Substantive Adjectives and the Prop-Word *One* in Old and Middle English

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Abstract: This study discusses substantive adjectives, which are noun-less noun phrases seemingly headed by adjectives, in Old and Middle English. It has been argued that these were used more frequently in Old English and declined over the course of the Middle English period, and this historical change is attributed to the loss of the adjectival inflection. Furthermore, it has also been assumed that the decline of substantive adjectives contributed to the rise of the prop-word *one*. This study argues that all instances of the substantive adjectives are not sources of the construction including the prop-word; however, it started to be used with adjectives showing a contrast with an antecedent adjective. To demonstrate this, special attention will be paid to the postnominal *and*-construction, which will be categorized into two types: contrastive and non-contrastive.

Keywords: Substantive adjectives, prop-word *one*, adjectival inflection, postnominal *and*-construction

1. Introduction

It has been argued that the morphological realization of agreement on adjectives played an important role in licensing substantive adjectives in Old and Middle English (Fischer, 2000, 2006, Haumann, 2003). Also, it has been assumed that the loss of the substantive adjectives led to the rise of the prop-word *one*. This paper first discusses substantive adjectives and their distribution in Old and Middle English, and then summarizes part of the history of the pronominal use of *one*. Although a direct connection between these three historical events has been assumed (Fischer, 2000, Haumann, 2003, Rissanen, 1997, Yamamura, 2010), this paper suggests that in addition, the contrastive context is also an important factor when determining the whole picture of the development of the prop-word *one*. To demonstrate this, Section 4 pays attention to the postnominal *and*-construction, which is discussed in Haumann (2003) and Fischer (2006), and I point out that the relevant construction may be usefully classified into two different constructions. Section 5 is a concluding remark.

2. Substantive Use of Adjectives in Old and Middle English

Adjectives in Old English could be used substantively, as in (1).

(1) ða   cwican   no   genihtsumedon þæt hi   ða   deadan   bebyrigdan
    those quick.PL no longer sufficed   that they those dead.PL   bury
    'the living no longer sufficed to bury the dead'   (cobede,Bede_1:11.50.3.448)

Adjectives in Old English are used substantively more often than in Present-day English. For example, *ða cwican* and *ða deadan* in (1) are interpreted as 'the people who are alive' and 'the people who are dead', respectively, even though the nominal head corresponding to 'people' does not appear. They are quite similar to the string '*the* + adjective' in Present-day English, like *the poor*, which indicates a generic group of people who are poor. However, unlike their Present-day English counterparts, the substantive adjectives in Old English are not restricted to a group of people; for example, *se blinda* is attested in Old English texts, indicating 'a specific single person who is blind'. Furthermore, the substantivized adjective does not have to occur with a demonstrative, as in *halige* 'holy.PL', which means 'saints'. It is generally argued that substantive adjectives were widely

available in Old English due to the presence of the agreement inflection of adjectives, whose paradigm is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: The inflectional paradigm of Old English adjectives.

		STRONG			WEAK		
		Masc.	Neut.	Fem.	Masc.	Neut.	Fem.
Singular	NOM	-	-	-	-a	-e	-e
	ACC	-ne	-	-e	-an	-e	-an
	DAT	-um	-um	-re	-an	-an	-an
	GEN	-es	-es	-re	-an	-an	-an
Plural	NOM	-e	-	-a	-an	-an	-an
	ACC	-e	-	-a	-an	-an	-an
	DAT	-um	-um	-um	-um	-um	-um
	GEN	-ra	-ra	-a	-ena	-ena	-ena

As shown in Table 1, there are two paradigms for Old English adjectives, whose inflection depends on the definiteness of the noun phrase in which they occur: strong adjectives appear in indefinite noun phrases, weak ones in definite noun phrases.

The adjectival inflection declined during the Middle English period and only the ending *-e* remained, as in Table 2.

Table 2: The inflectional paradigm of Middle English adjectives.

