I have earlier established that *as who* followed by the verb *to say* first appeared as a parenthetic phrase in Early Middle English religious texts and commentaries translated from Latin or in quotations borrowed from the writings of the Fathers in the volumes of *Patrologia Latina*. It corresponded to the hypothetical parenthetic Latin clause *ac si/quasi dicit/diceret* "as if he said/ were saying" and the like, in model texts, which referred to the subject of the preceding statement, along with others with unambiguously impersonal reference, e.g., *ac si (aperte) diceretur* "as if it were (openly) said." The Latin phrase with personal reference was first regularly translated with a personal subject, e.g., *Swylce he cwæde* in Ælfric, or *Ase þauh he seide* in *Ancrene*, but during the first half of the thirteenth century an impersonal structure with the indefinite pronoun *who*(so) as subject was extended to passages where the Latin model text contained a personal subject (Nevanlinna 1974).

Toward the end of the thirteenth century an *as who*-phrase turned up in a different context: in adverbial position (cf. Quirk et al. 1987: 15.55) as a rendering of the Latin adverb *quasi* "virtually, almost," to indicate that
the following phrase was “practically right, though perhaps not formally exact” (*OED*), literally “as if (it were).” This must have been due to confusion with the conjunction quasi meaning “as, as if.” The appearance of *The Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* (= LALME) in 1986 and the completion of the Diachronic part of the *Helsinki Corpus of English texts* in 1991 prompted the reopening of the subject. In the Corpus the Middle English section was divided into four sub-periods as follows: ME1 (1150–1250); ME2 (1250–1350); ME3 (1350–1420); ME4 (1420–1500). This time-division is applied in the present study. The Early Modern English section of the Helsinki Corpus covers the years 1500–1710. This study is primarily concerned with Middle English. Though the Middle English section of the Corpus comprises over 600,000 words, the phrase *as who say/saith*, including its spelling variants, was gleaned from surprisingly few texts only, namely from Robert of Gloucester’s Chronicle, from Richard Rolle’s *Psalter Commentary*, from the *Sermons* in MS Royal 18 B xxviii, from Chaucer’s works, from Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*, and from Caxton’s *Reynard the Fox* (translated from Dutch). Thus, the Corpus examples only cover a small part of the present material. Actually, this was to be expected, as I have recently observed in connection with another study (on the structure of ME simile; see Kytö 1991) that a phrase occurring basically in certain types of text only is not apt to be frequent in a corpus that aims at covering as many different text types as possible.

II

The purpose of this study is as follows:

(i) to reconsider the various semantic uses of *as who say/saith*;
(ii) to try to shed more light on the emergence of the impersonal structure, especially as a variant of the personal structure that had been current until then;
(iii) to make an attempt to outline temporal and regional morphological and orthographical surface variation in the phrase in Middle English texts;
(iv) to add a brief survey of the occurrence of the parenthetic phrase after the Middle English period, based on information obtained from books of reference.

For the purpose of saving time, in order to add to the scanty material found in the Helsinki Corpus, I resorted to a number of examples previously
hand-picked from editions, manuscripts, studies of historical syntax, from Einenkel 1904 through Poutsma, Prins, and Mustanoja, to Visser 1972, as well as from the Oxford and Middle English Dictionaries \((OED, MED)\). The material was completed by instances from some recent editions. At present, it comprises fifty-four different texts of varying length in more than seventy MSS, but it can by no means be said to cover evenly the whole field of Middle English literature. About sixty per cent of the examples were found in texts with religious themes, such as homilies, sermons, rules, and saints’ legends. I scanned, however, numerous texts of a religious nature that did not contain the phrase, or that rendered the translation of the Latin literally with the meaning “as if he said/were saying,” where the subject pronoun referred to a specific person about whom the author was speaking. Few examples of the \textit{as who}-clause, mostly only solitary instances, were registered from other types of text: philosophy, history, travelogue, romance, fable, ballad, drama, dialogue, and private letters.

The MSS from which the examples have been picked are not listed in “Works Cited” below; instead, their title stencils, as well as their estimated dates, are given according to the \textit{Plan and Bibliography} (1954) and \textit{Supplement} (1984) of the \textit{Middle English Dictionary}. For texts not registered in \textit{MED}, the title of the edition is given. The main regional dialects of the scribes, i.e., East Midland, West Midland, Kentish, Southern, and Northern are suggested in square brackets according to \textit{LALME, MED, ME MANUAL (= A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050–1500)}, or the respective editors of MSS. The counties are distributed among the main dialect areas following the Dialectal Map contained in Jordan’s \textit{Handbook of Middle English Grammar: Phonology} (1974: 5). Though the occurrence of the variants \textit{as who say} and \textit{as who saith} at first seemed to be regulated by semantic and dialectal constraints, the phrases were gradually confused and will be treated as equals in the following analysis. The rare \textit{as who-so said} \((\text{in Ancr.})\) is also touched upon. In the end, comments are made on the various surface structures of the two phrases.

