

The Syntax of Prenominal and Postnominal Adjectives in Old English

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By

Agnieszka Pysz

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P U B L I S H I N G

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INTRODUCTION

“The analysis of attributive adjectives is a controversial issue in current linguistic theory. [...] From the point of view of syntactic theory it is perhaps slightly worrying that the theory [...] allows for so many distinct analyses of one and the same phenomenon” (Holmberg 1993)

“The widespread popularity in recent work of the DP hypothesis contrasts strikingly with the lack of a consensus about the structural location of the attributive adjective” (Svenonius 1994)

“We still have no good phrase structure theory of such simple matters as attributive adjectives” (Chomsky 1995)

The aim of this monograph is to suggest a syntactic analysis, couched in the framework of Chomsky’s generative grammar, which would best grasp the syntax of prenominal and postnominal adjectives in Old English (henceforth, OE). Taking into account that, as the three quotations above indicate, there is little consensus among generative scholars as to the status of adnominal adjectives in the syntax as well as that, heretofore, there have been hardly any attempts at handling OE adjectives by means of generative methodology, the aim to which this work aspires seems fairly wide-ranging. To make it more concrete, the scope of the investigation has been limited to four selected aspects of OE adnominal adjectives which, ideally, should all be captured by the prospective analysis. It is hoped that the limited scope of the inquiry will contribute to a qualitatively better insight into the nature of problems involved.

With the above in mind, the book has been divided into three major parts. The initial part (Chapter One and Chapter Two) is descriptive in nature and provides the characterisation of adnominal adjectives in OE, based on a selection of four specific aspects. The middle part (Chapter Three) lays out a theoretical groundwork for the analysis to be developed further. The final part (Chapter Four and Chapter Five) contains an actual analysis which is intended to cope with the four aspects of OE adjectives reviewed in the initial part.

As mentioned, Chapter One and Chapter Two provide the descriptive characterisation of adnominal adjectives in OE.

Chapter One describes as thoroughly as possible the first two properties

of OE adjectives, i.e. inflectional patterning and stacking potential. As regards the former, the discussion differentiates the inflection of adjectives in preposition to the noun (specifically, the patterns of concord and disconcord) from that of adjectives in postposition to the noun (specifically, the so-called 'true postposition' and 'false postposition'). A claim is made that the different inflectional behaviour which prenominal and postnominal adjectives exhibit argues against treating them on an equal footing. As regards the latter, the discussion focuses on the stacking potential of adjectives in preposition to the noun, viewed through the prism of previous research. Two traditional approaches towards adjective stacking in OE are considered: one which treats some adjectives as recursive, whereas others as non-recursive, and one which treats all adjectives as non-recursive. It is asserted that both of these approaches are somewhat problematic and must therefore be reconsidered.

Two further properties of OE adjectives, i.e. their placement with respect to the noun, as well as with respect to complements, constitute the focus of Chapter Two. As regards the former, a diachronic overview of prenominal and postnominal adjectives is offered, taking into account three periods in the history of English and paying special attention to the OE period. In addition to providing some empirical evidence from OE, the discussion points out that the issue of prenominal and postnominal adjectives cannot be reduced to the superficial difference in their surface placement. As regards the placement of adnominal adjectives with respect to their complements, an attempt is made to see what patterns are encountered in OE, specifically whether prenominal and postnominal adjectives tend to be placed before or after their complements.

As pointed out earlier, Chapter Three provides a theoretical groundwork for the analysis of OE adjectives suggested in further parts. At the outset, an outline of the generative research into the syntactic status of nominal phrases is offered. The remainder of the discussion reviews the research into the syntactic status of adnominal adjectives. Four major approaches towards the structural location of adjectives are presented. Each approach is subsequently evaluated and a conclusion is made that none of them can be straightforwardly applied to adnominal adjectives in OE. Thus, it is suggested that OE adjectives are best handled by a mixed account, according to which not all of them are ascribed the same status in the syntax.