	STRONG	WEAK
Singular	-e	-
Plural	-e	-e

It has been argued that the decline of the adjectival inflection led to the loss of the substantive use of adjectives, although it is still attested in Middle English, as in (2) and (3).

(2) Þat   is   þe   blessing of *pore*
    That is   the blessing of poor   (CMEDVERN-M3,251.485)
(3) *þe riche* haue þe contrarie of þe blessynge
    the rich   have the contrary of   the blessing   (CMEDVERN-M3,251.486)

In (2), *pore* indicates the group of people who are poor (deliberately in conformity with Christian virtue), and *þe riche* in (3) refers to the group of rich people. Although their understood head noun is 'people', just like '*the* + adjective' in Present-day English, the identity of the head noun was not so restricted in Old and Middle English. Here follows an instance of a substantive adjective in Middle English whose intended head noun is not 'person' or 'people'.

(4) Ach god   cleopeð *þe gode* briddes of   heouene
    but God   calls   the good birds   of   heaven   (CMANCRIW-1,M1,II.106.1318)

In (4), *þe gode* is the subject of the small clause taken as the complement of the matrix verb *cleopeð* 'calls', and the preceding context allows us to interpret it as 'the good anchoresses'. The example in (4) is taken from an early Middle English text, and similar examples are attested in later stages of Middle English, as in (5)-(6).

(5) ȝif þu myȝtest be wurþy to see wit   þy   gostly eȝe þat Marie seyȝ wyȝ *here bodily*
    if   you might   be worthy to see with your ghostly eye that Marie saw with her bodily
                                                            (CMAELR3-M23,50.743)
(6) þer   schall no good dede be vnquyte,   nor *no euell* vnponysched
    there shall   no good deed be unrequited nor no evil   unpunished
                                                            (CMMIRK-M34,89.2380)

In *here bodily* in (5), the adjective *bodily* is intended to be the premodifier of the noun *eʒe* 'eye'. Similarly, in (6), the intended head noun of *no euell* would be *dede* in the preceding nominal phrase. This kind of anaphoric substantive adjective is argued to be peculiar to Old and Middle English, and this fact is also attributed to the presence of inflectional endings on adjectives. It has been argued that its loss led to the rise of the prop-word *one* in Middle English and its establishment in Early Middle English (Rissanen, 1997).

3. The Rise of Pronominal *One* in Middle English

In addition to the argument that the adjectival inflection contributed to establishing the anaphoric relation between the substantive adjective and its antecedent, it has been assumed that the decay of the inflectional system led to the grammaticalization of the numeral *one* as pronominal *one* (Rissanen, 1997, Haumann, 2003).

Rissanen (1997) argues that the pronominal use of *one* derived from the individualizing use of the numeral *one* in Old English.

(7) þa inn eode *an* þæs cyninges þegna þe his ælmyssan bewiste, and sæde …
   'then one of the king's servants who supervised his almsgiving entered and said …'
(Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* 26 130 / Rissanen, 1997, p. 91)
(8) Nu bidde we þe þæt þu geceose þe *ænne* of us þrym hwilcne þu wille þe to aðume habban.
   'Now we ask you to choose one of us three, whichever you wish, for your son-in-law'
(The Old Testament *Genesis* 42 15-16 / Rissanen, 1997, p. 92)

The numeral *an* 'one' in Old English could be used to single out the referent from the set of entities indicated by a genitive phrase or *of*-phrase. In (7), it picks a single specific individual out of the set indicated by the genitive phrase *þæs cyninges þegna* 'of-the king's servant'. Similarly, in (8), *ænne* picks a non-specific person out of the three members of the set indicated by the *of*-phrase *of us þrym* 'of us three'. According to Rissanen (1997), the weak connection between *an* and the relevant set led to the pronominal use of *an*. Such examples were already attested in Old English, as in (9) and (10).