III

In Middle English, \textit{as who say/ saith} came to be used parenthetically in two main contexts: to introduce expository or reformulative clauses \(\text{from now on to be referred to as } E\), or as comment clauses \(\text{=} C\). Within the reformulative category I have made a distinction between three different types of exposition: \textit{Ea, Eb, and Ec}. 

Where a phrase with *as who*(so) + the verb *to say* went back to a vernacular ME author it was probably at first interpreted "like one who may/might say," where *who*(so) was regarded as an indefinite relative pronoun without any antecedent (see Curme 1931: 211). Since *as* could also stand for *as if* in a hypothetical conditional clause, the phrase could equally well be understood to mean "as if one might say/were saying." A great many instances of this type of phrase in religious literature had originally contained the interpretation of a preceding parallel drawn by Christ, or that of a symbolical or veiled statement made by God, a prophet, or some other personage from the Old or New Testament. Where the generalizing indefinite pronoun *who*(so) emerged in these clauses in the early thirteenth century, to replace the personal subject, there developed a generic meaning. If the Latin model is not known it is difficult to say whether *who* in the clause was original or not.

1) *Wooing Lord* (c. 1240) (ME1) (ed. W.M. Thompson, EETS 241), line 411, “Bote schome ouer schomes poledes tu hwen þu wes henged bituhhe twa þeofes, As hwa se seie ‘He þis is mare þen þeþef’ . . .” [Central East Midland]

“But shame above shame thou didst endure when thou wast hanged between two thieves, as though one might say, ‘he is more than thief,’ [and therefore as their (chief) master he hangs between them].” [trans. by R. Morris in his edition of the text in EETS 34]

By the second half of the fourteenth century the phrase had already become an idiom and had gradually acquired the status of indicator of an apposition, semantically equal to "that is to say," "in other words" (see Quirk et al. 1987: 17.73). In this context the appositives were two independent clauses, which were synonymous in that they expressed the same truth value (see Meyer 1987). In this capacity the phrase was also used to interpret Latin passages. The vernacular translator often added the second appositive. (From now on I shall make an attempt to provide translations for the examples to be presented.)


“Pilate answered: What I have written I have written,” in other words, “this writing shall stand.”

3) *Spec. Chr.* (2) (Hrl) (ME4) (ed. G. Holmstedt, EETS 182), p. 42. “Salomon: He that ȝeues to the pore schal not haue nede, as so sey, he
schal neuer be the porer, but rather the rycher" (p. 43 Salomon: *Qui dat pauperi, non indigebit.* [Norfolk; EMidland]

"Salomon: He who gives to the poor shall have no need, that is to say, [trans. in editor's note] he will never be the poorer but rather the richer."

(ii) Eb:
The phrase introduces an answer given by the author or the translator, to a rhetorical question. In most instances the answer provided seems to be a negative one, often a short elliptic clause, which is sometimes only introduced by the vernacular author. This is a stylistic device that is particularly favoured in some religious texts, e.g. the *Lollard Sermons* and the *Pricke of Conscience*. In the latter text the translation is often accompanied by the Latin.

4) *Glo. Chron.* (ME2) (ed. W.A. Wright, RS, 86; 1887), line 10997. "Hii sede: "3uf we dop ou wrong, wo ssal ou do rigz?" *As wo setb, we be pinges, ur wille we mowe do." [Gloucs.; Southern]

"They said, 'If we do you wrong who shall do you right?' As if one (they?) were saying (or: that is to say) 'we are kings, we can do what we like.'"


"And what is more horrible than man when he is dead?" In other words, "nothing is so ugly as man's dead body."


"What saint is crowned without a painful victory?" as one may say [trans. according to editor's note] "none."

(iii) Ec:
The phrase introduces the author's explanation of kinesics (see *OED* Suppl. 3, 1976) or "body language," i.e., an interpretation by the author of the subject's attitude or reaction implied by an emotional gesture, movement, or facial expression. In Latin treatises the turn *ac si dicat* etc. could be used in the same way.

"De Deuel stod and made him signe: *Ase ho-so seith.* 'I-nelle nougt speke. . . .' [Gloucs.; Southern/ East Anglia]

"The Devil stood and made a sign to him, like one who might say 'I don't want to speak. . . .'"

8) *Digby Pl.* (ME4) (ed. Donald C. Baker, John L. Murphy, and Louis B. Hall Jr. EETS 283) (Christ's Burial), line 189. "He lukyd on that maide, his moder, rewfully/ And with a tender cow[n]tenaunce. / *As who say,* 'Moder, the sorow of your harte/ Makes my passion mor bitter and mor smarte.'" [Notts. East Midland]

"He looked at that maiden, his mother, pitifully, and with a tender expression, like one who might say, 'The sorrow of your heart makes my passion more bitter and painful'."

