AS WHO SAY / SAITH REVISITED:
FORM AND FUNCTION

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I

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 dicat/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 *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 *Plan and Bibliography* (1954) and *Supplement* (1984) of the *Middle English Dictionary*. For texts not registered in *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 *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 *Handbook of Middle English Grammar: Phonology* (1974: 5). Though the occurrence of the variants *as who say* and *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 *as who-so said* (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, *as who say/ saith* came to be used parenthetically in two main contexts: to introduce expository or reformulative clauses (from now on to be referred to as *E*), or as comment clauses (= *C*). Within the reformulative category I have made a distinction between three different types of exposition: *Ea, Eb*, and *Ec*.

(i) *Ea:*

Where a phrase with *as who(so)* + the verb *to say* went back to a vernacu-
lar 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 under-
stood 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 in-
terpretation 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 þoledes tu hwen þu wes henged bituhhe
> twa þeofes, *As hwa se seie* 'He þis is mare þen þeof'. . . . " [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 inde-
pendent 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.)

> 2) *Wycl. Serm.* (ME3) (ed. T. Arnold, *Select English Works of John Wyclif*,
> vol. 1, London, 1869), p. 127. "Pilat answeride, þat y have writun, I have
> writun, *as who saith*, þis writing sal stonde." [Ely; East Midland]
> "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: 'ʒuf we doþ ou wrong. wo ssal ou do riʒt?' *As wo seiþ*, we beþ kinges, 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'."

5) *PConsc.* (ME3) (Hrl) (ed. R. Morris, Philological Society: Transactions, 1863), line 1952. "And what es mar horibel in stede/ þan a man es when he es dede? *Alswa say*, nathyng es swa ugly/ Als here es a mans dede body." [Innocent: *Quid enim fetidius humano cadavere? Quid horibilius homine mortuo?*] [Northern]
   "And what is more horrible than man when he is dead?" In other words, "nothing is so ugly as man's dead body."

6) *Spec. Christ* (ME4) (Hrl) (ed. G. Holmstedt, EETS 182), p. 14. "Ieronimus: What seynte es crowned withoutyn trauelous victorye? *As who seythe* 'noon'." (p. 15 Ieronimus: *Quis sanctorum sine certamine coronatus est?*) [Leics.; East Midland]
   "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.

7) *SLeg. (Laud)* (ME2) (ed. C. Horstmann, EETS 87), [St. Dominic] p. 285.
"Þe Deuel stod and made him signe: *Ase ho-so seith.* 'I-nelle nouȝt
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 ex-
pression, 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 seiþ, ase þauh 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."

10) *Mandev.* (ME3) (ed. P. Hamelius, EETS 153), p. 167. "And þerfore þei
spenden *as who seyth* right nouȝt." [Herts.; EMidland]
"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.

11) Gower, *CA* (ME3) (ed. G.C. Macaulay, vol. 1, EETS ES 81, rpt 1957)
Bk4. 585. "and stonde, *as who seith*, doumb and def/ that all nys worth
an yvy lef." [East Midland]
"And stand, as the saying is, dumb and deaf, so that all is not even worth
an ivy leaf."

IV

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*]: *SLeg.* (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* (Frf) <v> (*C*)
> [EM];

[XX]: Trev. *Dial. MC* (Hrl) <p> (*C*) [EM]; Chaucer *Bo* (Rob.) <p> (*Ea, Eb, C*) [EM]; Chaucer *Buk.* (Rob.) <v> (*Ec*) [EM]; Chaucer *CT. Mel.* (Rob.) <p> (*Ea*) [EM].
[*IR*: 10; *NN*: 2; *NI*: 4; *XX*: 4]

