

Antonio Miranda García (amiranda@uma.es)
Javier Calle Martín (jcalles@uma.es)
María Laura Esteban Segura (lauraesteban@uma.es)
Department of English Philology
University of Málaga (Spain)

Prepositional anastrophe in Old English: a corpus-based study

Abstract

The Greek etymology of the word *anastrophe* (as well as that of *hyperbaton*) shows that the change of the syntactic order of the clause-elements for the sake of emphasis is rather old. Even though this phenomenon is found in many languages, both classical and modern, our paper will be concerned with the analysis of the Anglo-Saxon construction in which the preposition follows the prepositional object as in *him to cwæþ* ‘said to him’ or *eow betwynan* ‘between you’. Our immediate aim in this talk will be to find out whether the emphasis which is commonly used to justify this phenomenon conceals a metric pattern in prose texts similar to those found in verse pieces.

An annotated corpus containing the Old English *Apollonius of Tyre* and the *Holy Gospels* has been analysed. By using the *Old English Concordancer*, all the instances were automatically retrieved and arranged in terms of the preposition and the nature of the object (be it a pronoun or a simple/complex noun phrase). In addition, likely counter-examples have also been retrieved to find out whether parallel constructions are used and, if so, which becomes more frequent. Finally, the conclusions drawn from our analysis close the paper showing that, to a certain extent, the use of the anastrophical position largely depends on rhetorical rather than on purely grammatical reasons.