(iv) C:

As a comment clause in the adverbial position, often before noun phrases, *as who saith* began to occur in the latter half of the thirteenth century in the south-west as a variant of several other turns that were already current in the language, e.g. *as me seib, ase pauh hit were* in Early ME, corresponding to "so to say, as the saying is, as it were" in present-day English (cf. Quirk et al. 1987: 15.56; for an extensive variety of comment clauses in present-day English see Peltola 1983). The variant *as who say* appeared as a comment clause in some East Midland texts in the fourteenth century, perhaps at first in positions where it could be understood to have a twofold function (see example no. 9 below). Acoustic similarity with *quasi* (which Caxton, for instance, occasionally used) may have played some role in northerly areas.

9) *Mannyng HS* (Hrl) (ME3) (ed. F.J. Furnivall, EETS 119), line 2782.

"Fallace ys, *as who seye,* gyle." [Bucks.; EMidland]

"Fallacy is, in other words (or: as it were), deceit."


"And therefore they spend, so to say/ as it were, nothing at all."

In Late ME verse the phrase often came to be used as a rhyme-filler.


"And stand, as the saying is, dumb and deaf, so that all is not even worth an ivy leaf."
The texts included in the present corpus will be grouped and presented as previously explained. The reference is to the basic printed text, unless otherwise indicated. The Linguistic Profiles or LPs of scribes analyzed in LALME are indicated by county reference and #L in parentheses. The texts are placed in the four ME sub-periods according to the estimate of MED, ME Manual, or the editors. Though seven prototypical text categories were distinguished in ME (Kytö 1991:55), examples were only found in four of them. The examples were distributed between the four as follows: IR (= instruction religious), NN (= narration non-imaginative), NI (= narration imaginative), and XX (= none of the above). No examples were found to represent the remaining prototypical text categories, namely, STA (= statutory), IS (= instruction secular), and EX (= expository). Verse texts are indicated by (v), and prose texts by (p). Additionally, the semantic use of the instances of the phrases registered will be indicated according to the above analysis. The dates or dialects of the variant readings in parallel MSS are not cited in this context. A couple of examples from Scotland and Ireland have been presented as reference material.

ME1 1150–1250

[IR]: Ancr. (Corp. -C) <p> (Ea) [WM]; Wooing Lord (Tit) <p> (Ea) [EM].
[IR: 2 texts]

ME2 1250–1350

[IR]: SlLeg. (Ld) <v> (Ea, Ec, C) [S];
[NN]: Glo. Chron. A (Clg) <v> (Ea, C) [(Gloucs. #L) S];
[NI]: Arth. & Merl. (Auch) <v> (C) [(Middx #L) EM].
[IR: 1 text; NN: 1; NI: 1]

ME3 1350–1420

[IR]: Mannyng HS (Hrl) <v> (Ea, Ec, C) [(Bucks. #L) EM]; Cleannes (Nero) <v> (Ec) [(Chesh. #L) WM]; NHom (1) (Phys-E) <v> (Ea) [(Yorks. #L) N]; NHom (2) (Vrn) <v> (Ea) [(Worcs. #L) WM]; NHom (3) (Hrl) <v> (Ea) [(NME #L)]; Wycl. Serm. (&c.) <p> (Ea) [EM]; PConsc. (Glb & Hrl) <v> (Eb) [(NME#L) N]; Aelred. Inst. (1) (Vrn) <p> (Ea) [(Worcs. #L) S]; Bonav. Medit. (1) (Hrl) <v> (Ea, Eb) [(Bucks. #L) EM]; Pearl (Nero) <v> (Ec) [(Chesh. #L) WM].
[NN]: Cursor (Vsp.) <v> (Ea) [(WRY#L) N]; Trev. Higd. (Tbr) <p> (Ea) [(Gloucs. #L) S];
[NI]: Mandev. (Tit.) <p> (C) [(Herts. #L) EM]; Chaucer BD (Rob.) <v> (Ec) [EM]; Chaucer TC (Rob.) <v> (C) [EM]; Gower CA (Frfr) <v> (C) [EM];
The emergence of the indefinite who(so) as subject of the parenthetic clause in instances where the Latin source refers to a specific person is still subject to speculation. In the first ME subperiod who first turned up with the verb in the present or past subjunctive. The present subjunctive occurs in example no. 1 from a MS of The Wooing of Our Lord, probably written in northern East Midlands, and often quoted in grammars and dictionaries.
Here the speaker is not a biblical person, but the author himself, and the reference in *As hwa se seie* is definitely generic (cf. Curme 1912: 374). Curme further postulates that the simple determinative *who* has the same indefinite force as *whoever*, "only not so general and vague, often approaching definiteness, but on the other hand with the same determinative force, pointing to the following explanatory remark, . . . " (1931: 210–11). The above phrase in *Wooing Lord* occurs immediately after a sentence containing the traditional clause *as tah he seide*, which introduces the exposition of a statement uttered by Christ. The present subjunctive in a similar parenthetical clause has precedents in earlier texts. It was possible to use the present subjunctive in an "as if" clause in Old English, if the governing clause referred to the present (Mitchell 1985: 700). In *De Initio Creature* (*Vsp. A. Hom.*, ed. R. Morris, EETS 34), written before 1225 (ME1) in the east and modified from *Ælfric’s Homilies* (Thorpe 1844: 1.8), there is a hypothetical parenthetical clause (p. 221):

