The Progressive of the Verbs in Wulfstan's Prose

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Summary

Ælfric and Wulfstan were two eminent prose writers that lived in England during the Middle Ages. In this paper, all the examples of the progressive used in Wulfstan's writings are analyzed stylistically, especially in comparison with other Old English prose. Previous studies by Mossé (1938), Nickel (1966), and Raith (1951) have dealt with some of the works of Wulfstan, but an exhaustive study of the use of the progressive of the verbs in Wulfstan's prose has not yet been accomplished on account of the problem of authorship. This paper deals with Wulfstan's works comprehensively, covering not only homiletic documents but also legal and liturgical writings. The following four findings are demonstrated: first, we can find 41 examples of the progressive in total; however, by reducing the number of examples by omitting those that were repeated and dubious, the frequency of the progressive is quite rare in Wulfstan. Second, we can detect some examples of the progressive of the "*weorþan + ende*" form, which is rarely found in other Old English prose works. Third, the progressive in Wulfstan is mainly used emphatically and is often used with the adverb *geornlice or georn(e)*. Lastly, in almost all texts, Wulfstan avoids using the progressive and even when he does use it, he employs it in some formulaic expressions repetitively.

Keywords

Old English, the progressive, syntax, style

1　Introduction and Corpus

Wulfstan is one of the most represented Old English prose writers in Anglo-Saxon England. However, the problem of the authenticity of his works has not yet been confirmed. This paper cannot discuss the problem of the canons of Wulfstan extensively because of limited space, so we mainly follow the established view of previous scholars.

In this paper, we tentatively consider the following texts as Wulfstan's writings. They are treated as authentic Wulfstan texts in Sara M. Pons-Sanz's *Norse-Derived Vocabulary in Late Old English Texts.*

a)　Homiletic Works

All the homilies edited by Bethurum and some homilies compiled by Napier (1883) are included in this section. Bethurum and also Wilcox agree that the following homilies, that is, Napier 23,24,25,35,36,39,50,51, 59,60,61 and the first part of Napier 47 are written by Wulfstan. Wormald (2004), however, attributed several other Napier homilies to Wulfstan. These homilies are not included in Table 1, but if we include them, the total number of examples of the progressive remains unchanged because these homilies contain no examples of it.

b)　Prose parts of the *Benedictine Office*

Scholars disagree over the authorship of the *Benedictine Office* and there is the possibility that someone close to Wulfstan might have translated it from the Latin original. However, as Ure (1957), suggests, it is probable that Wulfstan merely revised another, now lost, original Old-English translation. In spite of these difficulties, these prose parts are included,

based on the opinion of Feiler.

c) Wulfstan's revision of Ælfric's pastoral letter

According to Jost and Clemoes, one of Ælfric's pastoral letters to Wulfstan was actually rewritten and revised by Wulfstan. The rewritten text can be found in the manuscript (CCCC201), which was edited by Fehr (1914).

d) *The Institutes of polity*

Almost all the scholars have accepted that the *Institutes of polity*, a treatise on political theory, is a genuine Wulfstan text. Consequently, this text is also examined.

e) *The Canons of Edgar*

The Canons of Edgar, which deals with topics of ecclesiastical law, is treated here because its style is characteristic of Wulfstan. This view is accepted by many authors. The text of the *Canons of Edgar 2* is also treated here and I use Fadda's edition.

f) Law (Legal Texts)

In spite of some disagreements among scholars, it is generally acknowledged that the following texts: *Peace of Edward and Guthrum, Episcopus, Mircna Laga, Að, Hadbot, Norðleoda laga, Geþyncðo, Grið, X Æthelred, V Æthelred, VI Æthelred, VII Æthelred, VIIa Æthelred , VIII Æthelred, IX Æthelred, Cnut 1018, Cnut 1020, II Cnut, and II Cnut* were actually legislated and written by the archbishop Wulfstan. In addition, he revised some laws: *I Edmund, II Edgar, III Edgar, and I Æthelstan*. All the revised laws except *I Edmund* have no examples of the progressive.

g) Parts of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle D* and *E*

A study by Jost attributed the two poems of Kings Edgar and Edward in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle D* (959, 975) and *E* (959) to Wulfstan. I follow Jost's opinion here.