Chapter Four and Chapter Five make an attempt at offering a syntactic account of OE adjectives which would best capture their properties described in Chapter One and Chapter Two.

Chapter Four suggests a way of dealing with the two aspects presented

in Chapter One. Regarding inflection, it is contended that since the inflectional behaviour of prenominal adjectives and that of postnominal adjectives cannot be reduced to one single pattern, there seems to be no easy way in which a single mechanism could account for both of them. Given this, two mechanisms are posited: one responsible for prenominal adjectives (in terms of concord by selection) and one responsible for postnominal adjectives (in terms of agreement by Spec-head). Regarding stacking, it is shown that the traditional claims suggesting that OE adjectives are partly or fully precluded from stacking do not stand up to scrutiny and must be abandoned. An alternative account of stacking, which differentiates between the stacking potential of prenominal adjectives and that of postnominal adjectives, is proposed instead.

Chapter Five suggests a way of dealing with the two aspects presented in Chapter Two. Regarding the placement of adjectives with respect to the noun, a proposal is made whereby both the prenominal and the postnominal placement of adjectives on the surface follow from their different base-generation sites in the syntax. The major innovation of the suggested proposal is that some adjectives which are traditionally viewed as postnominal, i.e. those in ‘CONJ+Adj’ and ‘N+Dem+Adj’ constructions, are subsumed here under the so-called ‘false postposition’. Regarding the placement of adjectives with respect to their complements, it is proposed that the relevant surface patterns in which prenominal and postnominal adjectives are preceded or followed by their complements may be readily derived by means of (at most) two movements inside the extended projection of nominals.

Two remarks are in order with regard to the basic terminology used throughout this book. Firstly, the term ‘nominal phrase’ is used in a theory-neutral (or pretheoretical) sense. At relevant points, when the syntactic status of nominal phrases is relevant to the discussion, a distinction is made between DP and NP: the label DP is used with reference to the determiner phrase, a maximal projection of the functional head D° , whereas the label NP is used with reference to the noun phrase, a maximal projection of the lexical head N° . Secondly, the term ‘adnominal adjective’ is used to refer to any adjective which appears within the boundaries of a nominal phrase, with no regard to its surface placement (prenominal or postnominal) or its relation with respect to the noun (attributive or predicative).

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	Accusative (case)
Adj	Adjective
C	Common (gender)
Compl _{ADJ}	Complement of an adjective
DAT	Dative (case)
DEF	Definite
Dem	Demonstrative (pronoun)
DIM	Diminutive (form of a noun)
DS	Deep Structure
F	Feminine (gender)
GEN	Genitive (case)
GEND	Gender
INDEF	Indefinite
INSTR	Instrumental (case)
LF	Long Form (of an adjective)
M	Masculine (gender)
ME	Middle English
ModE	Modern English
N	Neuter (gender)
	Noun
NOM	Nominative (case)
NUM	Number
oAdj	Adjective with ambiguous (weak/strong) inflection
OE	Old English
PDE	Present Day English
PL	Plural (number)
Poss	Possessive (pronoun)
Q	Quantifier
sAdj	Adjective with 'strong' inflection
SF	Short Form (of an adjective)
SG	Singular (number)
ST	Strong (adjectival inflection)

U	Unmarked (inflection)
UG	Universal Grammar
wAdj	Adjective with 'weak' inflection
WK	Weak (adjectival inflection)

CHAPTER ONE

ADNOMINAL ADJECTIVES IN OE: INFLECTION AND STACKING

1.1. Introductory remarks

The current Chapter discusses the inflection of adnominal adjectives in OE, as well as their stacking potential. The Chapter comprises two parts (i.e. section 1.2. and section 1.3.) and is organised as follows.

Section 1.2. reviews the inflectional patterning of OE adjectives: adjectives in preposition to an overt noun, adjectives in the postcopular position and adjectives in postposition to an overt noun. Section 1.3. is devoted to the phenomenon of adjective stacking in OE. It offers some discussion of adjective stacking from a cross-linguistic perspective. It subsequently discusses adjective stacking in OE, with a focus on two traditional approaches towards stacking in OE. Section 1.4. summarises the contents of Chapter One.

