

## The definite determiner in Early Middle English: What happened with *þe*?

Cynthia L. Allen  
Australian National University

### Abstract

This paper offers new data bearing on the question of when English developed a definite article, distinct from the distal demonstrative. It focuses primarily on one criterion that has been used in dating this development, namely the inability of *þe* (Modern English *the*, the reflex of the demonstrative *se*) to be used as a pronoun. I argue that this criterion is not a satisfactory one and propose a treatment of *þe* as a form which could occupy either the head D of DP or the specifier of DP. This is an approach consistent with Crisma's (2011) position that a definite article emerged within the Old English (OE) period. I offer a new piece of evidence supporting Crisma's demonstration of a difference between OE poetry and the prose of the ninth century and later.

### 1. Introduction: dating the definite article

A long-standing problem in historical English syntax is dating the emergence of the definite article. A major difficulty here, noted by Johanna Wood (2003) and others, is defining exactly what we mean by an 'article.' Millar (2000:304, note 11) comments that we might say that Modern English does not have a 'true' article, but only a 'weakly demonstrative definite determiner' on Himmelmann's (1997) proposed path of development for definite articles. However, no one can doubt that English has moved along this path from a demonstrative determiner to something that has become more purely grammatical, with loss of deictic properties. For generative diachronic syntacticians, following Giusti (1997), the relevant syntactic change is commonly taken to be a shift of what we can call the 'proto-

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article' from being the specifier of DP (a demonstrative) to being the D head (an article). This is the general approach argued for by Wood (2003) and the one I will adopt here, without addressing more theory-dependent details of analysis.

Among those who assume this general sort of development, there are different views on when the shift from specifier to head took place. Philippi's (1997) placement of this development in the Late Middle English period is generally rejected by later researchers, who assume that it happened sometime in the Early Middle English (EME) period. The accounts that have been offered are vague on the exact date, and not without reason, given the paucity of English writings in the late eleventh and the twelfth centuries. There can be no doubt that substantial changes took place within the determiner system in EME. Besides the near-total loss of inflection of the demonstratives, we have the 'paradigm split' investigated in Millar (2000). This was the split of what was a single paradigm into a new distal demonstrative *that*, developed from the neuter singular nominative and accusative form *þæt* in Old English (OE), versus the definite article *the*, originating in the masculine nominative singular form *se*. It is reasonable to try to tie these changes together in some way.

In this paper, I will add new data bearing on the question of when English can be assumed to have a determiner as the D head and discuss some implications of these facts. The evidence supports the position that before *þe* became a 'dedicated' article (i.e. only an article), there was a long period when the same forms could be used either as articles, occupying the D head, or as demonstratives, in the specifier position. In section 2, I briefly sketch some well-known facts about the differences in the determiner system between OE and later English. Section 3 is the main part of the paper, in which I will take a closer look at a diagnostic that has been proposed for dating the emergence of the definite article. This proposed diagnostic turns out to be problematic, and in section 4 I add some results of my research into determiners with externally possessed body parts to the evidence provided by Crisma (2011) that the article had already emerged in the late OE period. Section 5 summarizes the main conclusions and points to some future avenues of research.

## 2. The Determiner in Old English

To avoid making a judgement on the correct analysis when no specific analysis is being discussed, I will use the term 'determiner' as a cover term for articles and demonstratives. I will also sometimes use the term 'article-

like' for forms which are followed by a noun rather than used pronominally and which do not have clear deictic force.

The two most important non-syntactic changes that affected the determiner *se*<sup>1</sup> can be outlined briefly. This determiner covered a functional range from a clearly deictic and distal meaning to being essentially indistinguishable from a mere marker of definiteness. The masculine and feminine singular nominative forms, *se* and *seo*, respectively, differed from all other members of the paradigm in beginning with *s-* rather than *þ-*. They succumbed to paradigmatic pressure by becoming *þe* and *þeo* respectively.<sup>2</sup> After a period of variation, the reflex of the masculine nominative singular form eventually replaced all the other forms and thus became indeclinable. The other major change is the shedding of the non-deictic attributes of the neuter singular nominative and accusative form *þæt*, Modern English *that*. This form was already unlike the other forms early in OE in that it was used in some functions in which it did not refer to a neuter noun, e.g. *þæt was god cyning* 'that was a good king' at *Beowulf* line 11. I agree with Millar's (2000:320) conclusion that the initial impetus that led to the 'fissure' of this paradigm was not the developments that led to *the*, but instead those developments which fostered the emergence of *THAT* as a purely deictic element with its own new plural inflection *those*. I will not discuss this development further. Instead, I will focus on the relationship between the syncretism of forms and the loss of inflectional categories of the old determiner and the uses of its reflexes in EME.

Of particular importance to the discussion is the fact that *se* and the other members of the paradigm could be used without a following noun, that is, pronominally, in positions where we would use the personal pronouns *he*, *she*, or *they* in Modern English. Some examples of this use in EME will be given in the next section. Wood (2003:67) pointed out that when the determiner became unavailable to be used pronominally, it was no longer a demonstrative, but an article. However, pronominal use only shows that a given form is not an article in a particular instance; it does not tell us whether this form is an article in other uses. Watanabe (2009:367) adopts

<sup>1</sup> I use small capitals for a lexeme when it might cause confusion to use a particular inflected form such as *se*, which might be interpreted as referring specifically to the masculine singular nominative form rather than including feminine *þa*, etc.

<sup>2</sup> In my own text, I will use *þ* without distinguishing the spellings <þ> and <ð>, which represented the same interdental fricative. However, I will preserve the spellings in all examples presented. The difference in spelling is very important in such matters as identifying scribal hands, etc. but it is not relevant to the matter in hand.

the loss of the pronominal use of the determiner as the best diagnostic for determining when the definite article developed, although he does not put a time on the loss of pronominal functions. Since this putative diagnostic is one which has been advocated recently, it is important to establish how well it works.

There are problems with this proposed diagnostic even before we look at the question of whether *þe* ever was used as a pronoun. Crisma (2011:176) notes that if we treat a form as a definite article only if it is not used in any demonstrative functions or as a pronoun, that is, only when it is a ‘dedicated’ article, we would have to exclude German from the languages that have an article. I have argued in Allen (2006, 2007b) that *se* and other forms of this determiner could be either the specifier of DP or the D head in OE, which is consistent with Crisma’s findings discussed in section 4. Wood (2007a, b) also suggests that in some circumstances the distal demonstrative already occupied the D head in OE. I will assume that when this element is in the D head, it can be called an article.

The preceding discussion indicates why the loss of the ability to serve as a pronoun cannot be a diagnostic for determining when the article came into existence (as opposed to a diagnostic for when *se* or its reflex *þe* ceased to be a demonstrative). However, information about the behavior of *þe* and its variation with other forms in EME is certainly important to our understanding of the development of the determiner system. In the following section, I will present some fresh information bearing on the question of how *þe* replaced the inflected forms of the determiner. I will also show that *þe* was in fact used pronominally in EME. The empirical detail provided in this section also adds more generally to our understanding of how the contraction of the old determiner to non-anaphoric functions proceeded.

### 3. The Disappearance of Pronominal *se(o)* Reflexes

We cannot confine our investigation of pronominal uses of the determiner to only the *þe* form, but must also consider the pronominal use of other forms in the same paradigm, since inflected forms varied with indeclinable *þe* for some time. A complication arises here from the development of *þæt* as a pure demonstrative. I will use ‘reflexes of *se(o)*’<sup>3</sup> to cover both *þe* (whether used for the masculine singular nominative or in some newer function) and inflected forms, e.g. the masculine singular accusative

<sup>3</sup> I will occasionally use *se* when referring to the OE paradigm when it is useful to make it clear that I am not excluding neuter forms.

*þone*. Since we are only concerned with the pronouns that can be used instead of the personal pronouns corresponding to modern *he*, *she*, and *they*, when these refer to humans, we can ignore neuter forms, which are used for humans only in texts maintaining the OE gender system. The facts presented below are the result of a combination of searches in two parsed corpora, *The Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English* (Taylor, Warner, Pintzuk & Beths 2003, henceforth YCOE) and *The Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Middle English 2* (PPCME2, Kroch & Taylor 2000), Laing's ongoing (2013-) *A Linguistic Atlas of Early Middle English* (LAEME), and my own inspection of texts, including some not included in any of these invaluable resources.

The following discussion of the use of SE(O) in EME will focus on four main issues:

- demonstrative pronouns with clear deictic force
- demonstrative pronouns used as relative pronouns
- demonstrative pronouns used as personal pronouns
- *þe* as a pronoun

Some clarification of the third and fourth dot points is in order. The distal demonstrative can of course still alternate with personal pronouns in Modern English, e.g. *The people who stood by me in my time of trouble, those/they are my friends*. Here the pronoun has stress and refers to a class of people, rather than specific individuals and so there is no co-reference. However, the demonstratives can no longer be used in the most basic anaphoric use of a (third person) personal pronoun, which is to express co-reference with an antecedent introduced in the preceding discourse, as in *John and Jane have some news. They/\*those are getting married*. When people speak of the loss of the ability of the distal demonstrative to be used 'independently,' it is this particular type of pronominal use that they mean, and this is what I will mean by 'used as a personal pronoun.' This development is relevant to the reflexes of SE(O) generally. When it comes to the specific form *þe*, however, the use as a 'stand-alone' pronoun in any function is what is at issue.