(9) þær wearð wicingum wiþerlean agyfen.
   Gehyrde ic þæt Eadweard *anne* sloge
   swiðe mid his swurde …
   þæt him æt fotum feoll fæge cempa
   'there the Vikings were given retribution. I heard that Edward smote one [Viking] powerfully with his sword … so that the doomed warrior fell at his feet.'
(*Battle of Maldon* 117 / Rissanen, 1997, p. 100)
(10) Ich chulle þt he wite hit ful wel … ich am to *an* iweddet þt ich chulle treoliche wiðute leas luuien. þt is unlich him & alle worltlich men.
   'I wish him to know well that … I am wedded to *one* that I should love faithfully without deceit, that is unlike him and all worldly men' (*Juliane* 100 / Rissanen, 1997, p. 101)

In (9), *anne* refers to 'one Viking'. Although it is not accompanied by a phrase indicating a set explicitly, the set of Vikings is implicit in the discourse, namely through the preceding nominal phrase *wicingum*. The example in (10) is presented by Rissanen (1997) as the first unambiguous instance of specific-personal *one*, which is from an early 13th century text.

According to Rissanen (1997), the anaphoric use of *one* started to appear as early as specific-personal *one*. Here follows an example given by Rissanen (1997).

(11) ʒho was sec … wiþþ weppman wedded,
   Wiþþ *an* þatt wass of hire kinn
   'She was also … wedded to a man, to a one that was her kinsman'
(*The Ormulum* 2051 / Rissanen, 1997, p. 102)

Thus, numeral *one* gradually lost its intrinsic semantics as a numeral and acquired a more grammatical, functional status. Rissanen (1997) presents the following example to show that

anaphoric *one* started to occur with an adjective (or started to be used as a prop-word) in the thirteenth century.

(12) 'Nai,' quoð þe cuddeste *an* of ham alle
  '"Nay", said the most famous of all of them'   (*Kathrine* 822 / Rissanen, 1997, p. 102)

This is the earliest extant written instance of the prop-word *one* in the history of English, but it was in Early Modern English that the use of the prop-word *one* was established.
  As mentioned above, it has been assumed that the rise of the prop-word *one* is attributable to the loss of the adjectival inflection and the subsequent decline of substantive adjectives (Rissanen, 1997, Haumann, 2003, Yamamura, 2010). To demonstrate such connection, Haumann (2003) attempts to examine the postnominal *and*-construction in Old English, as in (13), and argues that it is parallel to the Dutch example in (14).

(13) Soþfæstne man & unscyldigne ne acwele ðu þone næfre
  righteous person and guiltless not kill you that-one never
               (LAW2,40.45 / Haumann, 2003, p. 63)
(14) Jan kocht de rode auto en [de groene].
  John bought the red car and the green
  'John bought the red car and the green one'   (Kester, 1996, p. 58)

Adjectives in Dutch are suffixed by the ending *-e* (pronounced as a schwa), except when the noun is indefinite, neuter, and singular.[1] In (14), the adjective *groene* is not followed by a head noun, but the lack of the head noun is permitted due to the ending *-e* (Kester, 1996, Corver and van Koppen, 2009).[2] Its Present-day English equivalent, however, requires the insertion of the prop-word *one*, as in the translation in (14). Thus, the presence/absence of the inflectional ending on adjectives is regarded as the essential factor in the presence/absence of the substantive adjective, and the prop-word *one* is assumed to have appeared to salvage substantive adjectives instead of the inflectional ending on adjectives.

4. Two Types of the Postnominal *And*-Construction

As mentioned in the previous section, the postnominal *and*-construction was possible in Old English, but the loss of the adjectival inflection led to the loss of the relevant construction and the rise of the prop-word *one*. It is also attested in Middle English, as in (15) and (16).