1.2. Inflection of adjectives in OE

The current section discusses the inflection of OE adjectives, both prenominal and postnominal, as well as those which occur in constructions with a copula. The discussion falls into three parts (section 1.2.1., section 1.2.2. and section 1.2.3.).

Section 1.2.1. reviews the inflection of adjectives proposed to an overt noun (prenominal adjectives). It focuses on the major patterns of concord between adjectives and nouns and is supplemented by an analogous discussion of the so-called ‘disconcord’. Section 1.2.2. reviews the inflection of adjectives in the postcopular position. Section 1.2.3. reviews the inflection of adjectives postposed to an overt noun. Two types of postposition are considered, i.e. ‘true postposition’ and ‘false postposition’. They are kept apart because adjectives which occur in these two positions behave differently in terms of inflection.

Generally, adjectives in OE inflect according to two inflectional patterns, i.e. weak (or definite) and strong (or indefinite).¹ The relevant paradigms are presented in Table 1-1 and Table 1-2. Table 1-1 includes a standardised set of weak adjectival endings, whereas Table 1-2 includes a standardised set of strong adjectival endings.²

Table 1-1. Weak inflectional endings of adjectives in OE.

	M	F	N
NOM.SG	-a	-e	-e
GEN.SG	-an	-an	-an
DAT.SG	-an	-an	-an
ACC.SG	-an	-an	-e
	M	F	N
NOM.PL	-an	-an	-an
GEN.PL	-ena/-ra	-ena/-ra	-ena/-ra
DAT.PL	-um	-um	-um
ACC.PL	-an	-an	-an

Table 1-2. Strong inflectional endings of adjectives in OE.

	M	F ³	N
NOM.SG	-∅	-u/-∅	-∅
GEN.SG	-es	-re	-es
DAT.SG	-um	-re	-um
ACC.SG	-ne	-e	-∅
	M	F ⁴	N ⁵
NOM.PL	-e	-a	-u/-∅
GEN.PL	-ra	-ra	-ra

-
- 1 Quirk & Wrenn (1957: 31) distinguish the definite and indefinite adjectival inflection, rather than weak and strong.
 - 2 Following a common practice, the inflectional paradigms of OE adjectives in Table 1-1 and Table 1-2 are based on the 'standard' West Saxon dialect of OE. A usual caveat in connection with this is that any such paradigms must be treated to a large extent as idealised.
 - 3 The difference between the strong inflectional endings associated with NOM.SG.F is that <-u> attaches to adjectives with light stems, whereas <-∅> attaches to adjectives with heavy stems.
 - 4 In some grammars of OE, the strong inflectional endings associated with NOM.PL.F and ACC.PL.F include <-e>, in addition to <-a>.
 - 5 The difference between the strong inflectional endings associated with NOM.PL.N and ACC.PL.N is that <-u> attaches to adjectives with light stems, whereas <-∅> attaches to adjectives with heavy stems.

DAT.PL	-um	-um	-um
ACC.PL	-e	-a	-u/-Ø

1.2.1. Inflection of adjectives in preposition to an overt noun

The discussion in this section focuses on the inflection of OE adjectives which appear in preposition to an overt noun. According to traditional views, OE adjectives agree with the noun which they precede in three morphosyntactic categories: case, number and gender (the phenomenon referred to as adjective-noun ‘concord’). The major patterns of adjective-noun concord in OE are outlined in section 1.2.1.1. The patterns of an opposite phenomenon, i.e. the so-called ‘disconcord’, are accordingly presented in section 1.2.1.2.

1.2.1.1. Concord between a prenominal adjective and a noun

The discussion of concord in this section splits into two parts. Concord involving prenominal adjectives with weak inflection is discussed first (1.2.1.1.1.). It is followed by an analogous discussion of concord involving prenominal adjectives with strong inflection (1.2.1.1.2.).

