LANGUAGE MONOGRAPHS

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EDITED BY

GEORGE MELVILLE BOLLING
Ohio State University

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Ohio State University

SAMUEL MOORE
University of Michigan

EDWARD SAPIR
University of Chicago

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THE GERMANIC CASE OF COMPARISON

WITH A SPECIAL STUDY OF ENGLISH

BY

GEORGE WILLIAM SMALL
Associate Professor of English, The University of Maine.

LINGUISTIC SOCIETY OF AMERICA
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TO THE MEMORY OF

JAMES WILSON BRIGHT

A GREAT SCHOLAR AND A GREAT TEACHER

1852 — 1926

He wæs swiðe snotor wer and soðfæst on spræce,
Rihtwis on dome and on ræde fore-gleaw.

Ælfric's Lives 1.116.4.

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PREFACE

The investigation embodied in the following pages represents a study of all the extant occurrences in Old English of one aspect of comparison, namely, the use of case for the expression of this relationship. The syntax and semantics of the *particle* of comparison have been studied in a previous work by the present writer (*The Comparison of Inequality*), and it is hoped to complete the study of this whole phenomenon in a third treatise on the *Mode of the Clause of Comparison*, which is now in preparation.

To establish the very existence of the case-construction of comparison as a frequent and idiomatic expression was the main purpose of the present study; to interpret the statistics and explain the syntax were secondary problems. Whatever one is enabled to say with respect to the conditions in OE cannot but have an important bearing upon the same problem in the larger field of General Germanic.

The method of this investigation had to be devised as the material accumulated. There are so few thorough studies upon the special problems of syntax that no established approach to this aspect of grammar can be said to have received general acceptance. The larger and more general treatises that have attempted to embrace the whole field have found it convenient to present data about the various grammatical categories in the briefest possible form; and most of these data had been handed down in a kind of grammatical tradition, while little had been the result of special and exhaustive investigation. The so-called syntactical studies embodied in a century of German dissertation writing, running the whole gamut of the grammatical categories with reference to single poems or prose pieces, have not justified themselves in method and have yielded only an occasional isolated bit of valuable information.

Since the advent of modern linguistic study, phonology and morphology have rightly received the intensive application of the best minds in the field of grammar. Syntax, the finer and more subtle aspect of grammar, representing as it does our very process of thinking, has quite properly been made to wait until modern comparative linguistics

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had placed the more elemental question of sound and inflection upon a scientific basis. The well known works of Professor M. Callaway, Jr., mark the beginning of the scientific study of the problems of syntax *per se*, in which a single syntactical phenomenon is studied in all its forms over the whole range of a given language or dialect. Until the entire field of English syntax has been covered in this manner, no authoritative pronouncement can be made upon the various problems involved.

Two expressions of opinion relating to the nature of the case of comparison itself, which in my judgment were based upon insufficient data, are those of Huchon and Behaghel, who classed the dative of comparison as a construction foreign to OE. The former in his interesting but uncritical compilation [1], after pointing out certain uses of the dative that had been taken over from the prehistoric instrumental, locative, and accusative, mentions without any attempt at proof what have been *said to be* non-Germanic functions of the dative taken over directly from the Latin ablative. He says: En outre, une partie considérable de la littérature anglo-saxonne ayant été traduite ou adaptée du latin, il est naturel que, sous l'influence des textes originaux, l'ablatif ait été souvent rendu par le datif, après des comparatifs par exemple: Se ure Aliesend þe mara is and mærra eallum gesceaftum (Our Redeemer who is greater and nobler than all creatures, *Cura Past.* 300, Sw.), — witodlice micle ma mann ys sceape betera (How much then is a man better than a sheep, Mat. 12, 12).

Behaghel [2], after listing only a few examples of the dative of comparison from Gothic and two from Old Icelandic, raises the question as to whether this dative is genuine OE idiom:

'*Guþlac*, 1287, sunnan beorhtra (echt ae. ?).'

The present treatise has brought out for the first time the actual strength of the case-construction in OE, and by a method of *relative* strengths has established a means of comparing and estimating this and other constructions in General Germanic and in Indo-European. Concerning the native quality of this dative of comparison, one can expect to form an intelligent opinion only through a general view of all the available evidence that has been preserved for us. The present

1. René Huchon, *Histoire de la Langue Anglaise* 1.203. Paris: Armand Colin, 1923.

2. O. Behaghel, *Deutsche Syntax* 1.651. Heidelberg: Winter, 1923.

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writer interprets the facts (see Chapter VI) as showing that the OE dative of comparison is definitely in the tradition of a *native* Germanic case-construction, which developed quite normally out of a Pre-Germanic ablative of comparison.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge my indebtedness to Messrs. C.T. Onions of Magdalen College, Oxford, and W. A. Craigie of Oxford and Chicago, both of whom read the MS and offered many valuable suggestions. To Professors J.W. Bright and Hermann Collitz of The Johns Hopkins University, my former teachers, I owe more than can be set forth here, especially for the general approach to such a subject as the present one. Professor H.C.K. Wyld of Merton College has my deepest gratitude for his many personal kindnesses and inspiring conferences on this and other grammatical subjects.

G.W.S.

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