(15) a. **feier**   **lif and clene**   to leden in þisse liue
   morally-good life and morally-clean to bring in this life
                (CMLAMBX1-MX1,131.1317)
  b. sare stiche of **sari soreȝe & sorechful**
   severe pain of painful grief & grievous (CMANCRIW-1-M1,II.87.1051)
  c. … makeð febel & unstrong . vat calf & wilde
   … makes feeble & weak fat calf & wild (CMANCRIW-1-M1,II.109.1370)
  d. **noble þing and good** is þe cumfort of cumpanye
   noble thing and good is the comfort of company (CMEDVERN-M3,258.809)
  e. they com to a laake that was a fayre watir and brode
   they came to a lake that was a fair water and large (CMMALORY-M4,41.1351)
(16) a. Sumeiscead **godra gast and ufele**
   some discernment of-good spirit and evil (CMLAMBX1-MX1,97.864)
  b. there be many in this londe, of **hyghe astate and lowe**
   there be many in this land of highborn class and lowborn
                (CMMALORY-M4,194.2900)

In (13) and (15), we can observe semantic overlap between the relevant two adjectives, such as *soþfæstne* 'righteous' - *unscyldigne* 'guiltless' in (13), *feier* 'morally good' - *clene* 'morally clean' in

(15a), and so forth. On the other hand, in (16), the two adjectives show a semantic contrast, as in *god* 'good' vs. *ufele* 'evil' and *hyghe* 'born in the upper class' vs. *lowe* 'born in the lower class'.

Haumann (2003) claims that the postnominal *and*-construction in Old English is parallel to the Dutch construction in (14), and that the second adjective is the attributive, prenominal modifier of the null noun *pro*, which is licensed by the morphological realization of agreement on the adjective, as in (17).

(17) Soþfæstne man & [DP [AgrP [AP unscyldig-ne$^{<sg.masc>}$] [Agr' Agr$^{<sg.masc>}$ [NP *pro*]]]]

(cf. Haumann, 2003, p. 71)

In (17), the functional head Agr(ee), specified for number and gender, licenses the null noun *pro*. Furthermore, she claims that the prop-word *one* occurs in Agr to specify it for number and license the null noun *pro* after the loss of the adjectival inflection, as in (18).

(18) [DP the [AgrP [AP old] [Agr' **one**$^{<sg>}$ [NP *pro*]]]]   (cf. Haumann, 2003, p. 80)

Instead of the adjectival inflection, the prop-word *one* licenses the null noun in (18). Although her analysis seems to explain the developmental scenario successfully, Fischer (2006) points out that Dutch substantive adjectives like (14) are used only in the contrastive context; that is, (14) is possible only if Jan bought two different cars. Therefore, it appears implausible that the non-contrastive type of the postnominal *and*-construction is to be analyzed parallel to (14).

Contrarily, Fischer (2006) attempts to explain all types of the postnominal *and*-constructions by assuming that they are not attributive but postposed predicative adjectives, especially in Middle English. She points out that a large number of the instances of the postnominal *and*-construction appear as the complement of the verb *be*, as in (19).[3]

(19) a. fox is ec anfrech beast & fretewil wið alle
      '[a] fox is also a-greedy beast and voracious withal'   (CMANCRIW,II,103,1265)
   b. þet is we grat zenne and wel dreduol
      'that is [a] very great sin and very dreadful'   (CMAYENBI,22,328)
   c. and stronge man was, & miȝty   (CMBRUT3,15.430)
   d. wheþer þei ben bodily creatures or goostly   (CMCCLOUD,24.171)
   e. þei arn slawnderows wordys & erroneows   (CMKEMPE,132.3092)
          (Fischer, 2006, p. 281)

She argues that the second adjective can be interpreted as predicative in this position. Furthermore, she assumes that the gradual loss of the adjectival inflection led to its more restrictive distribution in positions where it is interpreted as predicate.

Thus, the postnominal *and*-construction has been analyzed in various ways, but I would like to point out the possibility that there were two different internal structures for the relevant construction. One is the split construction described in Mitchell (1985), in which the coordinator and the second conjunct are separated from the first conjunct and extraposed to sentence-final position, as in (20) and (21).