Tracing the loss of the independent use of SE(O) and its reflexes turns out not to be a simple task for more than one reason. First, *se* > *þe* was a change that happened at different times in different dialects. As Watanabe (2009:367, note 7) observes, we must distinguish the replacement of the form *se* with *þe* as the form for the nominative singular masculine determiner from the spread of *þe* as the form used for other combinations

of case, number and gender. This means that tracking the loss of the ability of *þe* to be used as a pronoun cannot be done without studying the different morphological systems of individual texts of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Before looking at those texts, however, it is necessary to say something about the situation in OE, where we will focus on the use of the form *þe* in article-like functions as well as making some comments on the pronominal uses.

### 3.1 *þe* in Old English

The spread of *þe* is generally assumed to have begun in the north, as this form (along with *þ-* forms of the feminine determiner) is very frequently found in the Northumbrian *Lindisfarne Gospels* of the late tenth century; see Ross (1937) and Allen (1997). The *þ-* forms are also found in the Mercian part of the tenth century *Rushworth Gospels*: see Campbell (1959:§§11, 708). In both these sources, the *þ-* forms are in variation with the *s-* forms. Millar (2000:329) illustrates early pronominal use with *ðe* translating Latin *qui* ‘he who, whoever’ in the *Lindisfarne Gospels*.<sup>4</sup>

Before moving on to EME, it can be noted that we find a very few examples of *þe* substituting for other determiner forms already in ‘classical’ OE texts. This subject is addressed by Wood (2003:68-71). Since Wood has a smaller corpus available to her than the YCOE, the following comments update her discussion.

The most convincing substitution of *þe* for *se* that I have found is in the text of *Orosius*:

- (1) *ymb seofon hund wintra & ymb lytelne first þæs*  
*after seven hundred winters and after little time DET:GEN.SG*  
*þe hie ærest Diþa þe wifmon getimbrede,*  
*that it:FEM.ACC.SG first Dido SE woman(M)NOM.SG built*  
 ‘seven hundred years and a bit more after the woman Dido first  
 founded it [Carthage]’  
 (coorosiu,Or\_6:1.133.7.2811)

<sup>4</sup> In Allen (1997) I argue that although *ðe* (and the rarer *se*) had already spread into accusative contexts, the distinctive masculine accusative singular form *ðone* had not spread into nominative contexts. That is, the situation was one of structured variation rather than simple confusion of the forms, showing that the case categories were maintained despite the syncretism of some forms.

This example is noted in Bately's introduction as the sole example of the replacement of *se* by *þe* in this text (Bately 1980: xlix). It is a surprisingly early example because it comes from the 'Lauderdale' manuscript, one of the four manuscripts designated by both Campbell (1959:§16) and Bately (1980:xxix) as the basis of our understanding of Early West Saxon. However, Bately also discusses the fact that although *Orosius* is considered to be Early West Saxon, some Mercian features can be identified in it and comments that 'How far the scribe of L is responsible for this state of affairs and how far his usage reflects that of his exemplar it is impossible to determine with any certainty' (1980:xxxix). Since we know that this form is found in some parts of Mercia in the tenth century, it is possible that this instance of *þe* is a case of scribe letting some of his own Mercian usage slip through in a text which he intended to be written in West Saxon. It is also possible that the occasional use of *þ-* forms in a manuscript written for the most part in West Saxon reflect a phenomenon that was already occurring in the speech of the southwest in the OE period; we can only speculate here.

Example (1) is the only convincing instance I have found of a substitution of *þe* for *se* in an early text.<sup>5</sup> The use of *þe* for the instrumental case is more common.<sup>6</sup> This spelling might reflect a reduced vowel in the old instrumental form *þy*. It is some interest to note that the examples of prenominal *þe* as an instrumental also come from texts of Mercian origin, although written mostly in West Saxon.

I am aware of a second convincing example of *þe* where we would expect *se* in article-like function in a text near the end of the OE period, presented by Wood (2003:69) as her example (5).

<sup>5</sup> Wood (2007a) presents several more examples from the *Peterborough Chronicle*. These show that *þe* was used in article-like function in the Peterborough area in the first half of the twelfth century, but since they were all written by a scribe around 1131, they cannot be considered examples of this use in OE. Most of these examples are from annals added by this scribe, and the two examples that are not Interpolations are best treated as instances of the scribe letting his own grammar slip into his copying of earlier material. See Allen (2007a) for some discussion of the determiner inflections in the *Peterborough Chronicle*.

<sup>6</sup> We must include here Wood's (2003:69) example (4), from *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, where *þe uplican dome* 'following the divine judgement,' must be glossed as instrumental, not nominative. Campbell (1959:§709) comments on the interchange of *þy*, *þon*, and *þe* in phrases like *þon ma* 'the more', but does not cover all instances of instrumental *þy*. The vowel is assumed to be long in *þy* and *þe*, but this length is not usually marked in manuscripts and is not indicated here.

Although this example, from *Apollonius of Tyre*, is a convincing example of *þe* substituting for *se*, it is important to note that it is contained in a manuscript from the middle of the eleventh century. Furthermore, the editor of this text judges that some of the spellings are probably the work of a scribe from Essex (Goolden 1958:xxx). By the middle of the eleventh century *þe* may be coming into use in areas such as Essex, although the scribe mostly writes in ‘classical’ West Saxon.

To sum up the article-like use of *þe* in OE, it seems to be fairly clear that this form was used in some instances for the instrumental case. The use of this form elsewhere is too infrequent for solid generalizations. However, it can be noted that the two convincing non-instrumental examples both involve a straightforward substitution of *þe* for the masculine singular nominative *se*. They also come from texts involving at least some Mercian influence.

Turning to *þe* used as a personal pronoun, Wood (2003:69) states that she found no examples in her corpus. In the larger corpus that has become available since then, namely the YCOE, I have found one genuine-looking example, in a Late West Saxon text. This is in manuscript (Cotton Julius E. vii), from the early eleventh century, close to the time when the text was written by Ælfric:<sup>7</sup>

- (2) þa awende þe hit to gode  
     *then turned he it to good*  
     ‘then he turned it to good’  
     (coaelive,ÆLS\_[Exalt\_of\_Cross]:165.5654)

The editor of this text (Skeat 1881-1900:vol. 2) translates *þe* as ‘he’ without comment. Nothing can really be made of a single example, which might be some sort of error. I found no examples of *þeo*, either in article-like or pronominal uses.

Summing up the situation in ‘classical’ OE, we can note that at this early stage, when *þ*- forms are only sporadic in the texts, we have no evidence of a loss of inflectional categories of the determiner.

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<sup>7</sup> There are a few more examples in this YCOE file (coaelive.o3), but they are all from the Life of St Vincent, which was added from a twelfth century manuscript to this edition for completeness.



### **3.2 Early Middle English: General remarks**

No northern texts are available for the EME period to enable study of how long pronominal *þe* was used in that part of England, and so it is texts from the midlands and the south that will be discussed here.

When we get past the early part of the eleventh century, it becomes difficult to find data that can be used straightforwardly. For one thing, by the end of the tenth century and into at least the middle of the eleventh century and later in some places, scribes in different parts of England mostly used what is now usually called ‘Standard Old English’ (Scragg 2013).<sup>8</sup> This means that scribes may have been using forms that did not reflect their native dialects and that obscured changes that were taking place in the spoken language. A second very important fact is that most of the writings in English that have survived from the century after the Norman Conquest were copies of OE material. Swan & Treharne (2000) and Treharne (2012), among others, have emphasized that these are by no means all simply slavish copies of earlier texts; even in copied material there is a good deal of adaptation to suit the current social situation. There is also sometimes addition of material that does not appear in the extant OE versions of copied texts. These adaptations and updates can yield information about changes that were happening in very early Middle English.

English writings from EME generally, but particularly from the twelfth century, must be carefully sorted into texts that are copies of OE material and the small number that are believed to have been first written in English in that period.<sup>9</sup> This is made the more difficult by the fact that in some cases, we are not certain whether the original composition was pre- or post-Conquest, and scholarly opinion frequently differs. Furthermore, a

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<sup>8</sup> Also sometimes called the ‘West Saxon *Schriftsprache*’ because it is essentially that of the Winchester School, spread by the Benedictine Revival of the 970s.

