
**A Poster Presentation for the Sixth International Conference
for Graduate Students on Diverse Approaches to Linguistics**

Title: The Demonstrative Pronouns in Old English:
a Textual-Structural Analysis

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Keywords: Ælfric of Eynsham, demonstrative pro-
nouns, Old English, structural linguistics,
text linguistics

Old English has two demonstrative pronouns: *se*^M, *seo*^F, *þæt*^N and *þes*^M, *þeos*^F, *þis*^N. This poster presentation surveys their core functions in an independent status (i.e. not functioning as a determiner accompanied by a nominal phrase) in the corpus, Ælfric's (c. 955 – c. 1010) *Lives of Saints* (ÆLFRIC (1881–1900)), a collection of about forty sermons and saints' *vitae* and *passiones*, all written in rich and idiomatic Old English (West Saxon dialect). This long and varied collection gives us the opportunity to observe the ways in which the author made use of the available 'linguistic toolbox'; in our case, the demonstrative pronouns in diverse text-types. An analysis of all of the occurrences in the corpus — a little less than a thousand for both pronouns in total — reveals they can be categorized into a relatively small number of textual-structural types, some of which are quite unexpected and hitherto undescribed, yet are common and systematic in Ælfric's language.

Significant differences are apparent from describing the two pronouns' features and functional distribution. In the literature the difference between them is often described as bearing a spatial meaning (*þes*, *þeos*, *þis* as proximal, *se*, *seo*, *þæt* as distal), but after isolating the syntactic and textual environments in which they are not in actual structural opposition (ROSEN (2005, pp. 46–47)), it appears that the cases in which there exists genuine selectability between them are very limited, and describing them in spatial terms might be anachronistic (see MUSTANOJA (1960, p. 168ff), LASS (1992, p. 114), and SOMMERER (2011) for further diachronic and synchronic support).

From the structural examination and analysis there emerges a clearer, more complete profile of the two pronouns and their refined use by Ælfric.

Examples for some of the functions, explained and given in systematic context in the poster presentation:

- (1) Taking part in the linguistic complex of introducing new characters into narrative — (Basilus, 1)

<p>Basilivs wes ge-haten svm halig biscop · / se wæs fram cyld-hade · swiðe ge-healdsum · / þeah þe he to langū fyrste · ún-ge-fullod wære ·</p>	<p>A certain holy bishop was named Basil; he (<i>se</i>) was very continent from childhood, although for a long period he was unbaptized.</p>
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- (2) A marked type of reference to nominal phrases — (Forty Soldiers, 253)

<p>Ure ealra fultum is on ðæs drihtnes naman · / se ðe geworhte heofonas 7 eorðan ·</p>	<p>The help of us all is in the name of the Lord, He (<i>se</i>) who made the heavens and the earth.</p>
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- (3) Mediating in the interface between textemes (the text's body and its doxology) — (Oswald, 287)

<p>Þæs halgan oswoldes bán wurdon eft gebroht / æfter manegum gearum to myrcena lande / into gleawceastre · 7 god þær geswutelode / oft feala wundra þurh þone halgan wer · Sy þæs wuldor þam ælmihtigan gode · / ðe on ecnyse rixað a to worulde · AMEN.</p>	<p>The holy Oswald's bones were afterwards brought — after many years — to Mercia, to Gloucester, and there God often showed many wonders through the holy man. For this (<i>þæs</i>; GEN.N.SG of <i>þæt</i>) be glory to the Almighty God, who reigns in eternity for ever and ever. Amen.</p>
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- (4) Pronominal antecedents; a special subset: taking part in signalling gnomic bipartite utterances —
(Forty Soldiers, 351)
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|---|---|
| <p>þ̅ þ̅ ðu þe sylfū nelt on þinū life becuman · / ne
do ðu þ̅ oðrum menn · [...]</p> | <p>That ($\text{þ̅}=\text{þæt}$) which (þ̅) you do not want to befall
for yourself in your life, do not do that (þ̅) to
another man.</p> |
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- (5) Representing the content of speech — (Chrysanthus and Daria, 73)
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| <p>Þis wearð þa gesæd sona þā fæder · / ȝ he beweop
þone sunu swilce he dead wære ·</p> | <p>Then this (<i>his</i>) was soon said to the father and
he wept for his son as if he were dead.</p> |
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- (6) As a part a linguistic formula for reminding the reader of the previous state prior to its change by
divine intervention (a device of narrative cohesion) — (Swithhun, 219)
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|---|---|
| <p>He wearð þa gehæled · ȝ hæfde his gesihðe · / ȝ
ham eode blyðe butan latteowe ana Se ðe lytle
ær þanon wæs gelæd þurh ðone oþerne ·</p> | <p>Then he was healed and had his sight, and went
home cheerfully alone without a guide, he (<i>se</i>)
who a little while before was led by another.</p> |
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- (7) Meta-linguistic reference in translation — (Memory of the Saints, 13)
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| <p>[...] abel iustus · þ̅ is se rihtwisa abel ·</p> | <p>[...] <i>abel justus</i> (that (þ̅) is ‘The Righteous Abel’).</p> |
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