Tying up syntactic loose ends: *hwæt*/*huat*-clauses in Old English and Old Saxon
George Walkden (University of Cambridge)

A perennial problem in research on Old English (OE) syntax is the existence of 'verb-late' main clauses, which occur at a low frequency in all OE texts and cannot be analysed as instances of the more common V2/V3 pattern (6.3% in the sample of Pintzuk 1993; between 0.6% and 6.1% in the texts investigated by Koopman 1995; though cf. Pintzuk & Haeberli 2008). Walkden (2010) has found that such clauses are found at a similar frequency in Old Saxon (OS). These clauses are problematic for unified analyses of OE and OS constituent order, including those assuming competing grammars, since, as Koopman (1995: 142) observes, their frequency is lower than might be expected under such a hypothesis. In this paper I investigate a subset of these clauses, namely those preceded by the OE 'interjection' *hwæt* and its OS cognate *huat*, such as (1) and (2) overleaf.

OE *hwæt* is well-known as the first word of the epic poem *Beowulf*. In editions, this *hwæt* is often followed by a comma or an exclamation mark. It is commonly held that the word can be 'used as an adv[erb]. or interj[ection]. Why, what! ah!' (Bosworth & Toller 1898: 571) as well as in its normal sense, familiar from modern English, as the neuter singular of the interrogative pronoun *hwa* 'what'. Mitchell & Irvine (2000) even treat this use of *hwæt* as an extra-metrical 'call to attention'.

In this paper I challenge the view that *hwæt* can have the status of an interjection. I present new evidence from OE and OS constituent order which suggests that the additional punctuation after 'exclamative' *hwæt* and OS *huat* is misplaced: *hwæt*/*huat* is unlikely to be extra-clausal. Data is drawn from a study of the OE translation of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* using the YCOE corpus (Taylor *et al* 2001), and of the OS *Heliand* carried out by hand. In both texts, clauses preceded by *hwæt*/*huat* pattern with subordinate clauses and against root clauses in that the verb appears later in these clauses than is normal in root clauses, the difference being statistically clearly significant (Fisher's exact test, p<0.0001 in both cases; see Tables 1 and 2 overleaf).

If *hwæt*/*huat* affects the constituent order of the following clause, then it cannot be truly clause-external. In addition to this syntactic evidence, Stanley (2000: 554) has adduced metrical evidence to show that *hwæt* cannot have been a stressed interjection. Furthermore, while other interjections are often separated from the following clause by a point in the manuscripts, this is never the case with *hwæt* (Stanley 2000: 525); an investigation of the *Heliand* manuscripts shows that the same is true of OS *huat*.

I argue that clauses introduced by *hwæt*/*huat* are in fact parallel to Modern English *wh*-exclamatives such as 'How he ran!'. In other words, it is *hwæt*/*huat* combined with the clause that follows it that delivers the interpretive effect of exclamation, not *hwæt*/*huat* alone. Following Munaro & Obenauer (1999), I argue that the neuter interrogative pronoun in OE and OS is underspecified for argument status, and can therefore serve to mean 'how' and 'why' as well as appearing in *wh*-exclamatives; (3) and (4) overleaf are OE and OS examples of *hwæt*/*huat* with non-argumental meaning in interrogatives. Parallels are drawn with other languages that exhibit this apparent underspecification of *wh*-pronouns, such as French, German and Pagotto (Munaro & Obenauer 1999). Furthermore, I suggest that the origin of this underspecification diachronically can be seen in a commonly-observed process of grammaticalization whereby the pronoun loses functional features and comes to be reanalysed as base-generated in its original derived position in the clausal left periphery (cf. Roberts & Roussou 2003).

The syntax and semantics of *hwæt*/*huat*-clauses is sketched following Rett's (2008) model for exclamatives, in which exclamatives are used to express surprise that the degree property which is their content holds of a particular degree (2008: 147). This model enables

us to explain the constituent order facts, as *wh*-exclamatives cross-linguistically are typically expressed using free relative and/or indirect question constituent order rather than that of main clauses or direct questions (Rett 2008: 173).

I conclude that OE/OS *hwæt*/*huat* was not an interjection, *contra* the traditional view dating back to Grimm (1837); instead it was simply an underspecified *wh*-pronoun introducing a *wh*-exclamative. If so, then we have a principled explanation for the fact that clauses preceded by *hwæt*/*huat* are atypical in verb position, and so these clauses cease to stand in the way of a unified analysis of OE/OS clausal syntax.

Data

(1) **hwæt** *se*   *soðlice onwriið*   *his*   *fæder*   *scondlicnesse*
     hw.   he   truly discovers   his   father.GEN   nakedness.ACC
     'he certainly uncovers the nakedness of his father' (OE, cobede,Bede_1:16.70.15.657)

(2) **Huat** *thu*   *thesaro thiodo*   *canst*   *menniscan*   *sidu*
     hw.   you   this.GEN people.GEN   know.2SG   human custom.ACC
     'You know the customs of these people' (OS, *Heliand*, ll. 3101–2)

Tables 1 & 2: Frequency & percentage of V1/V2 vs. V-later clauses in Bede and the Heliand

	V1/V2		V-later		Total
	N	%	N	%	N
Root	1898	69.9	819	30.1	2717
Hwæt	9	31.0	20	69.0	29
Sub.	1863	37.8	3067	62.2	4930
Total	3770		3906		7676

	V1/V2		V-later		Total
	N	%	N	%	N
Root	875	94.0	56	6.0	931
Huat	9	36.0	16	64.0	25
Sub.	182	21.2	677	78.8	859
Total	1066		749		1815

(3) **Hwæt** *stendst þu*   *her*   *wælhreowa*   *deor?*
     Hw.   stand you   here   cruel   beast
     'Why are you standing here, cruel beast?' (OE, coaelive,+ALS_[Martin]:1364.6872)

(4) **huat** *uuili*   *thu*   *thes*   *nu*   *sôken te*   *ûs?*
     hw.   will   you   this.GEN   now   seek to   us
     'why do you now complain about this to us?' (OS, *Heliand*, l. 5158)

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