1.2.1.1.1. Weak adjectival inflection (concord)

OE prenominal adjectives inflect weak when they appear in one of the following contexts (1-9).

- (1) when an adjective is preceded by a proximal demonstrative
 - a. þisne iungan man
this young.WK man.ACC.SG.M
(colsigewZ,ÆLet_4_[SigewardZ]:1054.475)
 - b. þis wræclice lif
this wretched.WK life.NOM/ACC.SG.N
(cowulf,WHom_6:48.274)
- (2) when an adjective is preceded by a distal demonstrative
 - a. þam soðan Gode
the true.WK God.DAT.SG.M (coeust,LS_8_[Eust]:411.435)
 - b. (þurh) þone halgan Swiþun
(through) the holy.WK Swithin.ACC.SG.M (Spamer 1979: 241)
- (3) when an adjective is preceded by a possessive pronoun

- a. (for) his goodan willan
(for) his good.WK will.DAT.SG.M (Haumann 2003: 59)
- b. hys yfelan dæda
his evil.WK deeds.NOM/ACC.PL.F
(coaelhom,ÆHom_6:196.974)
- (4) when an adjective is preceded by a nominal phrase in the genitive case
- a. þæs fæder dyrstigan aðsware
the.GEN father.GEN bold.WK oath.ACC.SG.F
(cocathom1,ÆCHom_I_32:454.87.6424)
- b. (to) þæs cyninges untruman bearne
(to) the.GEN king.GEN sick.WK child.DAT.SG.N
(Mitchell 1985: 56, §113)
- (5) in the vocative case, i.e. in direct address⁶
- a. Eala þu leofa cyning⁷
alas you.SG dear.WK king (Haumann 2003, fn. 4)
- b. leofan men
beloved.WK people
(Fischer 2001: 265, Quirk & Wrenn 1957: 69)
- (6) in the comparative degree, preceded by a demonstrative
- a. (mid) ðære lufan ðæs beteran lifes
(with) the.DAT desire the.GEN better.WK life.GEN.SG.N
(Mitchell 1985: 80)
- b. þæt ærre folc
the earlier.WK folk.NOM.SG.N
(coblick,HomS_21_[BIHom_6]:81.279.1018)
- (7) in the comparative degree, not preceded by a demonstrative
- a. (mid) ryhtlicran lufan
(with) more-right.WK love.DAT.SG.F
(Haumann 2003: 59, fn. 4)

6 Strikingly, weak inflection seems to be obligatory in the vocative case in general because even postnominal adjectives, which otherwise take exclusively strong inflection, assume weak inflection when they appear in the vocative case.

7 See also the following example in (i).

(i) snotra fengel
wise.WK king (Fischer 2001: 265, Quirk & Wrenn 1957: 69)

- b. (on) *beteran hade*
(on) better.WK rank.DAT.SG.M (Mitchell 1985: 80, §181)
- (8) in the superlative degree, preceded by a demonstrative⁸
- a. *ðes wyrresta cyning*
the worst.WK king.NOM.SG.M (Mitchell 1985: 80, §181)
- b. *þone mæstan dæl*
the largest.WK part.ACC.SG.M (Quirk & Wrenn 1957: 69)
- (9) in the superlative degree, preceded by a possessive pronoun
- a. *his leofestan freond*
his dearest.WK friend.ACC.SG.M
(coaelive,ÆLS[Peter's_Chair]:126.2361)
- b. *min sweteste bearn*
my sweetest.WK child.NOM.SG.N
(coeuphr,LS_7_[Euphr]:305.324)

1.2.1.1.2. *Strong adjectival inflection (concord)*

In general, OE prenominal adjectives inflect strong when they appear in contexts other than those enumerated in (1-9) in section 1.2.1.1.1. In concrete terms, strong adjectival inflection is used in the following contexts (11-14) (see, e.g., Fischer 2000: 160, Mitchell 1985: 65, §136).