Table 1 shows all the instances of the progressive in each writing. In the examples marked with an asterisk (*) in Table 1, the anomalous progressive form "*weorÞan* + present particle" is used instead of the normal "verb BE + present participle" type. The function of the *weorÞan* type progressive is not clear, but my opinion is that it has nearly the same meanings and functions as the normal type.

This table suggests that the frequency of the progressive in Wulfstan is quite rare compared with other prose writers such as Ælfric or other prose works such as *Orosius.* According to Table 1, the progressive of *wunian* is used twice but these are found only in the pastoral letter, which was originally written by Ælfric, who uses the progressive form of *wunian* often. Consequently, it can be surmised that Wulfstan just copied the original progressive expression of Ælfric.

Table 1

WHom1b	None
WHom2	None
WHom3	None
WHom4	None
WHom5	*hywende (p.135/5) *leande (p135/6) *lufiende (p.135/6)
WHom6	wilniende (p.147/6)
WHom7	byrnende (p.162/6), bifiende (p.162/11) cwaciende (p.162/11)
WHom7a	None
WHom8a, WHom8b, WHom8c	None
WHom9	smeagende (p.187/17)
WHom10a	None

WHom10c	gitsiende (p.206/10) scaðiende (p.207/3) *tiligende (p.207/4)
WHom11・12・13・14・15	None
WHom16b	clipigende (p.241/4)
WHom17	None
WHom18	wilniende (p.246/30)
WHom19	None
WHom20	godiende (p.255/17)[1]
Napier 23,24,25,35,36,39,47 (first part), 50,51,59,60,61	None
Benedictine Office	clypigende (p.97/8) herigende (p.97/8) wacigende (p.101/9, p.101/13, p.101/14) gebiddende (p.102/2)
Wulfstan's revision of Ælfric's pastoral letter	wunigende (p.96/7, p.100/28-29) libbende (p.118/10) gitsiende (p.134/4)
Institutes of Polity	clipigende (p.70/8)[2] clypiende (p.89/16 II) bodigende (p.225/5) bysnigende (p.225/5-6) scinende (p.232/5) Þeowiende (p.234/5) [3] waniende(p.262/6, p.267/4)
Canons of Edgar	Þeowigende (p.1/4) þenigende (p.1/5) Þingiende (p.1/5)
Canons of Edgar (Fadda Omelia 9)	byrnende (p.179/15) winnende (p.179/26), wedende (p.179/27)
Law (Peace of Edward and Guthrum, Episcopus, Mircna Laga, Að, Hadbot, Norðleoda laga, Ge þyncðo, Grið, X Æthelred, V Æthelred, VIÆthelred, VII Æthelred, VIIaÆthelred ,VIII Æthelred IX Æthelred, Cnut 1018, Cnut 1020,II Cnut) Charter (S 1386)	None

I Cnut	clypiende (p.306/14-15)
I Edmund (revised by Wulfstan)	smeagende (p.184/7)
Two Poems of Chronicle D, Chronicle E	None

Table 2

bifiende	1
bodigende	1
byrnende	2
bysnigende	1
clipiende	5
cwaciende	1
eardiende	1
gebiddende	1
gitsiende	2
godiende	1
herigende	1
hyrwende	1
leande	1
libbende	1
lufiende	1
scaðiende	1
scinende	1
smeagende	2
tiligende	1
Þenigende	1
Þeowigende	2
Þingiende	1
waciende	3
waniende	2
wedende	1
wilniende	2
winnende	1
wunigende	2
Total	41

2 Verbs used in the Progressive

The verbs used in the progressive and their frequency are shown in Table 2. Compared with other Old English prose writings, the complete lack of the verbs of saying is the most notable feature. Instead of verbs of saying, we can find the verb of crying *clipiende* used most often.

3 Functions and Meanings of the Progressive in Wulfstan

The progressive in Old English has three different meanings or functions. One such function is the emphatic, while the progressive is commonly used with adverbs or adverbial phrases expressing stress or emphasis. In Wulfstan, the adverb *geornlice* is often used. Another function is aspectual and its central role is to express duration or continuation of an action. When the progressive is used in this sense, it is expressed along with adverbs or adverbial phrases meaning eternity or continuance. The other is merely a variation of the simple form, and the progressive used in this way has no special meanings but has the same meaning as the simple tense.

4 The analysis of the examples

In the following, we will examine some examples one by one. First, we will look at the *Wulfstan Homilies.*

In *WHom5*, we can notice three occurrences of the irregular progressive, but in another manuscript the irregularity is emended (2) and the normal type progressive is used. That is, *weorþað* in (1) is changed into *beoð* in (2). This passage is a free translation of a biblical passage (2 Timothy).