<sup>9</sup> I use the phrase ‘written in English’ to include translations made into English in the EME period, since the important point here is that they are likely to reflect the English of a given period better than a copy from an earlier period (although the possibility of translation effects must be kept in mind). Copies can give us valuable clues to morphosyntactic developments, but they must be used with caution and with sufficient attention to a number of philological matters. Copies are generally most useful when we have looked at writings that more certainly reflect the language of their composer first, and that is what I have tried to do here.

given EME manuscript is likely to contain diverse materials.<sup>10</sup> This is the case, for example, with the British Library manuscript Cotton Vespasian D.xiv, a southeastern manuscript (considered by some scholars to be Kentish) that Laing (1993:83) dates as c12a2-b1, i.e. the second part of the first half of the twelfth century to the first part of the second half of that century, or mid-twelfth century. Most of the English in this manuscript is copied material, but there are some texts which were first written in English in this period. The largest of these texts, which are twelfth century translations from Latin, are included in the PPCME2 as cmkenthom1.

### 3.3 *þe* in ‘case-rich’ texts

The existence of texts like the ‘Kentish Homilies’ is a boon to the study of the loss of *se(o)* reflexes as pronouns referring to human beings because these southeastern texts are ‘case-rich’ EME texts. That is, in these texts the inflection that concerns us is well maintained. The *se(o)* reflexes still convey the old category distinctions, and although we find late OE/EME changes in form such as *þam* > *þan*, there is no substitution of *þ-* in the *s-* forms or use of a nominative determiner form in other than its historical functions.<sup>11</sup> This means that these texts can provide information relating to the relationship between the spread of *þe* and the disappearance of demonstrative pronouns used as personal pronouns.

Looking at these texts, we can quickly rule out the possibility that the pronominal use of *se(o)* might have disappeared even when this determiner maintained full inflection. We find ‘stand-alone’ *se(o)* in one of these texts in all the functions it had in OE. In example (3) we have the use of the demonstrative pronouns with a clear deictic force:

<sup>10</sup> Sources such as Laing (1993) and especially Laing’s ongoing (2013-) *A Linguistic Atlas of Early Middle English* (LAEME) are of great use in sorting these matters out. I have used information from LAEME when possible, but this wonderful resource is under construction and does not yet include information on all the EME manuscripts mentioned here.

<sup>11</sup> Another change worth noting is a strong tendency in these texts to use a doubled pronoun, e.g. *þæt þæt* for *þæt þe* and *þa þa* for *þa þe*, and the relative particle *þe* is sometimes written *þa*, presumably reflecting some orthographic confusion caused by vowel reduction.

- (3) **Seo** studdedede emb þa uterlice þing, **þeos**  
*SE:FEM.NOM.SG cared. about the outer things* *DES:FEM.NOM.SG*  
 oðer þa inwardlice þing  
*other SE:NEUT.ACC.PL inner things:(NEUT)ACC.PL*  
 gemyndelice besceawode  
*thoughtfully contemplated*  
 ‘The former was concerned about the outer things, while this latter  
 one thoughtfully contemplated the inner things’  
 (CMKENTHO,136.71)

In this example, the feminine distal demonstrative *seo* is contrasted with the proximal *þeos*, and its use has the function noted by Mitchell (1985) for OE of clearing up the ambiguity that would be caused by the use of a personal pronoun: an introductory *heo* ‘she’ would be ambiguous because both Martha and Mary are mentioned in the preceding discourse. Mary, being the person last mentioned, would be the most natural antecedent for *heo*, but the use of the demonstratives indicates that Martha, mentioned earlier in the discourse, is the referent of *seo*, and *þeos oðer* refers to Mary. The demonstratives have a deictic function in the discourse. However, as Mitchell comments for OE (§321), in some sentences it is hard to distinguish the independent demonstrative pronoun from a personal pronoun; in other words, the deictic force is not as clear. This is still true in this twelfth century text. Consider example (4):

- (4) **Seo** hæfde ane suster þe wæs genæmd Maria.  
*SE:FEM.NOM.SG had a sister that was named Mary*  
**Seo** wæs sittende æt ures Drihtenes foten  
*SE:FEM.NOM.SG sitting at our Lord's feet*  
 ‘She had a sister that was named Mary. She was sitting at our Lord’s  
 feet’  
 (CMKENTHO,134.6-7)

Here, the *seo* in the first clause is used like a personal pronoun, that is, it is co-referential with the antecedent Martha, introduced in the preceding sentence as the owner of the house Jesus visited. This is the most basic anaphoric use of a third person personal pronoun. *Heo* would not have been ambiguous, Martha being the only woman introduced so far. It is not clear why the demonstrative pronoun was used instead of the personal pronoun.

However, the use of *seo* to refer to Mary in the second clause falls under the ‘subject changing’ function of demonstrative pronouns discussed in Mitchell (1980:§320). The first *seo* is possibly used for parallelism. Since we could just as easily have ‘explained’ the use of *heo* for both of these, however, it is best at this point simply to note that in this text we have a clear indication of the continuation into the twelfth century of the OE use of the determiner in pronominal functions that were later lost.

Turning to the use of the demonstrative as a relative pronoun, we find nearly the same possibilities as in OE. The demonstrative pronoun is found as a relative pronoun after a nominal head, as in (5):<sup>12</sup>

- (5) And his agene dohter Mariaen he geaf Alpheon, of  
*and his own daughter Mary he gave Alphaeus:DAT of*  
 þære wæs geboren Jacob se læsse.  
*SE:FEM.DAT.SG was born James SE:MASC.NOM.SG less*  
 ‘And his own daughter he gave (in marriage) to Alpheus, of whom  
 was born James the lesser’  
 (CMKENTHO,139.148)

However, this use of the demonstrative is uncommon in this text, where the relative particle *þe* is by far more usual.

One type of relative clause used in OE but not found in this text is a nominally headed relative clause in which a demonstrative used as a relative pronoun is followed by the relative particle *þe* (the *SE þe* relative). Although there are no examples in this text, we do find occasional examples in other texts of this period and a bit later that still have some inflection for case of demonstrative pronouns. I will not discuss nominally headed relative clauses further here, but will only note that the use of a demonstrative as a relative pronoun seems to have been on the wane in these relatives even in case-rich dialects like this one. In EME a relative particle on its own, the old *þe* or its replacement *þat*, is the dominant relative marker in this period.

Another continuation of an OE type of relative clause is illustrated in (6):

<sup>12</sup> When there is no relative particle following the demonstrative, as in (5), it is often difficult to be certain of whether we are dealing with a relative pronoun or simply a demonstrative pronoun. This difficulty is exacerbated by editorial practices adding modern punctuation and capitalization, especially in older editions. Similarly, we might want to analyze the second *seo* of (4) as a relative pronoun. However, the examples that I have identified in this text as relative pronouns are also so identified by the PPCME2.

- (6) & fostrode þone þe is God & mann,  
*and fostered SE:MASC.ACC.SG that is God and man*  
 ‘and fostered him who is God and man’  
 (CMKENTHO,137.81)

I will refer to the construction illustrated in (6) as the ‘demonstrative headed’ relative.<sup>13</sup> Another type of relative clause lacking a nominal head will be discussed below.

To summarize, in the case-rich texts just discussed, we find orthographical evidence of vowel reduction and other phonological changes that resulted in syncretism of forms. The possible uses of the demonstrative pronoun remain the same as in OE, although the use of the demonstrative as a relative pronoun has become much less frequent.

### 3.4 Texts with reduced inflection

EME texts that have indeclinable *þe* in variation with the old inflected forms are particularly important in investigating the connection between the reduction of morphology and the article-like behavior of *þe*. These texts make it clear that things were more complicated than a simple loss of the ability of *þe* to stand on its own when *se* was replaced by *þe*.

The British Library manuscript Cotton Vespasian A.xxii, written in one hand, is also essentially southeastern in language but of the later C12b2-C13a1 period (Laing 1993: 82).<sup>14</sup> Along with identifiable copies of OE homilies, this manuscript contains two homilies not found elsewhere (Clemoes 1997:48). These were published in Morris (1867-8:231-243) as *An bispell* and *Induite uos armatura dei*, but are not included in the PPCME2 or (yet) in LAEME. Strikingly different from the copied homilies of this manuscript in their more advanced deflexion, these two pieces are likely to be of EME origin. In them, we find a situation in which *þe* co-occurs with inflected forms. The determiner *þe* has made serious inroads into article-like positions in prepositional phrases; of the singular objects of prepositions, the determiner is *þe* in 18 instances, while an inflected form is used only eight times. Plural nouns in any function are also frequently preceded by *þe*. In contrast, singular subjects and objects overwhelmingly

<sup>13</sup> Taylor (2014:473-477) argues that in Old English, the head of such a relative might be internal or external. I will not take a position on the analysis of these relatives here.

<sup>14</sup> Laing (1993:82) notes that there is some mixture of dialect features, and that it has been suggested that the manuscript derives from a West-Saxon original. For our purposes, the important fact is that these pieces have features that were not found in OE.

use an inflected form.<sup>15</sup> This is usually the expected reflex of the OE form (*se* for masculine nominative singular, *si* for feminine nominative singular, etc.) although there is some apparent confusion in the use of *seo* with *king*. Not much can be made of this, since there is only a single occurrence of *seo king* in these two pieces. It is possible that this historically incorrect form is the result of the scribe's attempt to use forms which were not a part of his own linguistic competence, but it is clear enough that a system which preserves agreement between the determiner and the noun lies behind the language of these texts. The use of the indeclinable *þe* with the objects of prepositions has been introduced into this language as an option, probably because the function of such noun phrases was clear enough without inflection. It is likely that the use of *þe* with plurals reflects the phonological collapse of the old *þa(m)* with *þe*.