- (10) when an adjective is the first element in a nominal phrase
- a. *gastlicne wæstm*
spiritual.ST growth.ACC.SG.M
(coblick,HomS_17_[BIHom_5]:557.688)
- b. (of) *yðigendre sæ ðyssere worulde*
(of) stormy.ST sea.DAT.SG.F this.GEN world.GEN
(Mitchell 1985: 56)
- (11) when an adjective is preceded by an indefinite *an* (Mitchell 1985: 65, §136)
- a. *an stunt wif*
a foolish.ST woman.NOM/ACC.SG.N (Mitchell 1985: 60)

8 Mitchell (1985: 80, §181) claims that superlatives inflect weak or strong (cf. comparatives can be only weak). See also Brunner (1962: 62), Quirk & Wrenn (1957: 31, 69).

- b. *æne bealdne ðeof*⁹
a bold.ST thief.ACC.SG.M (Mitchell 1985: 60)
- (12) when an adjective is preceded by an indefinite *sum* (Mitchell 1985: 65, §136)
- a. *sum earm wif*
some poor.ST woman.NOM/ACC.SG.N (Mitchell 1985: 60)
- b. *sum wælhreow casere*
some cruel.ST emperor.NOM.SG.M (Mitchell 1985: 60)
- (13) when an adjective is preceded by an adjective of quantity or number, e.g. *ægðer*, *ælc*, *ænig*, *eall*, *(ge)hwilc*, *manig*, *genog* (Mitchell 1985: 61, §125)
- a. *gehwilce wise lareowas*
all wise.ST teachers.NOM/ACC.PL.M (Mitchell 1985: 61)
- b. *manege lease Cristas*
many false.ST Christs.NOM/ACC.PL.M (Mitchell 1985: 61)

1.2.1.2. Disconcord between a prenominal adjective and a noun

This section focuses on the phenomenon of ‘disconcord’ between OE prenominal adjectives and nouns, i.e. on instances in which the standardised rules of adjective-noun concord (for which see section 1.2.1.1.) are not obeyed. Two general patterns of disconcord are taken into account. Section 1.2.1.2.1. discusses instances in which adjectives inflect weak, although they appear in contexts associated with strong inflection. Section 1.2.1.2.2. discusses instances in which adjectives inflect strong, although they appear in contexts associated with weak inflection.

Two important provisos should be borne in mind. Firstly, the discussion below is by no means intended to set out the reason(s) for the existence of adjective-noun disconcord in OE. That is, instead of taking an explanatory stance, the discussion adopts a purely descriptive approach. Adjectival inflection is thus taken at face value, i.e. a given inflectional ending is treated as unambiguously weak if it is formally different from an ending in the corresponding slot of the strong paradigm. Similarly, a given ending is treated as unambiguously strong if it is formally different from an ending in the corresponding slot of the weak paradigm.

9 Compare the corresponding example in (i).

(i) *æne leofostne sunu*
one dearest.ST son.ACC.SG.M (Mitchell 1985: 84, fn. 68)

Secondly, no attempt is made below to provide any statistical data concerning the prevalence of adjective-noun disconcord in OE. Although it is often claimed that the scale of this phenomenon is different in poetry and prose¹⁰, the question of whether there is in fact any crucial difference in this respect is not addressed here. All the examples cited in the main text in sections 1.2.1.2.1. and 1.2.1.2.2. are taken from prose. Whenever appropriate, the relevant comments, qualifications and references to the previous work on the subject are provided in footnotes.

1.2.1.2.1. *Weak adjectival inflection (disconcord)*

This section contains a selection of examples in which adjectives preposed to an overt noun inflect weak, although they appear in contexts typically associated with strong adjectival inflection.

