A Study of the Inflexions of *EVERYMAN*

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The purpose of this thesis is to investigate and make clear the language of *Everyman* ,and in particular inflexions which,during the ME period, were greatly simplified and reduced. It is almost certain that *Everyman* was translated from the Dutch play *Elckerlijk* .Commentators confirmed the resemblances between *Everyman* and *Elckerlijk* . The date of this work is circa 1500. The English language's system of inflection was significantly simplified during this period.

Citation is by line, e.g. (105) denoting '1.105.'

I. The definite article in *Everyman* .

All forms of the definite article except *the* had disappeared by the end of the late ME.

(1) Ye thynke synne in *the* begynnynge full swete		(13).
(2) In fayth, Eueryman, fare well now at *the* endynge		(301).
(3) *The* oyle of forgyuenes than shall he fynde		(571).

II. The personal pronouns in *Everyman* .

(A) The First Person.

A.1. Nominative, Sg., Pl.

(1) *I* wyll gyue her leue to helpe you in that iourney	(sg.)		(363).
(2) *I* desyre no more to my besynes	(sg.)		(683).
(3) *I* wyll folowe the other, for here *I* the forsake	(sg.)		(846).
(4) In welth and wo *we* wyll with you holde	(pl.)		(325).
(5) Good Dedes, haue *we* clere our rekenynge?	(pl.)		(652).
(6) *We* wyll brynge hym all thyder	(pl.)		(675).

There were many forms of the first person nominative in all the early texts: N. *ic, ich, wa*. In *Everyman* I can confirm one Nominative singular form *I* and one Nominative plural form *we* .

A.2. Accusative & Dative, Sg., Pl.

(7) How that all creatures be to *me* vnkynde	(sg.)		(23).
(8) In dede, Deth was with *me* here	(sg.)		(264).
(9) And comforte *me* tyll I come without the towne	(sg.)		(291).
(10) Ye, Eueryman, and to *vs* declare	(pl.)		(322).
(11) Vp, let *vs* go thyder to-gyder	(pl.)		(424).

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(12) That shall *vs* comforte, by Goddes grace   (pl.)   (542).

     The examples, *me* and *vs* can be seen in this text.

A.3. Genitive, Sg.,Pl.

(13) Ye shall haue my mayde with all *my* herte   (sg.)   (360).

(14) For in hym is all *myne* affyaunce   (sg.)   (199).

(15) Also of *myne* owne an vnredy rekenynge   (sg.)   (375).

(16) Whiche God for *our* soules medycyne

     Gaue vs out of his herte with grete pyne   (pl.)   (719).

(17) God be *our* gyde!   (pl.)   (780).

     I can confirm many examples whose forms are *my*, *myne* and *our*.

The form *myne* is, needless to say, a genitive one before the vowel.

(B) The Second Person.

B.1. Nominative, Sg., Pl.

(1) For before God *thou* shalte answere, and shewe   (sg.)   (107).

(2) O Deth, *thou* comest whan I had the leest in mynde!   (sg.)   (119).

(3) *Ye* speke lyke a good frende; I byleue you well   (sg.)   (234).

(4) Wheder *ye* haue loued me or no   (sg.)   (287).

(5) And *you* do by me, that iournay with you wyll I take   (sg.)   (495).

(6) Here shall *you* receyue that scourge of me   (sg.)   (561).

     Confusion between you and ye exists among writers.

B.2. Accusative & Dative, Sg., Pl.

(1) A-dewe for euer! I shall se *the* no more   (sg.)   (300).

(2) And a precyous iewell I wyll gyue *the*   (557).

(3) I wyll no lenger *the* kepe   (849).

(4) I shall shewe *you* how it is   (sg.)   (241).

(5) That can I helpe *you* to remedy shortly   (sg.)   (402).

(6) For I toke *you* for my best frende   (848).

B.3. Genitive, Sg.,Pl.

(1) *Thy* rekenynge to gyue before his presence   (sg.)   (160).

(2) Thou maystse with *thyn* eye   (396).

(3) That *thyne* accounte thou can not make truly   (420).

(4) That is to *thy* dampnacyon, without lesynge   (429).

(5) I knowe *your* sorowe well, Eueryman   (554).

(6) I wyll deceyue you in *your* moost nede   (sg.)   (358).

(7) *Your* pylgrymage to take on hande   (818).

Many texts in ME ,without exception *Eueryman* also distinguish between *thyn* used before words beginning with vowels, and *thy* before those beginning with consonants.

(C)   The Third Person.

C.1. Nominative, Sg., Pl.

(1) Whiche *he* in no wyse may escape   (sg.)   (69).

(2) *She* loueth to go to feestes, there to be nyse   (361).

(3) That *she* can nother go nor speke   (483).

(4) Bycause *he* wolde euery man redeme   (584).

(5) And *they* wyll here you in-contynent   (Pl.)   (667).

(6) Or *they* for ony money do take or tell   (Pl.)   (758).

C.2. Accusative & Dative, Sg., Pl.

(1) And shewe *hym* in my name   (sg.)   (67).

(2) We shall fynde *hym* in that place   (541).