It is noteworthy that in these texts, the use of pronominal SE(O) reflexes seems to have become quite restricted. Although *se* remains a distinctive form for the masculine nominative singular demonstrative in these texts, it is not used like a personal pronoun. SE(O) reflexes continue to be used in demonstrative-headed relatives:

- (7) **Se**                    þe    of þese brad    ett    ne    sterfeð    he    nefer  
*SE: MASC. NOM. SG that of this bread eats not dies he never*  
 'He who eats of this bread, he will never die'  
 Morris 1867-8 241.8

There is one example with what looks like a SE(O) reflex used as a relative pronoun following a nominal head:

- (8) Þu    ahst    to    habben    ehte    wepnecin. **þa**    beod    seold...  
*Thou ought to have eight weapons which are shield*  
 'You ought to have eight weapons, which are shield...'  
 Morris 1867-8 (243.22)

There is another possible analysis of (8), however, which results from the orthographical variations found in this period: *þa* might be representing the relative particle *þe* here, since in an unstressed position, these would have

<sup>15</sup> The single possible counterexample I have found in these texts is *þe wlcne to gað* at Morris 239.24, translated by Morris as 'when the welkin shall vanish.' It is possible that *wlcne* is to be taken as a plural here, especially given that the expected singular form *geð* is used in the three unambiguously singular examples in these two texts.

been pronounced identically.<sup>16</sup> Even if (8) is to be regarded as a genuine example of *þa* in a relative, it is clear enough that the usual relative marker is the relative particle *þe*, and *SE(O)* reflexes are at best an infrequently used option – these two texts amount to only 221 lines, but they contain 25 examples of nominally-headed relative clauses using the indeclinable particle.

To sum up, in article-like use, indeclinable *þe* varies with inflected reflexes of *SE(O)* in these homilies, but this variation seems to be constrained by the grammatical role of the nominal phrase. It is rather surprising to find that *þe* apparently did not enter the determiner paradigm first as a replacement of *se* in this language, but this makes sense if contact with dialects that used *þe* more widely caused speakers to adopt this form, but to use it only where the old inflected forms were no longer very useful. The pronominal use of the determiner seems to have become more limited than in OE, although the brevity of these texts precludes any strong conclusions based on what does not appear in them. The demonstrative pronoun continues to be used in demonstrative-headed relatives, where it does not have a simple anaphoric function, but refers to a hypothetical entity introduced by the relative clause.

Despite the caveat above concerning drawing conclusions from the non-appearance of particular features in the texts discussed in this subsection, it is probably significant that this restricted pronominal use of demonstratives in Vespasian A.xxii is similar to what we find in other texts of the twelfth century with more advanced syncretism of forms, which will be discussed in the next subsection.

### 3.5 Case-impooverished texts

We turn now to the evidence for what happened to the pronominal use of *þe* in dialects in which *þe* had become the clearly dominant form. The late preservation of inflectional categories is restricted to southeastern texts. In other parts of the country, we find advanced syncretism of determiner forms in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Two well-known case-impooverished texts of the second half of the twelfth century that will only be briefly mentioned here are the *Ormulum* from c. 1180 and the Final Continuation of *Peterborough Chronicle*, which covers 1132-1154. The approximate date of the manuscript is assumed to be that of the final entry. In

<sup>16</sup> The fact that (8) is a non-restrictive relative is no bar to this analysis, since *þe* could be used in such relatives.

these two texts indeclinable *þe* has completely replaced the inflected forms of SE(O) and we find none of the old pronominal uses under investigation here. However, we find some pronominal uses in manuscripts written around the same time as the *Ormulum* or somewhat later but preserving more case inflection. It is interesting to see that the pronominal uses of SE(O) reflexes are greatly restricted in these texts. The following discussion will focus on the form *þe*, since one of the questions of particular interest is in establishing whether this form was ever used in pronominal functions. However, I will make some comments on the retention of clearly inflected forms of the SE(O) paradigm.

Two manuscripts of particular interest and needing more detailed comment are Lambeth 487, dated C13a1 (c.1200) by LAEME, and Trinity College, Trinity B.14.52 (335), dated a bit earlier, C12b. These two manuscripts contain overlapping material, as discussed in Laing and McIntosh (1995), who provide helpful tables showing the correspondences between the texts in the manuscripts. Using the material in these manuscripts is tricky. First, all of it is likely to be copied material, as is the case with most EME writings that have come down to us. A thorough investigation of any differences in the forms and use of the determiner in the homilies known to have been composed in the OE period and those that might have originated closer to the time when they were copied into the Lambeth and Trinity manuscripts might yield some interesting results. In this paper, however, I will confine the discussion to one item that is shared by the two manuscripts but (being verse) is not included in the PPCME2, namely the *Poema Morale*.<sup>17</sup>

There is general agreement that the date of composition of the *Poema Morale* was circa 1170-1190. This means that the versions found in the Lambeth and Trinity manuscripts are fairly near the supposed time of composition (but see below). According to LAEME, the language of the Trinity version can be localized to west Essex, while that of the Lambeth version points to northwestern Worcester. By comparing the language of these two versions with each other as well as with the language of the writings discussed above, we can arrive at a better picture of the connection between the loss of inflection of the determiner and the disappearance of the pronominal use of *þe*.

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<sup>17</sup> This popular piece of verse is also found in five other manuscripts, of which Trinity, followed by Lambeth, seem to be the oldest (Laing 1992:570). As Laing discusses, multiple copies of a text can be very useful in establishing dialect characteristics.



In both the Lambeth and Trinity versions of the *Poema Morale*, uninflected *þe* predominates in article-like uses, but there is some retention of inflected forms. I will make no attempt at a detailed discussion of these forms here, but it is interesting to note that *se* is found six times in the Trinity version, all in the historically correct masculine nominative singular function, while Lambeth only has *þ-* forms. The Trinity version also has slightly more case-inflected forms than the Lambeth version. Both versions have frequent use of *þa* or *þo* for a plural, both in article-like functions or as a demonstrative pronoun, sometimes heading relative clauses.<sup>18</sup> For us, the important thing is that these versions from two different areas and different times in the twelfth century are essentially the same in the syntax of the reflexes of *se(o)*. That is, we find these reflexes in pronominal use, but not expressing co-reference with an antecedent. Looking specifically at *þe*, we find it frequently used in both the Lambeth and Trinity versions of this poem in relative clauses without a nominal head. For example, consider line 88 in the two versions, presented in (9):

- (9) a. **þe** þe deð godeswille uwer he mei him finden. (Lambeth)  
*þE that does God's will everywhere he may him find*
- b. **þe** godes wille doð aihware he maiȝ him finde. (Trinity)  
*þE God's will does everywhere he may him find*  
 '(He) who does God's will, he can find Him everywhere'  
*Poema Morale* 1.88, Morris (1867-8)

The Lambeth version (9a) begins with a left-dislocated demonstrative-headed relative, followed up by the resumptive personal pronoun *he*. Trinity (9b), however, has what can be called a 'fused' relative construction, in which the functions of a head and a relative clause marker are combined.<sup>19</sup> There is a tradition of using the term 'free relative' for any relative clause lacking a nominal head, for example recently by Taylor (2012:475). This use of this term is not universally accepted, but it is a convenient cover

<sup>18</sup> It is not always clear whether this indicates the retention of a different vowel in the plural or is just a spelling convention that has been retained after unstressed vowels had fallen together. It seems plausible that this spelling variation is due to homophony between the (unstressed) reflexes of *se* and the plural *þa* before the latter was replaced by *those*.

<sup>19</sup> This terminology follows Huddleston & Pullum's (2002:63) treatment of modern English *I've already spent what you gave me*.

term here for two types of relative clause.<sup>20</sup> The demonstrative-headed and ‘fused’ types behave similarly in using *þe* pronominally. This makes them different from relative clauses following a nominal head, which no longer seem to have used demonstrative pronouns as relative pronouns in texts of any dialect after about the middle of the twelfth century. There seems to be no consistent difference in the two versions in the use of one type of free relative or the other; Lambeth has the ‘fused’ type in other lines, and Trinity also has *þe þe* free relatives, as well as free relatives using *se þe*.<sup>21</sup>

Both the Lambeth and Trinity versions of the *Poema Morale* are believed to be copies of earlier versions, although the copies could not have been made terribly long after the time of composition. Laing (1992:571) says that it is generally accepted that the two belong to different textual stemmas, with each being at no fewer than two removes from the original. Given this, we need to say something about the possibility that the use of *þe þe* and fused relatives might be a copying effect, with a scribe substituting *þe* for *se*, as happens in some EME texts. We first note that the scribes of both the Lambeth and Trinity versions were ‘literatim’ copyists (see LAEME for Lambeth and Laing & McIntosh 1995 for Trinity). A literatim scribe was one whose practice was to reproduce the spellings of his exemplar more or less exactly, as opposed to a ‘translator,’ who updated the language of his exemplar to be more consistent with his own language.<sup>22</sup> This means that the *þe þe* relatives of these particular versions were presumably found in the scribes’ exemplars. It is possible that the originals had *se* and some translator scribes prior to the Lambeth and Trinity versions substituted *þe* because they were familiar with *se* and knew that they used *þe* in the functions of *se*. It is more economical to assume that *þe* was already widespread when the poem was composed in the late twelfth century and that the original had some *þe þe* relatives, perhaps in combination with *se þe* relatives. Intervening scribes may have extended the use of *þe þe*

<sup>20</sup> As Andrews (2007:214) notes, the ‘fused head’ relatives (the only type that he calls ‘free’ relatives) seem to be semantically similar to relatives with a demonstrative or pronoun in the head position. For EME, it seems best to analyze ‘fused’ *þe* as being in the complementizer position, but carrying some pronominal feature.