Examples (14a-14d) involve prenominal adjectives which inflect weak, although they are the first elements in a nominal phrase. For some qualifications see, e.g., Mitchell (1985: 56ff., §§114-117).^{11 12}

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- 10 This issue is a matter of some controversy. According to some scholars, e.g. Closs (1964: 116) (cited by Mitchell 1985: 67, §141), the distinction between weak and strong adjectival inflection is not rigidly obeyed in many OE texts, whether prosaic or poetic (the existence of disconcord in prose is confirmed by Fischer 2001: 253). Other scholars, e.g., Campbell (1969: §638) (cited by Mitchell 1985: 56, §114), claim that prose and poetry differ in this respect, specifically, that disconcord is more widespread in poetry than in prose. In this connection see, e.g., Lichtenheld (1873), who suggests that a number of weak adjectival forms in non-weak contexts may help determine the date of a given poetic text, i.e. that the high incidence of such forms is indicative of its earliness, whereas the low incidence testifies to its lateness. For a critical discussion of this approach see, e.g., Amos (1980: 124), Funke (1949: 151), Mitchell (1985: 56-57; 67, §141).
- 11 Constructions in which prenominal adjectives inflect weak, although they are the first elements in nominal phrases, are also found in poetry. Some examples are adduced in (i-iv) (Mitchell 1985: 56, §114, Quirk & Wrenn 1957: 69).
- | | | | |
|-------|--|------|--|
| (i) | gamel-a Scylding
old.WK Scylding.NOM.SG.M | (ii) | deor-an sweorde
violent.WK sword.DAT.SG.N |
| (iii) | geong-a garwiga
young.WK warrior.NOM.SG.M | (iv) | wis-a fengel
wise.WK king.NOM.SG.M |
- 12 Mitchell (1985: 56, fn. 37) cites an example from Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies*, i.e. *se Halgan Gast* 'the Holy Ghost' (where *se* represents the nominative case, whereas *halgan* appears with a weak ending which does not represent the nominative case), and claims that it can be regarded as

- (14) a. clænan muðe
clean.WK mouth.DAT.SG.M (Mitchell 1985: 57, §115)
b. (to) mæran engle
(to) great.WK angel.DAT.SG.M (Mitchell 1985: 57, §115)
c. (mid) swiðe micelan earnungan
(with) very great.WK merit.DAT.SG.F
(Mitchell 1985: 57, §115)
d. (mid) grimman sare
(with) bitter.WK sorrow.DAT.SG.N (Mitchell 1985: 57, §115)

Examples (15a-15b) involve prenominal adjectives which inflect weak, although they are preceded by an indefinite, either *an* ‘one, a’, as in (15a), or *sum* ‘some, a’, as in (15b).¹³

- (15) a. an blinda mann
a blind.WK man.NOM.SG.M (Fischer 2001: 268, 23b)
b. sum wælhreowa dema
some cruel.WK judge.NOM.SG.M (Fischer 2001: 267, 22c)

1.2.1.2.2. *Strong adjectival inflection (disconcord)*

This section contains a selection of examples in which adjectives preposed to an overt noun inflect strong, although they appear in contexts typically associated with weak adjectival inflection.

Examples (16-17) involve prenominal adjectives which inflect strong, although they are preceded by a demonstrative, either proximal, as in (16), or distal, as in (17). For some qualifications see, e.g., Mitchell (1985: 58-59, §§118-120).^{14 15}

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- hypercorrection.
- 13 Fischer (2001: 253, 267-268; also 274, fn. 11) hypothesises that adjectives in (14a-14d) inflect weak because they express inherent, rather than temporary, qualities. She draws an analogy to Dutch, where a similar tendency may be observed. For some relevant discussion concerning Dutch see also Kester (1996: 99-104, §2.5.1.3.).
- 14 In this context, consider example (i) from Old Norse, where a prenominal adjective inflects strong, although it is preceded by a definite article.
- (i) sá góðr maðr ...
the good.ST man (Cooper 1986: 38)
According to Cooper (1986: 38), patterns such as (i) are possible in Old Norse when a nominal phrase is followed by a restrictive relative clause.
- 15 It is often claimed that instances of disconcord such as (16-17), which involve masculine or neuter nouns, represent the confusion of the dative

