demands of syntax.
6. There are rules governing the coordination of nominal modifiers.
- (i) The words in the same group must be coordinated by conjunctions, while those in different groups must be connected without conjunctions.
  - (ii) Possessives and articles belong to different groups, because a possessive and an article are not coordinated with a conjunction.
  - (iii) Genitive modifiers which modify the same head noun are coordinated by conjunctions, except when the genitives are appositive.
    - eg (36) *ðæs cynges land & ðæs arcebiscopes* (= the king's land and archbishop's) <Pet. 1.37, 1088>
    - (33) *Antiocus rædels dæs cynges* (= the riddle of Antioch, the king) <Apo. 11.17–18, p. 36>
    - cf. (29) *ðone dom mynra dohtor gifta* (= the condition of my daughter's marriage) <Apo. 1.8, p. 6> (in this case *mynra dohtor* does not modify *ðone dom*.)

## [2] Conclusion

1. Word order is an important part of Old English syntax.
  - (i) The direction of the nominal modification was indicated by word order in Old English; modifiers immediately precede or follow the head nouns. Most of the modifiers are placed before the head nouns, while longer modifiers, such as phrasal modifiers, are placed after the head nouns.
  - (ii) When the head nouns are modified by more than two modifiers, the word order of the modifiers is predictable.
  - (iii) Structural analysis is necessary to find the word order rules. A surface linear analysis only shows that the word order of nominal modifiers is not fixed.
  - (iv) It is clear, from the following points, that word order had taken root in Old English syntax. First, the order classes consist of syntactic groups, such as pronouns, adjectives, numerals, and participles. Second, the word order of nominal phrases relates closely to other syntactic rules; for example, the words in the same group should be coordinated by conjunctions, while those in different groups should be connected without conjunctions.
  
2. The roles of word order are not entirely equivalent to those of inflections.
  - (i) Inflections indicate the relationships among words. Therefore, in the case of nominal modification, inflections indicate the direction of the modification, that is, which noun is modified by a modifier. The word order takes more roles than that. As a substitution for inflections, the word order of “*eall* — pronoun — numeral — *oðer* — adjective” is not necessarily required. If all the modifiers group together and are not separated from each other nor from the head, the direction of the modification is sufficiently indicated. (eg. The word order of “*oðer* —

*eall* — numeral — pronoun — adjective” would not constitute a hindrance to understanding the structure.) Owing to the word order, the nominal phrases have syntactically well-organized forms; the modifiers which have certain syntactic characteristics always precede those which have other syntactic characteristics. This makes the phrases easy to be understood.

- (ii) It is obvious that word order classes consist of semantic groups, as well as syntactic groups; Carlton’s 6th position consists of adjectives meaning quantity, and the 4th position consists of numerals, etc. And for further semantic evidence, *micel* which has the meaning concerning quantity can occur both in the 6th and 4th positions, but not in the other positions. Also *healf* which usually takes the position of normal adjectives (the 2nd position) sometimes takes the 6th position. In this connection, Mitchell points out that the numeral can also appear in the 6th position instead of the 4th position which is the normal position for the numeral (Mitchell 1985: Vol. I, p. 69). Another example shows that human genitives precede the head nouns, while non-human genitives follow the head nouns in the late Old English period. Thus the word order makes noun phrases semantically well-organized.
- (iii) In addition, it can be said that word order is partly a stylistic device. There seem to be stylistically preferred constructions of noun phrases. For example, shorter words or simpler phrases precede longer words or more complex phrases. This should be one of the characteristics of English which had already been established in Old English. For example, phrasal modifiers take rear positions in Old English as well as in Modern English. Furthermore, Old English genitive nouns which have no modifiers of their own precede the head, or it might be said, in the reverse cause and effect, that the prenominal genitives cannot have their own modifiers. Sørensen’s “Adjective — Substantive — Adjective” is another example. According to him, there is a stylistic rule in Old English, that is, for

parallel words to be kept apart (Sørensen 1956: p. 262). Also, the word order, such as “*eall* — pronoun — *oðer* — adjective”, might have been stylistically good. Some of the phrases which do not follow the rule, “6th – 5th – 4th – 3rd – 2nd – 1st – Head” might have been stylistically bad rather than unacceptable. Gleason says that some of the differences in orders of Modern English adjectives are “stylistic” (Gleason 1965: p. 413). Thus, compared with inflections, word order can produce stylistic variations.

Thus, the grammar of Old English, or probably, of any language, is not only a syntactic but also semantic and stylistic device. In order to study the grammar of a given language at any stage of its history, one should distinguish syntactic, semantic, and stylistic factors and at the same time one should consider the relationships among these factors.

3. It cannot be simply said that the loss of inflections caused the fixation of word order during the Old English period.

It has traditionally been said that the loss of inflections caused the fixation of word order, and hence that both promoted each other. However, concerning nominal modifiers, the word order was completely fixed before the loss of inflections. To be sure, the fixation of word order closely relates to the loss of inflections, because word order replaces the role of inflections. But word order has more roles than inflections have as has been observed in 2 above. Word order functioned by itself as a part of Old English grammar. In other words, even if inflections had not been lost, word order must have played an important role in Old English. But if word order had not been fixed, inflections could not have been lost. Therefore, the fixation of word order could have been the cause of the loss of inflections.

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