12) "Aelc þara þinge þe on paradis beoð þu most bruce. . . . buton ane treowe þe stent on middes paradis . . . ." *Al se he to him cwede* "fargang þu ones treowes westm and mid þare æðelice hyrsumnesse þu ʒearenhest hefenrices merhþe. . . ." [Kentish]

"All the things that are in Paradise you may use. . . . except for one tree that stands in the middle. . . ." As if he should say to him, "Abstain from the fruit of one particular tree, and with such easy obedience you will earn the bliss of Heaven."

The present subjunctive in the *as who*-phrase was common in northerly areas, especially as a translation equivalent of *Quasi dicat*, which could convey both a personal and an impersonal meaning (cf. *OED* s.v. Q.II.1).

13) Rolle *Psalter* (ME4) (ed. H.R. Bramley, Oxford, 1884). "Thou that is myghti in wickidnes, that lest is, whare-til ioyes þou in malice, as *wha say* in God is for to ioy that is great." [Yorks.; North.]

[Petrus Lombardus Ps. 51.3: *Qui potens es in iniquitate, quod minimum est, quid gloriasis in malitia, quasi dicat, in bono gloriam est.*]


"And Crist answered and said then: 'What is that to you and me, woman?' as if saying/ that is to say, 'why do you ask a miracle of me, who have derived nothing from you?'"
(In Wyclif's sermon on the same subject the phrase reads *as if he saide.* Going back still further in time we find *swilce he cwæde* in the corresponding passage in Ælfric.)

The fact that the Göttingen MS of *Cursor Mundi* (WRY, Northern; see *LALME* 1: 89) has retained the original form *als qua sai* (as in line 19854 in MSS Fairfax and Göttingen) twice in a passage where the Latin plural *Ac si dicerent* refers to Peter and John after Comestor's *Historia Scholastica* (PL 198: 1655), illustrates clearly that the phrase had by then become detached both from person and from tense, and was already acting as a connector between two appositive clauses. In the Vespasian MS the passage is already corrupt.

15) *Cursor* (Vsp) (ME3) (ed. R. Morris, vol. 3, EETS 62, rpt 1966), line 19056. "Bihald on us þai sai, þou man/ qua sai, behald on hus and see/ And vnderstand vr priuete/ Als sua sai, þou sal se vr wan/ For giftes ha we to þe nan." [SW Yorks.; North WM]

"Look at us, they say, you man," that is to say, "look at us and you will see we are poor," in other words, "you will understand our course, for we have no gifts for you."

VI

In the MSS of *Ancrene* (ME1) the parenthetic phrase usually appears as *ase þa(u)h he seide* (some ten instances) in a reformulative structure, but there are a few passages where the phrase is replaced by *as hwa se seide*. On one occasion where the indefinite pronoun occurs as subject of the phrase in several MSS both in *Ancrene Riwle* (Nero and Tit) and *Ancrene Wisse* (Corp-C and Cleo) the impersonal expression might possibly go back to the author, as a variant of the personal expression (see Curme 1912: 374; 1931: 210).


"'No hurt is so stinging as reproof' as if one should say/ like one who should say thus 'For the death of me I wouldn’t contemplate any harm to you,' and swear great oaths."

If the indefinite subject is original in the four MSS the phrase introduces what the author believes to be implied by the words of an impudent admirer, provided his passes were to be rejected by an anchoress. Here *who so* behaves like the generic *one* in present-day English. In this passage, the
change from personal to indefinite, without explicit reference to any specific person, may have been intentional as a stylistic device. On the other hand, it is not impossible that the Latin model passage might have read *ac si quis diceret*. French influence suggested in Einenkel 1904 was rejected by Curme (1912). The first instance of any *come qui* with a verb in the subjunctive—in Joinville (according to Godefroi 1937), who was born in 1224—was only attested later than *as who so seide* in these MSS of *Ancrene*. In French the Latin parenthetic phrase *ac si dicas / diceret* was traditionally translated literally with a definite speaker as subject. *Ausi com qi (ke) deist* first appeared in French translations of MSS of *Ancr.* several decades later (cf. Nevanlinna 1974: 578).