(1)   7 sume weorþað egeslice godcundnessa hyrwende 7 boclare leande 7 unriht lufiende…(p.135)

(2)　beoð huxlice godcundnessa hyrwenda 7 boclare leande 7 unriht
　　　lustigende…(p.135)

In quotation (1), since the writer uses an emphatic adverb *egeslice*, it
seems that the *weorÞan* progressive has the emphatic function. Moreover,
my opinion is that the progressive emphasizes the horror of the Last
Judgement and evil acts before the Day depicted in 2 Timothy of the *New
Testament*.

In (2), however, the present participle *hyrwenda* ends in –a and is in the
genitive plural form. This suggests that this citation might be a dubious
example of the progressive.

WHom 7 has examples of the verbs *byrnan*, *cwacian* in the progressive
forms (3)(4). My supposition is that these examples also have the emphatic
function and strengthens the horrifying effects while the preacher talks
about the evil actions and the Judgement Day. The progressive in (5)
quoted from *WHom18* also has an emphatic function, since it is used with
the adverb *geornlice*, which expresses emphasis.

(3)　Eall middaneard bið Þonne on dæg byrnende…(P.162)

(4)　7 eal hit bið bifiende 7 cwaciende…(p.162)

(5)　wæs he wilniende to Gode sylfum geornlice 7 mænigfealdlice… (p.246)

Similar examples can be found in *HomS12* and *Hom U34*,as shown in
(6)(7). (4) and (7) are exactly the same and are considered to be formulaic.
Actually, Wulfstan uses some formulaic expressions repeatedly.

(6)　Hom S12　Leofan men, on domes dæge eorðe bið bifiende…(p.43)

(7)　Hom U34　and eal hit bið bifiende and cwaciende.(p.203)

In *WHom 9*, the progressive of the verb *smeagende* is used (8). A similar example is seen in a legal code of Edmund *(I Edmund)* revised by Wulfstan (9). Quotation (8) has several variations among manuscripts and manuscript G has the adverb *georne*, which shows that the meaning of the progressive in (8) is probably emphatic. This kind of expression goes back to the legal code of Ine, the oldest extant Anglo-Saxon legal text.

(8)　byð Þeah smeagende oftor ymbe swicdom þonne ymbe wisdom.
(9)　Ðar wæs Oda arcebiscop & Wulfstan arcebiscop & manega oðre biscopas
　　　smeagende ymbon heora sawla ræd...

The adverb georne + progressive expressions are also found in *The Benedictine Office* and in *The Institutes of Polity*, such as in (10).

(10)　And ðy we sculon on ðone timan to Criste beon georne clypigende and
　　　hine herigende...(p.97)

In the Wulfstan homilies, the progressive of *clipian* is used in (11). However, this expression is formulaic and repetitively used in other Wulfstan works, for example (12).
Both (11) and (12) are exactly the same. Moreover, the progressive is dubious, because *wacole* is an adjective.

(11)　Ðonne motan Þa hydras beon swiðe wacole 7 geornlice clipigende...
　　　(p.241)

(12)　Ðonne motan Þa hydras beon swiðe wacole 7 geornlice clipigende…
(*Institutes of polity* p.70)

Lastly, we examine an example from *The Benedictine Office* (13). This quotation is also a biblical translation. In addition, the emphatic adverb *georne* and the durative adverbs OE *a* and *symle* are used.

(13)　Beoð a symble eow gebiddende to Gode georne; (p.102)

5 Conclusion

In this paper, all the examples of the progressive used in Wulfstan's prose are examined in comparison with other Old English prose works. 41 examples in total have been found but some formulaic expressions have often been used repeatedly. Some examples of the progressive in the "*weorþan + ende*" form occur, which are rarely found in other Old English prose texts. The progressive in Wulfstan is mainly used emphatically and often used with the adverb *geornlice*. In some examples, we can observe effects that horrify. Wulfstan mainly avoids using the progressive and prefers to use the simple form in most cases.

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(Footnotes)

[1] Similar expressions can be found in other versions of *WHom20*. We can find such examples in Bethurum's edition (p.261/23, p.268/2).

[2] The same *clypiende* is used in *the Institute of Polity II*.

[3] Nearly the same example can be found in *the Institute of Polity II.*

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