- (16) a. (fram) *ðisum andwerdum dæge*
 (from) this present.ST day.DAT.SG.M
 (Mitchell 1985: 58, §118)
- b. (fram) *þissum wræcfullum life*
 (from) this miserable.ST life.DAT.SG.N
 (Quirk & Wrenn 1957: 69)
- (17) a. *þæt cristen-Ø folc*
 the Christian.ST folk.NOM/ACC.SG.N
 (Mitchell 1985: 58, §118)
- b. (æfter) *þam gehorsedum here*
 (after) the horsed.ST army.DAT.SG.M
 (Mitchell 1985: 58, §119)
- c. (under) *þam sylfum norðdæle*
 (under) the same.ST northern part.DAT.SG.M
 (Mitchell 1985: 196, §492)
- d. (to) *þam heofonlicum timbre*
 (to) the heavenly.ST timber.DAT.SG.N
 (Mitchell 1985: 58, §119)

Examples (18a-18h) involve prenominal adjectives which inflect strong, although they are preceded by a possessive pronoun. For some qualifications see, e.g., Mitchell (1985: 59-60, §§121-122).^{16 17}

- (18) a. *his unrihtes sleges*
 his wicked.ST murder.GEN.SG.M (Mitchell 1985: 59)
- b. (mid) *his lyttlum suna*
 (with) his little.ST son.DAT.SG.M (Mitchell 1985: 59)
- c. (æfter) *hiera hæðeniscum gewunan*
 (after) their heathen.ST custom.DAT.SG.M (Mitchell 1985: 59)

singular/plural endings *-an/-um*. In this spirit, Krohn (1914) (cited by Mitchell 1985: 58, §119) suggests that although *-um* in examples such as (16-17) has been extended from the strong paradigm it should be treated as weak (see also Christophersen 1939: 91).

- 16 In this context, consider example (i), where a strong adjective is preceded by an adverb and a possessive.
- (i) *His ful leof fæder*
 his very dear.ST father (Fischer 2000: 169, her 14; see also her fn. 12)
- 17 In connection with constructions in which a strong adjective is preceded by a possessive pronoun see, e.g., Christophersen (1939: 91-92) and Mitchell (1985: 60, §122).

- d. his getreowne ðegn
his faithful.ST thane.ACC.SG.M (Mitchell 1985: 59)
- e. ure worldcunde fæderas
our worldly.ST fathers.NOM/ACC.PL.M (Mitchell 1985: 59)
- f. (mid) hire scamleasre bæld
(with) her shameless.ST boldness.DAT.SG.F
(Mitchell 1985: 59)
- g. (þurh) þin sigefæst-Ø gefeoht
(through) your victorious.ST fight.ACC.SG.N
(Mitchell 1985: 59)
- h. (on) urum gastlicum fulluhte
(on) our spiritual.ST baptism.DAT.SG.M/F/N
(Mitchell 1985: 59)

1.2.2. Inflection of adjectives in the postcopular position

The discussion in this section focuses on the inflection of OE adjectives which appear in the postcopular position, notably after a copula *wesan* ‘to be’ or *weorþan* ‘to become’. For the sake of perspicuity, only the most typical patterns of inflection are taken into account. For fuller discussions see, e.g., Mitchell (1985: 16-20, §§33-38, 62-63, §§128-129), Tōyama (1989).

According to the view advocated here, postcopular adjectives in OE assume the endings of the strong inflectional paradigm (see Table 1-2). It must be admitted that such a view is not based on any statistical examination and that, as shown below, postcopular adjectives sometimes fail to follow the strong inflectional pattern. Nevertheless, the null hypothesis which finds support cross-linguistically and, moreover, may be accounted for structurally is that for OE postcopular adjectives (for predicative adjectives, in general) there is one type of inflection available, i.e. strong.

Some representative examples of OE adjectives which appear after a copula and which inflect strong are provided in (19-20). Examples (19a-19c) involve strong adjectives which agree with the singular subject, of masculine, feminine and neuter gender, respectively.