<sup>21</sup> The plural forms *þo þe* and *þa þe* are also found, as well as the occasional free relative using a form inflected for case. There is also one use of *þe* with plural reference in the Lambeth version, and I have found sporadic use of *þe* for a plural in other texts of the period also.

<sup>22</sup> For detailed discussions of scribal practice in the EME period, see Benskin & Laing (1981) and the introductory material to LAEME.

(or even replaced some existing instances with the more conservative *se þe*), but it seems most likely that once *þe* had become a commonly used form of the demonstrative, its use in free relatives was a real grammatical possibility in more than one dialect in the twelfth century. Also, if *þe þe* seemed unnatural to a scribe, he could always have substituted *he þe* without affecting the meter or rhyme.

In the thirteenth century, pronominal *þe* becomes quite unusual. However, a number of convincing examples appear in the various versions of the *Ancrene Riwe*. My investigation of this anchorite's guide is based primarily on the version used by the PPCME2, from Cotton Cleopatra C.vi, but for examples of interest, I have made some comparisons with the version found in Corpus Christi College 404 (known as the *Ancrene Wisse*). The relationship between the different versions of this rule is complicated, and there is disagreement about the date of both the composition of the original and the date of some of the manuscripts. For a discussion, see Millett (2005:vol.2, xiii), where it is concluded that the date of composition could not have been earlier than the mid-1230s. There is no dispute that both the Cleopatra and Corpus texts were written in the West Midlands, although there has been a good deal of discussion about the exact location. LAEME gives a location of South Shropshire for the Corpus manuscript, and North Herefordshire (i.e. a bit further south) for Cleopatra.

In both manuscripts, we find a clear difference between the article and the distal demonstrative, whether used pronominally or as a stand-alone pronoun. In its article-like use, *þe* had become an indeclinable form, that is, it was used for both numbers and in all grammatical relations. However, the article is sometimes inflected for case. In Cleopatra at least, there is also occasional use of *þeo* for a plural or feminine singular article. The demonstrative was not inflected for case (except in fixed expressions) but continued to make a distinction between specifically masculine singular *þe* and general plural or feminine singular *þeo*.<sup>23</sup>

As in the earlier texts discussed, we have *þe* in the 'fused' relative construction:

(10) and þonke þe hit sende þe.  
*and thank who it sent you*  
 'and thank the one who sent it to you'  
 (CMANCRIW-1,II.102.1236)

<sup>23</sup> Of course, the masculine includes the feminine in the headless relatives, where *þe* 'the one' refers to a hypothetical individual.

The Corpus version has *þe þe* here:

- (11) ant þonki **þe** þe hit sent te  
*And thank who that it sent you*  
 ‘and thank the one who sent it to you’  
 (Millett chapter 3.118, p. 56, fol. 34v)

Both types of relatives are found in both versions, the fused type with only *þe* being the more common, particularly in the Cleopatra version. It is rather surprising to find examples of *þe þe* free relatives in a text where they cannot possibly be due to substituting *þe* for *se* in an exemplar. It is even more surprising to find this clear example of *þe* used as a pronoun co-referential to an antecedent:<sup>24</sup>

- (12) þt ich þurch þe lare of þe hali gast mote halde  
*that I through the teaching of the holy ghost may hold*  
 foreward **þe** hit \$zetti \$me<sup>25</sup> þurch ouwer bonen  
*forward þE it grant me through your prayers*  
 ‘That I, through the teaching of the Holy Ghost may keep my promise, may he grant it to me through your prayers.’  
 (CMANCRIW-1,II.135.1794)

Corpus has a personal pronoun here; *þet Ich þurh þe lare of þe Hali Gast mote halden foreward, þe hit zetti me þurh ower bonen* (Millett chapter 3.791, p. 67, fol. 47v). With only one such example, it is not possible to say that this use of *þe* was a genuine option in the language. However, Richard Dance’s glossary to the Corpus version yields a clear example of *þe* where *he* would be used today:

<sup>24</sup> My search in the PPCME2 yielded another example parsed as D dominating only *þe*, at (CMANCRIW-1,I.42.12), but this seems to be an error in the keying in of the text, since instead of *þe* Dobson’s edition has a crossed *þ* here, which is an abbreviation for *þet*. So the example contains an ordinary relative clause, not a demonstrative used pronominally.

<sup>25</sup> The \$ indicates a change that the PPCME2 has made to the printed edition; here the edition has *zetime*.

- (13) ant he tahte him to his þridde breðer, þe wes dead biburiet.  
*and he directed him to his third brother that was dead buried*  
 He answered surprised  
*þe ondswarede wundrinde*  
 ‘...and he<sub>i</sub> directed him<sub>j</sub> to his<sub>i</sub> third brother, who was dead and  
 buried.. He<sub>j</sub> answered, surprised’  
 Millett Chapter 8, line 176 f. 114v.

This sentence is in an addition in the Corpus version and does not have a parallel in Cleopatra. It makes it harder to dismiss (12) as an isolated example. In both examples, *þe* is co-referential with an antecedent, but in both, more is going on than the most basic anaphora. In (12), *þe* is presumably stressed and emphatic, and in (13) the use of *þe* appears to have the ‘subject changing’ function of the demonstrative pronoun mentioned above. Three brothers are mentioned in this example, and the use of the demonstrative indicates that the brother referred to is not the one who is the subject of the preceding sentence.

Whatever we make of the preceding two examples, there is no denying the existence of a pronominal use of *þe(o)* that we have not encountered earlier, exemplified in (14):

- (14) þenchest þu þe þseið<sup>26</sup> hu þe spec oðer þeo of  
*thinkest thou he says how þE spoke or þEO of*  
 flesches galnesse.  
*flesh:GEN lasciviousness*  
 ‘Do you remember, he says, how he spoke (or she) of the lascivious  
 desires of the flesh?’  
 (CMANCRIW-1,II.200.2852)

This example is the only one of its kind that I found in my PPCME2 search, so I compared it with Millett’s edition of the Corpus version. This has essentially the same thing at chapter 4.1365, p. 104, fol. 74v. Further investigation of Richard Dance’s glossary and notes in volume two of this edition of the Corpus text makes it very clear that the use of *þe* and *þeo*

<sup>26</sup> The edition has *heseið*.

in the meaning of ‘such and such a person’ is a real feature of this text.<sup>27</sup> Several examples occur in the Corpus version, in passages not included in Cleopatra:

- (16) *seoððen Ich wes nest ishriuen, ant þet wes þenne ant of*  
*since I was last shriven and that was then and by*  
**þe** and *nempnin*  
 þE and name  
 ‘...since I was last shriven, and that was at such-and such a time  
 and by such and such a person, and name him’  
 Millet 2005 p. 28, 2.321, f. 16 v

- (17) *ant bisech him aleast greten þe ant te,<sup>28</sup> ant þet ha*  
*and beseech him lastly greet þE and þE and that they*  
 bidden for þe  
*pray for thee*  
 ‘and ask him finally to greet such-and-such and such-and-such and  
 that they pray for you’  
 Millet 2005 p. 28, 2. 326, fol. 17v

In both examples, the nun is being instructed what to say when a priest comes to visit, and is supposed to substitute the name of an actual person for *þe*. Dobson made this note to sentence (16) in his uncompleted edition, incorporated into Millett’s edition:

2.321 of *þe*: here *þe* is OE *sē* (as modified in early ME) used not as def. art. but as a masc. demonstrative, just as *þeo* (OE < *sēo*) is used as a fem. demonstrative, ‘that (woman)’.  
 (Millett 2006, vol. 2:67)

Dance’s glossary translates the *þe ant* ~ found in (17) as ‘this person and that.’ This pronominal use must be considered a real feature of the language in at least some area of the West Midlands at this time.<sup>29</sup> It has a similarity

<sup>27</sup> In addition, Dance lists some ‘independent’ uses of *þeo* that do not have a clearly deictic function. As the focus here is on documenting the specific form *þe* as a pronoun, these will not be discussed in this paper.

<sup>28</sup> The fricative assimilated to the preceding dental stop, hence *te*.