(3) His good workes I wyll helpe *hym* to declare   (622).

(4) You must call *them* all togyder   (Pl.)   (666).

(5) God hath to *them* more power gyuen   (Pl.)   (735).

C.3. Genitive, Sg., Pl.

(1) *His* mynde is on flesshely lustes and his treasure   (82).

(2) I wyll gyue *her* leue to helpe you in that iourney   (363).

(3) As I haue done the, and all to *his* soules reprefe   (450).

(4) *Theyr* chyldren sytteth by other mennes fyres,   (Pl.)   (760).

(5) We be *theyr* shepe, and they shepeherdes be   (Pl.)   (767).

    The Sing. *his*, *her* and the Plural *theyr* were used for genitive forms.

III. The declension of nouns.

(A) The Singular of Nouns.

(1) The *story* sayth:Man, in the begynnynge	(Sg. N.)	(10).
(2) But my *custome* is clene contrary	(Sg. N.)	(129).
(3) In my glory sholde make his *mansyon*	(Sg. A.)	(53).
(4) I pray the *trouth* to saye	(Sg. A.)	(460).
(5) That is a hye *kynges* chefe offycer	(Sg. G.)	(330).
(6) As I haue done the, and all to his *soules* reprefe	(Sg. G.)	(449).
(7) Thoughe I on the *grounde* be slayne for the	(Sg. D.)	(219).
(8) Frendes, let vs not tourne agayne to this *lande*	(Sg. D.)	(790).

The nominative singular became identical with the accusative singular (see 1,2,3,4).
The genitive singular ending of nouns became -es. Other forms cannot be seen in this work.
The dative singular ending became identical with the accusative singular ending, or -e as
another form. (see 7,8)

(B) The Plural of Nouns.

(1) That of our *lyues* and endynge shewes How transytory we be all daye	(5).
(2) They vse the seuen deedly *synnes* dampnable	(36).
(3) For your *wordes* wolde fere a stronge man	(253).
(4) Thus I bequeth you in the *handes* of our Sauyour	(609).
(5) If *preestes* be good, it is so, suerly	(750).

The inflexional ending -es became the ending of all plural cases.

(C) Mutation Plurals.

(1) I wyll not a *fote* with the go	(293).
(2) My *kynnesmen* promysed me faythfully For to a-byde with me stedfastly	(381).
(3) Though we kysse thy *fete*, thou were worthy	(743).
(4) Theyr chyldren sytteth by other *mennes* fyres, I haue harde	(760).
(5) Be good *frendes* in sporte and playe	(201).

The change of vowel appears in a certain number of nouns in the Nominative and Accusative
Plural.   *mann* Sg.> *menn* Pl.,   *fot* Sg.> *fet* Pl.,   *freond* Sg.> *friend* Pl.
But only *frendes* in this work has succumbed to the influence of the vast class of -es plural

forms.

(D) Irregular Plurals.

(1) Theyr *chyldren* sytteth by other mennes fyres, I haue harde   (760).

  In OE *cild* Sg.> *cild, cildru* Pl.; in ME *childre* (derived from *cildru*), *children*.

IV. The declension of Adjectives.

(A) The strong declension.

(1) For your wordes wolde fere a *stronge* man	(Sg.)	(253).
(2) In that I wyll helpe the with a *good* wyll	(Sg.)	(282).
(3) Lo, *fayre* wordes maketh fooles fayne	(Pl.)	(379).
(4) *Folysshe* frendes and kynnesmen that fayre spake	(Pl.)	(872).

The strong form which had no ending was used ,but plural ending -*e* was very common in late

Midddle English.

(B) The weak declension.

(1) And shewed hym of this *sodeyne* chaunce?	(Sg.)	(198).
(2) For the is preparate the *eternall* glory	(Sg.)	(631).
(3) They fere not my ryghtwysnes, the *sharpe* rod	(Sg.)	(28).

If the adjective was preceded by the definite article, by a demonstrative, by a possessive

pronoun, or by a noun in the genitive case, the weak form , which mostly ended in -*e* in this

work (see 1,3).

(C) Comparison of Adjectives.

(1) Veryly they will become moche *worse* than beestes	(49).
(2) To gyue a rekenynge *longer* layser I craue	(101).
(3) Alas, shall I haue no *lenger* respyte?	(131).
(4) Ye, there shall ye consume, *more* and *lesse*	(795).
(5) I loued them *better* than my Good Dedes alone	(857).

In OE. the comparative endings -*ra* became -*re* in late OE. and in ME.the comparative was

generally formed by means of -*re*, later -*er*.   The examples of the irregular comparison can

be seen in this work (see 1.4.5).

V. Adverbs.

According to *A Short History of English* by H.C. Wyld, there are three main ways of forming Adverbs in OE. (1)

(A) By the suffix *-e* added to Adjectives.

(1) Alas, I may well wepe with syghes *depe*   (184).

(2) Nay, Eueryman, that wyll we not, *certayne*   (656).

(3) Yet they promysed me *fayre* and louyngly   (830).

(B) By the addition of an adverbial suffix.

(1) My kynnesmen promysed me *faythfully*   (380).

(2) That can I helpe you to remedy *shortly*   (402).