- (19) a. Crist is good-Ø¹⁸
 Christ.NOM.SG.M is good.ST (Mitchell 1985: 16)
 b. heo ... wæs swiþe geswencedu¹⁹
 she.NOM.SG.F was very distressed.ST (Mitchell 1985: 16)
 c. þæt land is bradost-Ø
 the land.NOM.SG.N is widest.ST (Quirk & Wrenn 1957: 69)

Examples (20a-20c) involve strong adjectives which agree with the plural subject, of masculine, feminine and neuter gender, respectively.

- (20) a. ealle þa consulas wæron deade buton twæm²⁰
 all the consuls.NOM.PL.M were dead.ST except two
 (Tōyama 1989: 32)
 b. þonne wæron ealle þa dura betyneda
 then were all the doors.NOM/ACC.PL.F shut.ST
 (Mitchell 1985: 17)
 c. fela þinga, Petrus, beoð god gesegnu²¹
 many things.NOM/ACC.PL.N Peter are God.DAT blessed.ST
 (Mitchell 1985: 17)

Apart from the above canonical patterns, there are a number of other patterns available. Two of them are mentioned and accordingly illustrated below.

It is claimed that OE postcopular adjectives which agree with the plural subject sometimes take a generalised <-e> ending, irrespective of the gender of the subject. Whereas the use of <-e> in the case of adjectives which agree with plural subjects of the masculine gender is expected, as it follows the strong paradigm, it is unexpected in the case of adjectives

18 Compare the following example in (i).

(i) se ... wearð fyrrest-Ø on ðrowunge
 he.NOM.SG.M was first.ST in suffering (Mitchell 1985: 62)

19 Compare the following example in (i).

(i) ne weorþeð sio mægburg gemicledu
 not become the nation.NOM.SG.F increased.ST

20 Compare the following example in (i) (with a participle).

(i) þas gymstanas synd tocwysede
 the jewels.NOM.PL.M are crushed.ST

21 Compare the following example in (i).

(i) his weorc syndon deofollicu
 his works.NOM.PL.N are devilish.ST (Mitchell 1985: 17)

Mitchell (1985: 18) claims that neuter plurals in <-u> are exceptional, in prose, as well as in poetry.

which agree with plural subjects of the feminine and neuter gender, i.e. they should take <-a> and <-u>, respectively. Examples (21a-21c) show that <-e> can be used with postcopular adjectives which agree with the plural subject of any gender.²²

- (21) a. ealle þa consulas wæron deade buton twæm
all the consuls.NOM.PL.M were dead except two
(Tōyama 1989: 32)
- b. sio bieldo 7 sio monnðwærnes bioð swiðe anlice
the courage.F and the courtesy.F are very unique
(Tōyama 1989: 32)
- c. ealle þa ðing ... sint eorðlice
all the things.NOM.PL.N are earthly

The other claim, which is made with regard to OE postcopular adjectives which agree with the singular subject, is that they sometimes take a generalised <-Ø> ending (i.e. zero inflection), irrespective of the gender of the subject. The relevant examples are given in (22a-22c).²³

- (22) a. Crist is good-Ø
Christ.NOM.SG.M is good (Mitchell 1985: 16)
- b. þeos sealf is god-Ø²⁴
this medicament.NOM.SG.F is good (Tōyama 1989: 33)
- c. þæt land is bradost-Ø
the land.NOM.SG.N is widest (Quirk & Wrenn 1957: 69)

1.2.3. Inflection of adjectives in postposition to an overt noun

The discussion in this section focuses on the inflection of OE adjectives which appear in postposition to an overt noun. According to the mainstream view advocated in traditional OE grammars, the inflection of postnominal adjectives does not crucially differ from that of prenominal

22 Postcopular adjectives often take <-e> in the plural in all the three genders in later OE texts (Mitchell 1985: 20, §37). The question of whether this is due to the generalisation of <-e> from the masculine gender is disregarded here because it has no direct bearing on the discussion.

23 Postcopular adjectives take zero inflection in the plural in all the three genders in Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies* (Mitchell 1985: 17, §33).

24 Compare the corresponding example with a participle.

(i) heo swiðe wæs gedreht-Ø
she.F very was oppressed (Mitchell 1985: 17)