There is, however, another passage in two western MSS of *Ancr.* (Corp-C) and (Cleo) where the indefinite subject pronoun in a conditional clause must be scribal. Corp-C (ed. J.R.R. Tolkien, EETS 249) reads on p. 79.24 *for ase muchel wurd is as hwa se seide and zeide as he eode* after Gregory (PL 77 . . . *ac si eunde clamaret*). The clause occurs here in a context where a foolish man is carrying a treasure along the streets and crying openly while walking "I'm carrying a treasure; I'm carrying a treasure." *Ancr.* (Nero) (ed. F.M. Mack, EETS 252, p. 67), written in the South, reads here *ase pauh he seide & *zeiede, thus following the Latin model. It might be speculated that *hwa se* in the above passage first emerged accidentally in the two western MSS through erroneous scribal analysis, e.g., *als swa swa he seide > (through a process of assimilation) aswa se seide > (through faulty segmentation) as wa se seide > (through hypercorrection) as hwa se seide. To support this hypothesis a similar instance of misapprehension may be pointed out in a contemporary western MS of *Sawles Warde* (MS Bodley 34; ed. S.T.R.O. D'Ardenne, Paris, 1977). The subject pronoun in *as ha soð seid "as she truly sais" occurring in the other MSS (Roy; Tit), reads *hwa in Bod.* The reference here is unambiguously to "Righteousness" personified. The scribe of MS Bod 34 must have taken the fem. pers. pron. *ha* in his model text for a variant of *hwa* 'who.' There is a parallel in Late ME: both "she" and "who" were registered as *ho* in some western counties (Gloucs., Heref., Worcs., Warwicks.), and as *ha* in sw. Worcestershire (*LALME 4: 7, 283*). R.M. Wilson, the earlier editor of *SWarde* (Leeds School of Language Texts and Monographs, 1938) seems to have quietly emended the spelling in Bod 34. *As who (so) said* must have been extremely rare as an authorial phrase. So far, I have detected no instances of the verb in the past subjunctive besides those in *Ancr.*, though Professor Zettersten intimates there may have been a few more in Early ME (personal communication).
The structure *as who so saith* with the present indicative of the verb was first seen in the oldest extant MS of the *South-English Legendary* (Laud.Misc.108) from the end of the thirteenth century. See example no. 7 above. In Old English, it was possible to use the present indicative as a translation of Latin *conjunctivus potentialis* when it was a question of a direct condition, that is, when something was likely to happen posterior to the conditional clause (e.g., *si quis dixerit* "if someone were to say"). This may be illustrated by a passage in MS Bodley 343 (ME1; southern; ed. A.O. Belfour, EETS 137) where a paraphrase of Matthew 17:19 *quia sicut quis dixerit huic monti* reads on p. 14 *3yf hwa sæged on earnost & cwæd to aente munte...* "If someone speaks in earnest and says to a mountain...." When the verb *to say* takes over as predicate of the parenthetic clause under discussion, *as who (so) saith* might accordingly be interpreted, e.g., as "as if one were to say."

17) *SLeg* (Laud) (ME2) [S. Patrick’s Purgatory] line 335. “Heo quakeden and chyuereden faste: in grete pine and stronge/ Ase ho so seith, a-bidet heore time: heore deth for to a-fonge.” [Southern] “They quaked and shivered violently in great pain,” as if one were to say “they are awaiting the time of their death.”

Most other surviving MSS of the text, which seem to go back to another MS tradition, produce here a comment clause (type C), which may have been the original word order, e.g., Ashmole 43 (Gloucs.) reads here “… and abide *as hose seip hor tymne hor deb vorte afonge...* ” “and await, as one may say (so to say/ as it were), the time of their death.”

It may be noted in this context that in ME1 (Ancr.) both *pah hit were*, *as me seid*, and *as me seide*, are to be found as comment clauses.

All the types of clauses in Middle English in which the parenthetic *as who-*phrase occurred had existed in literature of old as stylistic devices, though they had been expressed with other variants. In the fifteenth century at the latest, the categories merge and overlap. This is reflected very clearly in the relevant entries of *OED* and *MED*, where no distinction is made between the various uses (see *OED*, s.v. *as B 12; who II 7b; say v1 B.4.6* and *MED* s.v. *as v.7; seien, v. 1b and 2c(e)).
In ME, both *as who say* and *as who saith* are used in prose as well as in verse in all the capacities discussed above (*Ea, Eb, Ec, and C*).