(3) With sharpe scourges, and suffred it *pacyently*   (564).

(C) By the addition of the Genitive or Dative case ending to an adj. or noun.

(1) How transytory we be *all daye*   (6).

(2) This mater is *wonders* precyous   (7).

All daye means always or continually, and *wonders* means wonderfully.

VI. Verbal inflexional endings

(A) The present.

(A.1)   The Singular.

(1) I *knowe* the not	(1st)	(114).
(2) I *gyue* the no respyte.	(1st)	(130).
(3) Syr, why *lokest* thou so pyteously?	(2nd)	(207).
(4) O Deth, thou *comest* whan I had the leest in mynde!	(2nd)	(119).
(5) He that *loueth* rychesse I wyll stryke with my darte	(3rd)	(76).
(6) Full lytell he *thynketh* on my comynge	(3rd)	(81).
(7) This blynde mater *troubleth* my wytte	(3rd)	(102).

The forms of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Pers. Sing. are *-e, -est,* and *-eth* in this work.

The *-es* form like Mod. English *-(e)s* cannot be found in this work, but the ending *-es* in the

third Sing. Pres. has been regarded as of Northern origin .

(A.2) The Plural.

(1) We all *gyue* you vertuous monycyon	(1st)	(692).
(2) No remedy we *fynde* vnder God	(1st)	(745).
(3) They be so combred with worldly ryches		
That *nedes* on them I must do iustyce	(3rd)	(61).
(4) Synfull preestes *gyueth* the synners example bad	(3rd)	(759).
(5) Theyr chyldren *sytteth* by other mennes fyres	(3rd)	(760).

First the Northern plural ending - *es* spread to the west Midland dialects and then to the other dialects.   In Everyman - *eth* type in the third Plural Pres. gained ground.

(B) The Preterite.

(B.1)   The Singular

(1) I *hanged* bytwene two theues, it can not be denyed	(1st)	(31).
(2) I *hoped* well that euery man	(1st)	(52).
(3) She *promysed* with me to lyue and dye	(3rd)	(807).
(4) Mary, thou *brought* thy selfe in care	(2nd)	(454).
(5) He *solde* them not to vs, that Lorde omnypotent	(3rd)	(754).
(6) He *bad* me go a pylgrymage, to my payne	(3rd)	(331).
(7) But afterwarde he *lefte* me alone	(3rd)	(467).

The preterite indicative first and third Singular of weak verbs ended in Middle English in - *ed* , - *ede* , - *de* , - *te* .   The ending - *ed* is much commoner than any othe ending in this work.
The examples of *brought* , *solde* and *lefte* are irregular weak verbs.
The strong verbs are divided into seven classes. The (6) *bad* belongs to the Class V.   strong verbs.

(B.2) The Plural.

(1) And also they *gaue* me wordes fayre	(469).
(2) They *lacked* no fayre spekynge	(470).
(3) Blessyd be all they that *counseyled* me to take it	(775).

The ending - *en* occurs in the preterite plural of strong and weak verbs in the ME period.
The final - *n* had gradually disappeared in the northern dialects in the OE period. And after the loss of the final - *n* , - *e* also disappeared.   In Everyman we can confirm the regular form

-ed.

C. The Past Participle.

(1) I *hanged* bytwene two theues. it can not be denyed	(30).
(2) Nor yet for theyr beynge that I them haue *lent*	(57).
(3) How thou hast *spente* thy lyfe, and in what wyse	(109).
(4) I had *wende* so, veryle	(163).
(5) I haue *founde* you true here-before	(230).
(6) But, and thou had *taryed*, I wolde not haue *lefte* the so	(294).
(7) Syth that Felawshyp hath *forsaken* me?	(312).
(8) As for a whyle I was *lente* the	(440).
(9) And whan she hath *brought* you there	(527).
(10) Yet let my name be *wryten* in Moyses table	(596).
(11) Theyr chyldren sytteth by other mennes fyres, I haue *harde*	(760).
(12) By whom we all be *kepte* in suerte	(768).
(13) Now thy soule is *taken* thy body fro	(897).

In OE. and early ME. there were two conjugations: strong and weak. One result of the levelling of the inflections under the influence of the move towards analogy, is that in almost all cases the past participles of the strong conjugation became weak. In ME, the past participle of weak verbs ended in *-ed, -d,* or *-t.* The ending *-en* appears in the past partici -ple of strong verbs. In the ending *-en,* the final *-n* was sometimes dropped during the late OE period. In the southern dialect of the early ME. period, the *-n* was dropped, soon to be followed by the unaccented *-e* .

The system of inflexion changed most rapidly in all the Northern dialects, with changes in the South appearing considerably later. Although the speed with which inflexional endings were levelled varied geographically, the ultimate result was the same: by the end of the ME. period the inflexion system of the English language had been greatly simplified. We can easily recognize this trend towards simplification which was primarily brought about by the tendancy towards ambiguity of unstressed vowels. Other factors contributing to the decay of inflexions were analogy, as well as foreign elements.

NOTES

(1)   Wyld, H. C.   *A Short History of English* (London:John Murray, 1968), pp.252-253.

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