ME4 1420–1500

[IR]: *Ben. Rule* (2) (Vsp) <v> (*Eb*) [(WYks. #L) N]; *Wor. Serm.* (Wor) <p> (*C*) [(Worcs. #L) WM]; *Roy. Serm.* (Roy) <p> (*Ea, Eb*) [(Berks. #L) S]; *Lollard Sermons* (Add) (EETS 294; 1989) <p> (*Eb*) [EM]; *Jacob's W.* (Sal) <p> (*Ea*) [EM]; Rolle *FLiving* (Cmb) <p> (*Ea*) [N]; Rolle *Psalter* (UC 64) <p> (*Ea, Eb, Ec, C*) [(Yorks. #L) N]; *Spec. Chr.* (2) (Hrl) <p> (*Ea, Eb, C*) [(Leics. #L) EM]; *The Scottish Legendary* (Cmb) (ed. W.M. Metcalfe, STS xxv, 1896) <v> (*Ea*) [OScots/N]; *Epistle DStirrings* (CmbFf) (in *Deonise Hid Diuinite*, pp. 62-77 fns.; ed. P. Hodgson, EETS 231) <p> (*Ea*) [(Middx. #L) EM]; Misyn *FL* (Corp-O) <p> (*Ea, C*) [(Linc. #L) EM]; Misyn *ML* (Corp-O) <p> (*Ea*) [(Linc. #L) EM]; *Mirror St Edm.* (4) (Thrn) <p> (*Ea*) [N/x]; *Grace* (Thrn) <p> (*Eb*) [N]; Love, *Mirror* (Brsn) <p> (*C*) [(Bucks. #L) EM]; *Pilgr. LM* (Cmb) (ed. A. Henry, EETS 288, 1985) <p> (*C*) [EM]; Hilton, *SP* (Hrl) <p> (*C*) [(Ely/Norfolk#L) EM]; Chartier, *Quad.* (2) (Rwl) <p> (*C*) [EM]; Lydg. *LOL* (Dur-U) (ed. J.A. Lauritis, V.F. Gallagher, and R.A. Klinefelter, Duquesne Studies, Philological Ser. 2. Pittsburgh, Pa: Duquesne UP, 1961) <v> (*Ea*) [EM];
[NN]: *Wars Eng. in France* (ed. J. Stevenson, Rolls Series; example from *OED*) <p> (*C*) [EM];
[NI]: KJames. *Kingis Quair* (ed. J. Norton-Smith, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981) <v> (*C*) [Scotl. /N]; *Wars Alex.* (Ashm) (ed. H.N. Duggan, and T. Turville-Petre, EETS SS 10, 1989) <v> (*Ec*) [(Durham#L) N]; Caxton *Reynard* (ed. N.F. Blake, EETS 263, 1970) <p> (*Ec*) [EM]; The *Nut-Brown Maid* (ed. W.W. Skeat, *Specimens of English Literature A.D. 1394–1579*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1930) <v> (*C*) [EM]; *Parton.* (1) <v> (*C*) [(Surrey#L) EM];
[XX]: *GRom.* (Hrl) <p> (*Eb, Ec*) [(Hants. #L) S]; *Paston* <p> (*C*) [(Norfolk) EM]; Chartier A *Familiar Dialogue of the Friend and the Fellow* (Sion) (ed. M.S. Blayney, EETS 295, 1989) <p> (*Ea, C*) [EM]; *Digby Pl.* (Musaeo) (ed. D.C. Baker et al., EETS 283, 1982) <v> (*Ea, Ec*) [(Notts. #L) EM].
[*IR*: 19; *NN*: 1; *NI*: 5; *XX*: 4]

V

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 parenthetic 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 parenthetic 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 cweðe* "forgang þu ones treowes westm and mid þare æðelice hyrsumnesse þu ȝearnest hefenrices merhðe. . . . " [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 gloriandum est.*]

14) *NHom* (1) (ME3) (ed. J. Small, *English Metrical Homilies*, Edinburgh, 1862). [The marriage in Cana] "And Crist answerd and said thanne/ 'Quat es til me and the, womanne?'/ *Als qua sai*, 'qui askes þou me/ Mirakel that I toc noht of the?' " [Yorks.; North.]
"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).

> 16) *Ancr.* (Corp-C) (ME1), (ed. J.R.R. Tolkien, EETS 249), p. 51. "Na wohlech nis se culuert as o pleinte wise. *As hwa se þus seide*. Ich nalde forte þolie deað, þenche fulðe toward te. & swereð deope aðes." [West Midland]
> "'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 dicat/ 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 wurð is as hwa se seide and ʒeide 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 þauh he seide & ʒeiede*, 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 seið* "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).