<sup>29</sup> D’Ardenne (1961:§90) provides further examples of pronominal *þe* in other manuscripts written in the same ‘AB’ language as the *Ancrene Wisse*.

with free relatives in that there is no co-referential antecedent for *þe*. It is not clear how widespread this pronominal use was or how long a history it had. The nature of most OE and EME texts is such that they would not be likely to record this use even in areas and times when it was possible, unlike this nun's rule, in which the reader is given specific instructions about what to say.

To sum up the details just presented, *þe* could still be used as a 'stand-alone' demonstrative pronoun in this dialect in which there can be little doubt that there was a definite article, distinct from the demonstrative.

### 3.6 Late pronominal usage

As is well known, the relevant inflection remained longest in Kent, where we find some retention of the old case system into the fourteenth century. In the *Kentish Sermons* in the Bodleian Library manuscript Laud Misc. 471, (dated C13b2 by LAEME), we find frequent use of *þe* in article-like position in all grammatical relations, alongside historically 'correct' reflexes of the inflected forms. The forms *se* and its variant *si* occurs 27 times in these sermons preceding nominative singular nouns, according to LAEME. The situation regarding gender is murky in this period, but it can be noted that both *se* and *si* are found with historically feminine nouns as well as masculine ones, possibly due to the phonological merger of the old masculine *se* and feminine *seo/sio*; at any rate these *s*- forms are almost completely limited to nominative functions. This suggests a retention of old case categories despite the availability of the invariant *þe*, found seven times in article-like function in these sermons (all genders combined).<sup>30</sup> We find three examples of *se þe* free relatives in this text, along with some examples of *þo þe* 'those that,' but no *þe þe* relatives. We find no examples of the reflexes of SE(o) serving as personal pronouns.

Millar (2000:329) notes this use of *se þe* (free) relatives in the southeast into the fourteenth century. Besides the three examples in the *Kentish Sermons*, *se þe* relatives are found even in a text in which *þe* (spelled *ðe*), rather than *se* is the dominant form in the article-like use. In *Vices and Virtues*, a text dating from an earlier period (around 1200) but

<sup>30</sup> 'Almost completely' because there is one unetymological use of *se* preceding a direct object. It is always difficult to know what to make of a single example, which could be a scribal error, possibly brought on in this example by the use of *se* in its historical function with the same noun as the subject of the next sentence. Whatever the explanation for this example, the use of the inflected forms is systematic enough to suggest that the scribe clearly had a good grasp of the old inflectional system, but the ambiguity of forms had increased, and the scribe was also comfortable using indeclinable *þe*.

more advanced in deflexion because it is from Essex rather than Kent, *se* is found only 8 times modifying a noun, where *ðe* is the normal form (a fact noted by Millar and confirmed by my own investigation). In contrast, as Millar observes, free relatives of the form *se ðe* are frequent in this text. Again, *ðe* is not used pronominally in free relatives or any other pronominal use. This use of *se þe* and the lack of *þe þe* is the same situation just noted for the *Kentish Sermons*. Millar suggested that *se* was specializing as a demonstrative pronoun in the southeast. It would not be surprising if in a time when *se* and *þe* were in variation, speakers would create a functional difference between the forms, favoring *se* in the contexts where it had always been particularly frequent in the language and was furthermore presumably stressed (i.e. free relatives), and mostly using the indeclinable form in an unstressed position.

The data presented above from texts not included in Millar's investigation (*Poema Morale*, *Ancrene Riwe*, and *Ancrene Wisse*) add to Millar's findings and necessitate a revision of his conclusion (p.329) that '...the new *þe* form was not used in these pronominal contexts [free relatives/CLA] except a very early stage in the developments...'

### 3.7 Summary and conclusions on pronominal *SE(O)*

A summary table such as table 1 on the following page must involve substantial simplification. For example, the judgement that *þe* is a 'majority' form glosses over the fact that *þe* may be dominant in one grammatical function, such as with the objects of prepositions, while forms showing the old inflections may be favored in another grammatical role.<sup>31</sup> The table also does not convey the complicated interaction between case, number, and gender; for example I have listed the *Ancrene Riwe* and the *Ancrene Wisse* as having some inflection without distinguishing article inflection from demonstrative inflection. Nevertheless it helps to give overview of complicated details. Note that 'used like a personal pronoun' means that the pronoun conveys only co-reference with an antecedent, lacking any deictic force. 'Stand-alone' pronoun groups together all uses of the specific form *þe* used as a pronoun not associated with a relative clause, and does not distinguish simple anaphora from other uses.

<sup>31</sup> The distinction I have made between 'minority' and 'limited' inflection in Table 2 reflects my judgement concerning whether the amount of inflection (particularly for case) is still substantial (minority) or infrequent (limited). This distinction does not cover inflection for number.



Table 1 summarizes the findings of the preceding sections.

Text	Date and dialect of MS	Inflection of <i>se(o)</i> ?	Indeclinable article <i>þe</i> ?	<i>se(o)</i> used like a personal pronoun?	<i>se(o)</i> rel. pro. w/ nominal head?	<i>þe (þe)</i> free relatives?	'Stand-alone' <i>þe</i> ?
Peterborough Chronicle Final Continuation	Peterborough, c. 1154	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
'Kentish' Homilies	C12a-2-b1, southeastern	Full	No	Yes	limited	---	---
Bispeþ, Induite	C12b-2-C13a1, mixed southern	Minority	Majority	No	No	Yes	No
Poema Morale (T)	C12b, W Essex	Limited	Majority	No	No	Yes	No
Poema Morale (L)	C13a, NW Worcester	Limited	Majority	No	No	Yes	No
Ancrene Riwele	C13a2, W Mid (Herefordshire)	Limited	Majority	No	No	Yes	Yes
Ancrene Wisse	C13b?, W Mid (N Shropshire)	Limited	Majority	No	No	Yes	Yes
Vices and Virtues	C13a1, SW Essex	Limited	Majority	No	No	No	No
Kentish Sermons	C13b2, Central Kent	Frequent	Frequent	No	No	No	No

Table 1: Summary of characteristics of EME *se(o)* reflexes

Looking at this table, we have these overall results:

1. A full range of pronominal uses of *se(o)* is still found after the first quarter of the twelfth century in a dialect in which the old inflections of the demonstrative were essentially maintained intact. However, the use of the demonstrative as a relative pronoun other than in free relatives seems to have been on the wane even in this dialect.

2. It is necessary to differentiate 'pronominal' uses into different types, since uses that can be treated as pronominal do not appear to have disappeared all at the same time.

3. By the second half of the twelfth century, *þe* had made serious inroads into the inflectional systems of all dialects for which we have evidence. In all dialects, the pronominal use of *þe* is restricted in function

compared with OE, if found at all. Essentially, it is not used to express simple co-reference with a definite antecedent.

What can we make of all this? There is clearly a connection between deflexion of the determiner and the shrinking of its range as a pronoun, but it is not a simple one. In all texts exhibiting advanced deflexion, the pronominal uses are limited if not missing entirely. However, the use of demonstrative pronouns like personal pronouns appears to have disappeared by the thirteenth century even in Kent, where there was still substantial inflection. We must remember here that the texts do not give us a complete picture of the pronominal possibilities. So for example, in the homily on Mary in Cotton Vespasian D.xiv, it is easy to find pronominal examples like (3) through (5). But if we only had the ‘Honorius’ pieces from this same manuscript, we might conclude that the pronominal use of *se(o)* was restricted to free relatives, just as *þe* was in texts where deflexion was further advanced. The lack of the other pronominal uses of *se(o)* in these short pieces, however, is almost certainly due to text type; while the Marian homily tracks characters in a narrative, Honorius’ *Elucidarium* texts discuss principles of Christian theology and make generalizations about the nature and fate of particular types of people. It is hardly surprising that the demonstrative pronoun was not used in its discourse tracking function when there are no participants to keep track of. Conversely, in the Final Continuation of the *Peterborough Chronicle*, which records events, we would not necessarily expect to find *þe þe* relatives even if they were a possibility in the language of the scribe who wrote these annals, so we cannot conclude much from their absence.

When we get to the later twelfth century, all the texts show considerable deflexion, although to different degrees. However, there seems to be a real pattern of pronominal *þe* being maintained in free relatives in more than one dialect, and we also have the use of *þe* as a demonstrative pronoun meaning ‘such and such a person’ in the *Ancrene Riwe* and *Ancrene Wisse*. This use is surprising, but it seems probable that the fact that the pronoun can still be regarded as inflected for gender and number made this pronominal use possible. We can treat the form *þe* in this dialect as sometimes having some pronominal features, in opposition with *þeo*, and sometimes devoid of pronominal features. All pronominal uses seem to have disappeared with the complete disappearance of inflected forms of the determiner.