**Table 1**

Classification of the Texts and Their Distribution into Prose and Verse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-per. in ME</th>
<th>No. of Texts</th>
<th>Distribution</th>
<th><strong>Ea</strong></th>
<th><strong>Eb</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ec</strong></th>
<th><strong>C</strong></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prose Verse</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME1</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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<td>ME3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>54</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Number of texts containing each type: * **Ea** 26; **Eb** 10; **Ec** 9; **C** 23.*

All four types are hardly ever used by one and the same author (except by Rolle). Three types do, however, occur in Chaucer’s works, as well as in *Handlyng Synne*, which is a long text, or in texts that go back to several sources or authors, such as the *South English Legendary* and *Speculum Christiani*. On the other hand, there are many mediaeval religious texts in which the idiomatic impersonal phrase does not seem to occur at all, e.g., *Piers Plowman*, *The Ayenbite of Inwyt* (Kentish), or the writings of Margery Kempe and Julian of Norwich. In the seventy or so MSS included in my admittedly somewhat limited and unsystematically compiled corpus the number of variants of *as who say* and *as who saith* amounts to more than thirty each, if the slightest orthographical differences are taken into account. The editors of *LALME* found the spelling significant when the Linguistic Profiles (LPs) of the scribes were to be established. Besides older and newer spelling conventions, variation within the phrase, apart from *say* or *saith*, is mainly seen in the dialectal form in which the indefinite pronoun is spelt by individual scribes, as well as in the occurrence of the form *als* for *as* in northerly texts.

The present subjunctive of the verb, which had first cropped up in the northeast Midlands, came to be the prevailing form in the *as who*-phrase in northerly areas, especially as a translation equivalent of *quasi dicat*, when understood as an impersonal expression. Other possible Latin models may have been *ac si dicatur* (e.g., Gregory) or *quod est aperte dicere* (Bede). The phrase *quasi dicat aliquis* introduced Petrus Comestor’s gloss to Ps. 33.13 *Quis est homo* (PL 191: 342). In ME4, the northern translator of the *Rule*
of St Benedict (ed. E.A. Kock, EETS 120) provides an answer implied by the two rhetorical questions in the same Psalter verse. The *as who*-phrase is here already corrupt through faulty scribal analysis in northerly regions where OE *hwa* had lost its aspiration (cf. Wright 1970: 678).

18) *BenRule* (2) (Vsp) p. 64. "Quis est homo qui vult vitam? Whilk man es he pat lyf wyl haue And se gude days [Latin not in the MS: *Diligit dies videre bonos*?], hys saule to saue? Als-so say of hym am I fayne." "... that is to say, he is to my liking." [LALME: probably W Yorks.]

If a MS contains several variants it is either many times removed from the archetype, or it manifests a mixed scribal background (cf. Trudgill 1986 and Milroy 1992). *Roy. Serm.* (Roy) (ME4) (ed. W.O. Ross, EETS 209), for example, contains eight variants among the eleven instances of *as who say/saith*, which were derived from various sources but copied by six Berkshire scribes (*LALME* 1: 175). See Table 2 below.

The MS of Rolle's *Psalter* (ME4) (UC 64, ed. H.R. Bramley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1884) contains a dozen variants among the hundred and fifty instances of *als who say* in the *Commentary*, written in Yorkshire (*LALME* 1: 154) more than a hundred years after its composition. See Table 2.

In the *Scottish Legendary* (ME4), the surface token of the clause is *as quha sa* (type *Ea*) and in King James's *Kingis Quair* (ME4), *as quho sais* (type *C*) with a northern 3 pres. sg. ending. In an Irish MS of *NHom* (1) (Huntington HM 129; *LALME* 1: 92) the reading is *as who say*, as *wo sey* as against *als qua sai* in the oldest extant MS of *NHom* (1) (Phys-E; ed. J. Small, Edinburgh, 1862) written in Yorkshire (*LALME* 1:88).