(20) *Maran cyle*   ic geseah   *and*   *wyrsan*
      more   coldness   I   experienced   and   worse
      'I experienced more and worse coldness'   (ÆCHom ii. 354.21 / Mitchell, 1985, p. 613)
(21) þa   halwendan   men   cwædon, and   þa   geleafsuman, …
      those   healthful   men   spoke   and   those   faithful
          (BlHom 117.8 / Mitchell, 1985, p. 78)

Thus, the postnominal *and*-construction appears as a phrase-final variant of the split construction, and it appears plausible to assume that the non-contrastive construction is of this type: the two relevant adjectives describe the status of a single entity indicated by one noun, and the second adjective is extraposed to phrase-final position.

The other is, of course, the contrastive type of this construction, in which I assume two independent nominal phrases are coordinated and the latter is realized as a substantive adjective. Hence, the contrastive type like (16) is a variant of (5) and (6), repeated here as (22) and (23).

(22) ȝif þu myȝtest be wurþy to see wit þy   gostly eȝe þat Marie seyȝ wyȝ *here bodily*
     if you might be worthy to see with your ghostly eye that Marie saw with her bodily
<div align="right">(CMAELR3-M23,50.743)</div>
(23) þer   schall no good dede be vnquyte,   nor *no euell* vnponysched
     there shall no good deed be unrequited nor no evil   unpunished
<div align="right">(CMMIRK-M34,89.2380)</div>

Although the substantive adjective is not coordinated directly with its antecedent phrase in (22) and (23), the relevant adjectives show a sharp contrast (i.e., *gostly* vs. *bodily* and *good* vs. *euell*), which demonstrates a parallelism to what is observed in the contrastive type of the postnominal *and*-construction.

Following this line of argument, the first question is: What happened to the non-contrastive constructions after the loss of the adjectival inflection? The answer would be as follows: the non-contrastive construction was possible due to the adjectival inflection because the morphology indicated the grammatical function of the extraposed elements, but after this inflection declined, such extraposition was prohibited and constituency must have been maintained for the licit interpretation. How then about the contrastive construction? Considering that the most prominent function of the prop-word *one* is to indicate a contrast between the phrase containing it and its antecedent (Günther, 2011), it would not be far-fetched to assume that the prop-word *one* arose from these contrastive constructions after the loss of the adjectival inflection.

5. Concluding Remarks

In this paper, I summarized the history of the substantive adjectives and the prop-word *one*. The loss of the inflectional endings of English adjectives has been argued to have caused the decline of substantive adjectives and the rise of the prop-word *one*. I suggest that in addition to this, contrast played an important role in the origin of the construction with the prop-word *one*, since it is not used everywhere the substantive adjectives had once been used. This suggestion is based on the observation of the postnominal *and*-construction, which I have assumed was derived in two different ways: extraposing the coordinator and the second adjective to the phrase- or sentence-final position or coordinating two independent nominal phrases (the first a full NP and the second a substantive adjective). They are distinguished by the semantics of the adjectives involved. The present assumption requires further investigation, including a closer examination of the corpus data, and it is left for future research.

Acknowledgements

Notes
[1] The inflectional paradigm of Dutch adjectives is given as follows.

Table 3: The inflectional paradigm of Dutch adjectives (cf. Corver and van Koppen, 2009, p. 8)

	INDEFINITE	DEFINITE
non-neuter-sg	een klein-**e** goochelaar	de klein-**e** goochelaar
	a small-**e** magician	the small-**e** magician
non-neuter-pl	klein-**e** goochelaars	de klein-**e** goochelaars

	small-**e** magicians		the small-**e** magicians	
neuter-sg	een wit	konijn	de witt-**e**	konijn
	a white-**ø** rabbit		the white-**e** magician	
neuter-pl	witt-**e**	konijnen	de witt-**e**	konijnen
	white-**e** rabbits		the white-**e** rabbits	

[2] Corver and van Koppen (2009) argue that the ending -*e* functions as a licenser of the omission of the head noun, but they do not treat it as an inflectional ending but rather as a focus marker. See Corver and van Koppen (2009) for details.

[3] She reports that in 114 out of 294 instances, it appears in the complement position of the verb *be*. See Fischer (2006) for detail.

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