### 3.8 Deflexion and the definite article

Linguists have naturally been attracted to the idea of linking deflexion with other changes in the determiner system. To be successful, however, any such account must deal somehow with the fact that some of these other syntactic changes apparently took place around the same time in the case-rich and case-poor dialects. The loss of inflection does not correlate with the development of the definite article. The biggest problem for any formal account linking the appearance of the definite article by the non-use of pronominal *þe* is probably the fact that this approach implies that the case-rich dialects of the twelfth century did not have a definite article, since they apparently retained all the old pronominal uses. Reading the Marian piece in Vespasian D.xiv, I cannot find any places where we would need *the* in Modern English in which no article is used (although indefinite articles are certainly still lacking).<sup>32</sup>

Watanabe's (2009) suggestion that the advent of the definite determiner was one of a cluster of changes triggered by the loss of agreement can be used as an illustration of the problems faced in trying to integrate deflexion with other changes to the determiner system. It is problematic for this analysis that some of the constructions which are supposed to have come into existence because of the lack of agreement are found in texts with very different amounts of agreeing forms. I will not discuss all the constructions which Watanabe attempts to link to a single change, but will focus on one. Watanabe makes the standard assumption that the definite article appeared in English when the demonstrative, phrasal and therefore a specifier, was reanalyzed as a head. Watanabe suggests that this reanalysis was necessitated by the loss of the agreement features of the head D. The fundamental idea is that while D had agreement features, the demonstrative raised from its initial position to the specifier of DP, but after the loss of agreement features, this determiner had to be merged directly as the D head (p. 368). Watanabe suggests that the same loss of agreement features in D

<sup>32</sup> The only sentence where there is a lack of definite articles is one which uses the external possessor construction, which is no longer possible in Modern English except in fixed expressions, at (CMKENTHO,138.106): *Deos sæt wel þan Hælende æt foten and æt heafde* 'This one (Mary) truly sat at the Saviour's feet and at his head.' As discussed below, the lack of a determiner was permitted in prepositional phrases but not with subjects and direct object possessa. In this text, however, definite determiners do not appear to be optional in prepositional phrases generally. The lack of a definite article in these two prepositional phrases may be connected to the fact that definiteness is already marked by the dative possessor, but it may be due to the conjunction; see section 4.

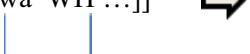
is responsible for the introduction of the sort of ‘wh-based free relative’ found in (18):

- (18) Wa se seið þet he bo hal  
*Who so says that he is whole*  
 ‘Whoever says that he is whole’  
 Lambeth *Poema Morale*, l. 114 (Morris 1867-8:167)

This is an innovation because in OE, the wh-based free relatives always had an initial *swa*:

- (19) Swa hwa swa oncnæwð þa blindnysse his modes  
*So who so perceives the blindness his mind:GEN*  
 ‘whoever perceives the blindness of his mind’  
 (cocathom1,ÆCHom\_I,\_10:260.65.1868)

In EME, the second *swa* weakened to *se*, and the first one disappeared. Watanabe proposes that it was the loss of the possibility of agreement that triggered this innovation: the first *swa* agreed with the indefinite *wh*-pronoun in OE. With the loss of agreement features, the first *swa* was no longer possible and dropped off, the scenario depicted in (20):

- (20) [<sub>DP</sub> [<sub>D</sub> swa WH ...]] ⇒ impossible
- 

Watanabe (2009:368, example 20.a’)

The difficulty here is that since this type of relative lacks the first *swa* in the *Poema Morale* and other texts of this period, this should mean that D has lost its agreement features, making demonstratives inflected for agreement no longer possible, since they should not be able to raise to the specifier of DP anymore. But as we have seen, such agreeing determiners are found in this period in variation with *þe*. In a Minimalist framework, it is possible to propose an analysis in which agreement is essentially optional by allowing more than one possibility for the features that an element carries. However, with this optionality, we would expect some instances of demonstrative pronouns in all the old pronominal uses, but we do not find this, even when agreeing forms are available.

It seems, then, that it is not possible to date the reanalysis of the phrasal demonstrative as the D head by the disappearance of pronominal *SE(O)* reflexes. I propose that the easiest way to deal with the variation found in the various dialects is to assume that the *SE(O)* reflexes could be in either the specifier of DP or be the D head. The form *þe* was normally the D head rather than a DP because it was no longer particularly useful as a pronoun, but it still could carry features that made it suitable as a pronoun in free relatives. In the next section, I will support the view that this dual analysis of *SE* goes back into the OE period.

#### 4. The Definite Article: A Development of the Old English period

The tools that have become available to linguists within the last few decades have made it much easier to add statistical arguments to the impressionistic view of Christophersen (1939) that OE had a definite article. Crisma (2011) provides compelling evidence from a corpus study that *SE* had already developed into a definite article by the late ninth century. Crisma documented a crucial difference between the early poetry and the prose of the late ninth century. Her essential finding was that in the poetry, which presumably enshrines earlier syntax in this respect, a definite interpretation is possible with a determinerless noun, but overwhelmingly in the prose, definite nouns appear with an overt determiner. In both the poetry and the prose, indefiniteness did not have to be marked.<sup>33</sup>

Crisma's paper marks an advance in the study of determiners in OE not only because of the finely-grained analysis of types of nominal expressions, but also because of her focus on nouns in the subject and object roles. Crisma notes that the use of the definite article in adverbials and the objects of prepositions tends to be idiosyncratic even in languages in which a definite article is well established. The examples that scholars provide to support the position that the marking of definiteness was not obligatory in OE usually involve the sorts that Crisma excluded, including objects of prepositional phrases and non-arguments and examples from poetry. While such examples illustrate that the marking of definiteness was not the same in OE generally and Modern English, they do not show that definiteness marking was simply optional. Crisma's careful study shows that certain types of nouns in argument positions only had a definite interpretation by

<sup>33</sup> As in Modern English, mass nouns and plurals which lack a determiner are always interpreted as indefinite, e.g. *wombats* is interpreted as a generic expression, a type of indefinite, in *wombats dig holes*.

the late ninth century when they were either inherently definite, such as proper nouns, or were overtly marked as definite. This represents a change from the poetry, and so I consider it to be well established that the definite article emerged within the OE period.

In a large sample, Crisma found only a small number of potential counterexamples to this generalization about the obligatoriness of definiteness marking in the prose of the ninth to twelfth centuries. For the most part, these fell into types also found in other languages which are normally regarded as having a definite article. In what follows, I would like to supplement Crisma's findings with some of my own findings from research which I have carried out into the syntax of the possession of body parts in OE.

As is well known, OE had an external possession construction for inalienable possession in which the possessor was in the dative case and not part of the phrase that contained the possessum. I'll refer to this as the Dative External Possessor (DEP) construction. Crisma made brief reference to this construction because four of the potential counterexamples to obligatory definiteness marking involved DEPs:

- (21) *to þære stowe lædedwæs, þær him mon*  
*to SE:FEM.DAT.SG place led was where him:DAT one*  
*sceolde heafud ofslean*  
*must head offcut*  
 'and was led to the place where he was to be beheaded'  
 (Bede\_5:17.456.5.4579) (Crisma 2013 ex. 17; my glossing)

Following Vergnaud & Zubizarreta (1992), Crisma assumes that the determiner of (21) was expletive, since the identification of the body part did not depend on the presence of the determiner. She proposes that in OE, an expletive determiner could be omitted in OE in some circumstances, including with externally possessed body parts.

Crisma is not alone in suggesting that there might be something special about the determiner in the DEP construction. Taylor (2014:448) remarks that definiteness was usually marked, but notes Traugott's (1992:172) comment that the definite determiner was frequently omitted with body parts belonging to the subject. However, the generalization that emerges from my study is that it is the grammatical relation of the possessum, not of the possessor, that is crucial. In both examples that Traugott uses to illustrate

her point, the determinerless phrase is *mid heafde*. The use of determiners in prepositional phrases was not completely obligatory in any period of OE. The majority of DEPs in OE do in fact have a possessum which is the object of a preposition, and the non-obligatoriness of the determiner in these DEPs follows from the optionality of determiners in prepositional phrases generally – although calling the determiner simply ‘optional’ is probably an overstatement. A determiner is usually used in these DEPs too in the prose, and the use seems to depend on the combination of verb, preposition and noun that is used. That is, the presence or not of a definite determiner in a prepositional phrase seems to be at least partly lexically determined in ways that are beyond the scope of this paper. I am not aware of any systematic study showing that determiners are more likely to be omitted in DEPs when the possessor is a subject, but my own study has found that the definite article is nearly always found when the possessed body part is the subject or the direct object (as defined by being marked with nominative or accusative case, respectively).

In my study, I collected prose examples of DEPs by searching selected files in the YCOE, using large list of body parts in subject and direct object roles. From the results of these searches, extracted the examples in which the possessor of the body part was a DEP which must be considered definite. For the poetry, I used *The York-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Poetry* (Pintzuk & Plug 2001), which I supplemented with my own examination of *Judith* (Griffith 1997 edition), *Andreas* (Krapp 1932:3-51) and *Genesis* (Krapp 1931:1-87). It should be mentioned that my selection of texts did not include all the texts searched by Crisma; specifically, I did not include very late texts or ones which I knew to involve manuscripts from different periods. The latter exclusion means that I did not capture example (21); I excluded the OE translation of Bede’s *History* because it is a composite edition, and using texts from different periods can muddy our findings for a particular period. However, (21) can be considered legitimate.