The edited MS (ME4) of Rolle's *Psalter and Commentary* contains twelve orthographic variants. This implies, on the one hand, that there had been a succession of scribes, and, on the other hand, that the meaning of the parenthetic phrase was no longer commonly known. The frequencies of (even slightly different) instances in Rolle's *Commentary* are given in parentheses as follows: *aswhasay* (94 times), *as wha say* (31), *aswha say* (7), *as whasay* (5), *alswa say* (3), *als who say* (2), *als swa say / aswasay / as whey sey / as who sey / as whose say / alswa* (1 each).
### Table 2
Regional Distribution of Surface Variants from a Number of MSS Localized in *LALME*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Variant Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>West Midland Region</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME1</td>
<td>*ase hwa se <em>bus seide (Ancr.)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME2</td>
<td>[none in the corpus]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME3</td>
<td>as who so seith (Staffs.); as who/wo seyth (Lanc.) as so saytz; as quo says (Ches.); als swa sai (WYks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME4</td>
<td>as whos seyth (Worcs.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Southern Region</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME1</td>
<td>*ase hwo se <em>bus seide (Ancr.)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME2</td>
<td><em>ase ho-so seip / as hose seip / as gwo seip (Gloucs.)</em> as wo seip (Somers., Berks.); as ho seip (Somers.)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME3</td>
<td>as whos seip / as hose seip / as hoo seyt (S. Worcs.) as who seip / as who seyp / as who seip / as who sey / as who sey / as who say / as who seis (Berks.)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME4</td>
<td>as who sayith (Hants.); as who sayth (Surrey)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>East Midland Region</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME1</td>
<td><em>as hwa se seie (Wooing L)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME2</td>
<td>als who seyt (Middlesex)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME3</td>
<td>as who seyth (London, Herts.) as who seith (Ely); as who saiith (London); as who saieth (Essex); als who say / als swa say (Lincs.)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME4</td>
<td>als qua say / als quwho say (Lincs.); as who say / os who say (Notts.); as so sey (Leics.); as who seyth (Norfolk); as who seip / as who seipe (Centr Midi. standard)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Northern Region</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME3</td>
<td>als qua say / als qua sai / alswa say / qua sai / al swa (WRY)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME4</td>
<td>als qua sai (Durham); als wha say (NRY, Durham); alswa say / als so say / as wha say (Yks.)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*not analysed in *LALME*
In Late Middle English it was possible to combine two different parenthetic clauses. In Chaucer Bo we find for instance once *his is to seyne as who seyth*. There was a great deal of confusion about the meaning and function of the phrase. Capgrave, for example, writes *as pei sey* to introduce an exposition (type *Ea*) and *as sum men sey* in a comment (type *C*). The popularity of *as who say/saith* began to decline in the fifteenth century, and other current phrases gained more ground. Periphrastic structures with *as who* were rare in Middle English. In Chaucer Bo (Book II Prosa 1) we come across *as who so myghte seyn bus* in a gloss. Wyclif had used *as who should* with other verbs than *say* (*OED*). In MS Fairfax 14 (c.1400) of Cursor, written in Lancashire (*LALME* 1: 203) there is a unique interpolation from 3 regum 3: 16–23, which has often been quoted. It contains the parenthetic phrase with a periphrastic verb form to interpret a woman’s “body language” (kinesics).

19) *Cursor* (Frf) line 8609. “*Pe tober womman childe ho hent/ and forsoke hir awen þat was shent./ Ho turned hir ouer wib hit in arme/ as qua sulde sai, I knaw na harme.*” [Lancs.; North WM]

“The other woman’s child she took, and abandoned her own, which had been killed. She turned round with it in her arms, like one who might say, ‘I know of no harm done.’”

Since the words *ho turned hir ouer* refer to the woman’s behaviour the notion lies close at hand that a previous scribe from a more southerly region, in whose dialect the form *ho* ‘she’ could also act as a variant of “who” (*LALME* 4: 283), might possibly have taken the second *ho* in his model text for an indefinite pronoun. The original meaning of the clause in this context must have been “as if saying.” The next instance of *as who should say* is only registered more than a hundred years later, in the Early Modern English period.

To wind up the discussion of *as who say/saith* in ME, the distribution of the four semantic and syntactic uses of the phrase will be presented in Table 3. The texts will be distributed among the prototypical text categories as follows:

*IR* : rules, homilies, sermons, religious treatises  
*NN* : history, lives  
*Nf* : fiction, romance, travelogue  
*XX* : philosophy, Mystery plays, dialogue, private letters
Table 3
Distribution of the Uses of the Parenthetic Clause

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ME</th>
<th>No. IR</th>
<th>No. NN</th>
<th>No. NI</th>
<th>No. XX</th>
<th>No. ME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ME1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ea</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Eac,C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Eab,C</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Eabc,C</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ea</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Eabc,C</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Ea,C</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Eabc,C</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Eab,C</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

XI

*As who say/ saith* lingers on in Early Modern English all through the sixteenth century, and is occasionally seen even in the seventeenth. It occurs in religious texts in reformulative function (*Ea, Eb*), and as a rhyme-filler in verse (*C*). See, e.g., Visser 1970: 2.923 and *OED*, s.v. *who*, II.7.b.(a). In the 1972 edition of *Thomas Thomas’s Dictionarium* (1587) *as who saith* and *as who say* are listed among a rather confusing variety of the vernacular variants of two Latin entries, namely (i) s.v. *quasi*, adverb.: *Like as, as if it were, in a manner, as though, as who saith, almost or about, and (ii) s.v. *scilicet*, adv.: *as who say, that is to witte, surely, truly, doubtles, indeed, euen, also, moreover, yea marry, yea truly, yea what else.*

In Early Modern English, periphrastic structures of the phrase seem to be the most frequent variants, especially *as who should say*. It corresponds to French sixteenth-century *comme qui diroit* (e.g., Calvin, Amyot, see Godefroi 1937), which is today *comme qui dirait*, as used in popular speech instead of the standard *comme si l’on dirait* ‘as if one said,’ ‘as much as to say.’ The phrase with *should* usually occurred in religious texts (e.g., Tindale) to introduce an exposition (*Ea*), but also in Shakespeare’s plays (e.g., *Shr.*). The phrase was used to introduce the interpretation of kinesics (*Ec*) in drama, for example in Shakespeare (*R2, MV*) (see Onions 1986: 317). To introduce a comment, Shakespeare used the variant *as one should say* (*TGV, MM*).