VII

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 *ȝyf hwa sægeð on earnost & cwæð to ane 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/ *A se 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 seiþ* hor tyme hor deþ 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 *as þah hit were*, *as me seið*, and *as me seide*, are to be found as comment clauses.

VIII

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

Sub-per. in ME	No. of Texts	Distribution		*Ea*		*Eb*		*Ec*		*C*	
		Prose	Verse	P	V	P	V	P	V	P	V
ME1	2	2	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
ME2	3	–	3	–	2	–	1	–	1	–	3
ME3	20	7	13	3	6	1	2	–	3	3	3
ME4	29	21	8	9	4	6	–	3	2	10	4
Totals	54	30	24	14	12	7	3	3	6	13	10*

*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 þat 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.]

<div align="center">IX</div>

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 wha say* (2), *als swa say* / *aswasay* / *as whey sey* / *as who sey* / *as whoe say* / *alswa* (1 each).

Table 2
Regional Distribution of Surface Variants
from a Number of MSS Localized in *LALME*

	West Midland Region
ME1	*ase hwa se þus seide* (*Ancr.*)
ME2	[none in the corpus]
ME3	*as who so seith* (Staffs.); *as who/wo seyth* (Lanc.) *as so saytz; as quo says* (Ches.); *als swa sai* (WYks)
ME4	*as whos seyth* (Worcs.)
	Southern Region
ME1	ase hwo se þus seide (*Ancr.*)
ME2	*ase ho-so seiþ / as hose seiþ / as ʒwo seiþ* (Gloucs.) *as wo seiþ* (Somers., Berks.); *as ho seiþ* (Somers.)
ME3	*as whos seiþ / as hose seiþ / as hoo seyt* (S. Worcs.) *as who seiþ / as who seyþ / as who seþ / as qwo seyþ / as qwo sey / as who sey / as who say / as who seis* (Berks.)
ME4	*as who sayith* (Hants.); *as who sayth* (Surrey)
	East Midland Region
ME1	*as hwa se seie* (*Wooing L*)*
ME2	*als who seyt* (Middlesex)
ME3	*as who seyth* (London, Herts.) *as who seith* (Ely); *as who saith* (London); *as who seie* (Essex); *als who say / als swa say* (Lincs.)
ME4	*als qwa say / als qwho say* (Lincs.); *as who say / os who say* (Notts.); *as so sey* (Leics.); *as who seyth* (Norfolk); *as who seiþ / as who seiþe* (Centr Midl. standard)*
	Northern Region
ME3	*als qwa say / als qua sai / alswa say / qua sai / al swa* (WRY)
ME4	*als qua sai* (Durham); *als wha say* (NRY, Durham); *alswa say / als so say / as wha say* (Yks.)

*not analysed in *LALME*

X

In Late Middle English it was possible to combine two different parenthetic
clauses. In Chaucer *Bo* we find for instance once þ*is 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 þei 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 þus* 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. "Þe toþer womman childe ho hent/ and forsoke
> hir awen þat was shent./ Ho turned hir ouer wiþ 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 willbe distributed among the prototypical text categories
as follows:

IR : rules, homilies, sermons, religious treatises
NN : history, lives
NI : fiction, romance, travelogue
XX : philosophy, Mystery plays, dialogue, private letters

Table 3

Distribution of the Uses of the Parenthetic Clause

ME	No.	IR	No.	NN	No.	NI	No.	XX	No.	ME
ME1	2	Ea	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	ME1
ME2	3	Eac,C	1	Eab,C	1	C	1	–	–	ME2
ME3	20	$Eabc,C$	10	Ea	2	Ec,C	4	$Eabc,C$	4	ME3
ME4	29	$Eabc,C$	18	Ea,C	2	Ec,C	5	$Eabc,C$	4	ME4
Totals	54	$Eabc,C$	31	Eab,C	5	Ec,C	10	$Eabc,C$	8	

XI

As who say/ saith lingers on in Early Modern English all through the six-teenth 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 vernac-ular 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 corre-sponds 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 litera-ture 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*.

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