In addition to DEPs of the type that has been illustrated so far, the search also turned up a small number of examples of what Ahlgren (1946) referred to as the ‘blended’ construction in which the possessor is indicated both by an external dative and an internal possessive or genitive form:

- (22) Her Romane Leone þæm papan his tungon forcurfon  
*Here Romans Leo:DAT the:DAT pope:DAT his tongue carved*  
 ‘In this year, the Romans cut out Pope Leo’s tongue’  
 (cochronA-1,ChronA\_[Plummer]:797.1.596)

Since possessives are definite, these examples can be considered to mark the body part as definite.

My findings are summarized in Table 2, which is divided into two parts, for body parts which play the grammatical relation of subject or object.

		Subject Possessum	Object Possessum	Total
Poetry	No Det	8	6	14
	‘Blended’	0	0	0
	Det	3	2	5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>19</b>
Prose	No Det	2	3	5
	‘Blended’	7	2	9
	Det	42	38	80
	<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>94</b>

Table 2: Definite determiners in definite body part subjects and objects with external dative possessors

Looking at Table 2, we see a difference between poetry and prose similar to Crisma’s findings for definite nouns in general in OE. While determinerless body parts are in the majority with DEPs in poetry, they are very unusual in prose. With definite body part object objects, even when we add (21) to the figures in my table, we still have only four examples lacking a determiner. This is without adding any of the examples with a determiner that appeared in Crisma’s texts not covered in my study. One of the three examples I collected is similar to (21) in being a verb + particle combination semantically equivalent to *beheafdian* ‘behead’:



- (23) ah me þynceþ unscyldiglicre þæt him man heafod of aceorfe  
*but me seems less.guilty that him one head off cut*  
 buton oðrum witum.  
*without other punishments*  
 ‘but it seems more excusable to me that his head should be cut off  
 without other punishments’  
 (coblick,LS\_32\_[PeterandPaul[BiHom\_15]]:189.335.2461)

A plausible explanation for (21) and (23) is that they involve object incorporation, since the object is directly before the verb in both examples. However, more investigation into object incorporation in OE would be necessary to make this more than a suggestion. It should also be noted that of the six examples describing a decapitation in the texts I investigated, (23) is the only one lacking a determiner. The use of a determiner, as in (24), is more common:

- (24) þa heton þa consulas Hasterbale þæt heafod of aceorfan  
*then ordered the consuls Hasterbal:DAT the head off cut*  
 ‘then the consuls ordered that Hasterbal’s head be cut off’  
 (coorosiu,Or\_4:10.105.34.2190)

My remaining two exceptions are two repetitions of the same sentence in Wulfstan’s works:

- (25) & him ægðer þurhdraf isenum næglum ge fet ge  
*and him:DAT both pierced iron:DAT nails:DAT and feet and*  
 handa  
*hands*  
 ‘and pierced both his hands and feet with nails’  
 (cowulf,WHom\_7:55.422 and 13.36.1238)

*Fet and handa* is a very common combination in the texts. Crisma notes (p. 187) that a number of her apparent counterexamples to the obligatory marking of definiteness involved coordination of two noun phrases without determiners. She notes also that a definite interpretation is often possible in both English and other languages when coordination is involved, so this sentence should probably not be considered a true counterexample.

Turning to body part subjects, the two determinerless examples of Table 2 are presented in (26) and (27):

- (26) Gif men        sie maga    asurod  
       *if man:DAT be stomach soured*  
       ‘If a man’s stomach is soured’  
       (colaece,Lch\_II\_[3]:69.1.1.4104)
- (27) Gif men        sie innelfe ute  
       *If man:DAT be bowel out*  
       ‘if a man’s bowel be out’ (*Leechbook* editor’s translation)  
       (colaece,Lch\_II\_[3]:73.1.1.4146)

With only two examples, more than one explanation is always possible and we have insufficient evidence to see a pattern. Scribal error cannot be ruled out in (26), where it would not be surprising if the scribe left out *se* because he had just written *sie*.<sup>34</sup> This particular explanation is not available for (27), since *innelfe* is a neuter noun and the determiner would be *þæt*. It is possible that this should be taken as a mass noun, since it is possible to think of ‘some bowel’ being out. There are too few examples of this noun in the texts to be certain of its properties.

Regardless of whether the small number of potential counterexamples can be convincingly explained, it is clear that the marking of definiteness in the external dative possessor construction is too much the rule to be considered optional in the prose. Although the number of examples from poetry is not huge, it is large enough that the difference between prose and poetry cannot be due to chance.<sup>35</sup> These findings both lend support to Crisma’s conclusion about the development of the definite article by the late ninth century, based on a different sample, and add to our knowledge

<sup>34</sup> Editorial error can be ruled out, however; a look at Wright’s (1955) facsimile of *Bald’s Leechbook* shows that the editor has faithfully transcribed the manuscript, except that he has silently expanded the abbreviation *m* with a line over it as *men*.

<sup>35</sup> The number of poetic examples would be much larger if we extended the search to words referring to ‘mind’ and the other semantic categories covered in Havers’ (1911) seminal work. External possession is used with such words in the poetry much more frequently than in the prose. As mentioned above, external possession is also much more frequent when the body part is the object of a preposition.

about the use of definite determiners at this time in a specific construction.<sup>36</sup> Crisma's suggestion that it is the expletive nature of the determiner with inalienable possessa that explains examples like (21) is intriguing, but given the near-obligatory use of definite articles with inalienable definite nouns, other possibilities, such as an explanation in terms of object incorporation, deserve consideration. Further research into the evidence for expletive determiners in the history of English is also needed. As Crisma noted, if OE had an expletive determiner, it got lost somewhere on the way to Modern English.

### 5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have followed up on Wood's (2003) suggestion linking the restriction of the reflexes of *se(o)* to prenominal position and the emergence of the definite article in English. It is appealing to hypothesize that with the deterioration of inflection, the indeclinable determiner was of little use as a pronoun and became restricted to the position before a noun, leading to its reanalysis as an article. However, the facts presented in section 3 lead to the conclusion that the disappearance of pronominal *þe* present a more complicated picture. Put simply, *þe* retained some of its uses as a pronoun well into the period when it no longer had any deictic force when used prenominally. I have argued in section 4 that in looking for diagnostics for the birth of the definite article, we must look earlier. In Allen (2006, 2007b) I proposed that *se(o)* could occur in two positions in OE; it could be either in D, an article, or it could be a demonstrative, a DP that could be the specifier of the larger DP or could serve as a pronoun. In two papers of 2007, Johanna Wood argued that *se(o)* was already in D sometimes in OE. Crisma's (2011) study found clear evidence of a shift in the status of *se(o)* within the OE period, with the marking of definiteness obligatory in some situations by the late ninth century. Crisma's finding that *se(o)* could be a D head at this time implies a dual analysis for this determiner, since it was clearly a demonstrative as well. I have added some findings of my own investigation into the syntax of external possession in OE to show that the same distinction between prose and poetry that Crisma found

<sup>36</sup> The attentive reader may have noticed that Crisma mentioned four determinerless examples with body parts, but I have only discussed two. Paola Crisma has kindly supplied me with all the apparent counterexamples in personal communication, and has noted that the other two can be excluded as counterexamples on independent grounds (they are conjoined nouns).

generally is apparent in that construction also. Taylor (2014:449) also cautiously suggests that there is some evidence to suggest that *se* could occupy either the demonstrative or the article position in OE. There seems to be a growing consensus for this position.

The EME facts seem to be most easily accommodated by an approach in which the *se(o)* reflexes were progressively restricted to the D position as *þæt* took on its specialized function as a demonstrative. Under such an approach, it is easy to deal with facts such as the preference for *se* in free relatives and for *þe* in article-like uses in the *Vices and Virtues* and the use of *þe* as an article with plural nouns in the *Ancrene Wisse*, where pronominal *þe* never has plural reference. This approach also makes sense of the fact that the state of case marking in a given dialect appears not to have mattered in the obligatory marking of definiteness.

There is much scope for future research here. This paper has only touched on some of the issues regarding the syncretism of the forms and morphological categories of the determiner. There appears to be no relationship between the state of inflection of the determiner in EME texts and its appearance in article-like positions. On the other hand, the texts looked at in my investigation seem to show a clear link between full inflection of the determiner and its use in the most basic function of a personal pronoun. The link between reduced inflection and the decline in the use of the demonstrative as a relative pronoun is not so clear. The amount of inflection does not seem to correlate in any straightforward way with the pronominal use of *þe* in free relatives, except that that these relatives do not seem to be found in texts where indeclinable *þe* is now the only form. Detailed studies of both the morphology and the syntax of the determiner in a larger number of individual texts is necessary before that preliminary conclusion can be made more solid (or refuted). If it is accepted that OE already had a definite article, there is still need for research on how the syntax of that article developed to become the way it is in Modern English. Accepting this conclusion about the early genesis of the definite article also of course means that we should stop trying to link other developments in the determiner system in EME with the presence of an article in D, and we can start looking for links between the new article and other phenomena that distinguish poetry from prose within the OE period.

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