*As who would / might say* seems to have been a rarer variant (*OED*, s.v. *who* II.7 b.(c)), whereas *as who should say* has been met with in literature even as late as the twentieth century. In Dickens, *Dombey* 212 (*OED*, s.v. *as.12.*) it is used to interpret kinesics (*Ec*). Two similar examples from Dickens are quoted in Poutsma 1916 and 1928. Sometimes the effect of the
exposition of a suggestive statement can be emphasized by implying kinesics as well, as in Dryden (1690) Don Sebastian (see Visser 2:923) and in Arnold Bennett's novel The Old Wives' Tale (1908) Bk II, Ch. 1, Part 1: "Really," replied Mr Povey with loftiness as who should say "what an extraordinary thing that a reasonable creature can have such fancies" (also in Curme 1931: 211).

The latest dictionary entries of parenthetic as who-phrases are dated in OED and MED as follows:

as who say: expository (type Ea) 1611; comment (type C) 1438
as who saith: expository [type Eb 1522 (Visser)], (type Ea) 1550; Comment (type C) 1559.

as who might say: comment (type C) 1526; kinesics (type Ec) 1664-1848.

as who should say: expository (type Ea) 1527 - 1717; kinesics (type Ec) 1568-1905. The phrase is recorded even in the twentieth century by some dictionaries and grammars, such as Wyld (1940) s.v. as (I.) 9 "Idiomatic phrases ... as it were, as who should say 'so to speak'" (type C). Onions (1932) mentions on p. 150 the archaic as who should say 'as though someone should say' (type Ea). This item no longer occurs in the revised edition by Miller (1971). Cf. the American Merriam-Webster (1971) s.v. who, where as who should say, glossed "so to speak" (type C), is referred to as an archaic phrase.

XII — CONCLUSION

Around the year 1225 the generalizing indefinite pronoun who so was first met in a parenthetic hypothetical clause conveying generic reference. About the same time the indefinite pronoun was also seen in some texts as a variant of a personal pronoun corresponding to Latin quasi dicat, ac si diceret, and the like, which referred to the person acting as subject of the preceding sentence. Thus the reference in the clause was seemingly altered from personal to generic. Accordingly, instead of introducing the exposition or reformulation of the preceding speaker's statement, thoughts, or emotional behaviour, the clause came to imply what might have been going on in the mind of any one person in the speaker's situation. Probably owing to confusion between the translations of the conjunction and the adverb quasi, as who say/saith also came to be used as a variant of an adverbial comment clause. In ME1, the phrase was only used to introduce the explanation of a difficult passage in a religious text. In ME2, its semantic field was already extended to denote other kinds of reformulation, and to constitute adverbial comment clauses.
In the course of time the exact meaning of the phrase in each situation was blurred, and a great deal of confusion took place. By ME3 the reformulative statement (with the exclusion of the interpretation of kinesics, which still implied "as if the speaker were saying") had become appositional, and the parenthetic phrase came to be used as a variant of "that is (to say)," "in other words." The comment clause conveyed the meaning "so to say," "as the saying is," "as it were," or the like.

The past subjunctive *sayde* with *as who so*, which has so far only been found in *Ancrene* (ME1) as equivalent of a Latin turn, either personal or impersonal, did not survive. The contemporary eastern variant with the present subjunctive *say* that was first detected in ME1 was to be the prevailing form in Northern and North Midland texts. The variant *saith* in the third person present indicative, which was first met in the *South English Legendary* (ME2), was to be the prevalent structure in southern, western, and South Midland areas, including the London region. Since the language of the capital essentially represented the developing standard language, the southern form soon ousted the other variant, except for some regional sermons and homilies.

By the end of the Middle English period the expository or reformulative use had become the most frequent, and comment clauses came next in numbers. *As who say/saith* survived all through Early Modern English, but was gradually replaced by periphrastic structures formed with auxiliaries such as *should, would*, and, rarely, *might*. *As who should say* cropped up occasionally even as late as the twentieth century. After the Middle English period kinesics and comment clauses were mainly found in non-religious and non-factual texts, that is to say, verse, drama, and fiction. Answers to rhetorical questions seem to have become extremely rare after the ME period, since only one sixteenth-century example was registered (Visser 1972). It would be worthwhile to study the equivalent phrase in a representative Early Modern English corpus. Thomas Elyot's *Governour* (1531), for instance, which belongs to the prototypical text category "Instruction secular," contains several instances of the parenthetic variant *as I mought say*, often preceded by *or*.

University of Helsinki


