Valency changes in the history of English
Elly van Gelderen
Arizona State University
Naples, 27 May 2010, ellyvangelderen@asu.edu

It has been claimed that languages differ in basic valency orientation. Thus, Haspelmath (1993), Nichols (1993), Abraham (1997), Nichols, Peterson & Barnes (2004), Comrie (2006), and Plank & Lahiri (2009) show that languages have a basic valency orientation that shows itself in being morphologically simpler than the non-basic one. Many of these authors (e.g. Nichols and Comrie) note a diachronic stability. However, Modern English differs markedly from its Germanic neighbors in having more ambivalent/labile and more transitive verbs. Therefore, in this paper, basic valency changes in the history of English are explored. I argue that Old English already has quite a number of labile verbs. Using an expanded VP shell, I show how changes in morphology affected the argument structure.

1. Terminology and framework

Unergative, unaccusative, ergative, inchoative/transitive, change of state, anti-causaitive, etc. Grammatical relations: SAO.

(1) a. The ball rolled down the hill.
   Theme
b. I rolled the ball down the hill
   Agent Theme
c. I made him roll the ball.
   Causer Agent Theme

(2) vP
   DP v’
   initfator v ASPP
   v ASPP
   ASPP’
   telic/def ASPP VP
   Theme DP V’
   V AP/PP ← Result

Some questions I am interested in:
(3) - Why can unergatives not be used as causatives (e.g. laugh a baby), like burn and boil; why does it need make? (Possible answer: Causer and Agent cannot be together unless make licenses a new position; conflict internal and external cause)
- Why are many unergatives denominal and why do they readily take (cognate) Themes? (Possible answer: if the N incorporates to V, the absence of Theme is accounted for)
- Why are many unaccusatives deadjectival? (Possible answer: the adjective represents the result and are therefore good for change of state)
- Why can unaccusatives causativize using make (I made it fall, although kids say you fell me down, Susie 4, Anne Walton Ramirez p.c. 27/4/2007) but not transitivize (The bus arrived me)? (Possible answer: only a Theme is licensed)

2. **The typology of valency**

Nichols et al’s (2004) ways to change valency: augmentation, reduction, suppletion, and ablaut. They select 18 verbs that vary between a ‘plain’ use with one argument (e.g. laugh, sit) and an ‘induced’ one with more than one (e.g. make laugh, seat). Nichols et al (2004: 150) note that there are in principle two types of transitivization and detransitivization, namely the addition or loss of the syntactic A role (to seat vs to sit) and the addition or loss of the O role (to laugh over vs to laugh).

Detransitivising, e.g:

(4) a. učit ‘teach’ učit’-sja ‘learn’
    b. razbit ‘break’ razbit’-sja ‘break’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>laugh</th>
<th>make laugh</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>die</th>
<th>kill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>sit</td>
<td>seat</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>eat</td>
<td>feed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>learn</td>
<td>teach</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>see</td>
<td>show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>be(come) angry</td>
<td>anger</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>fear</td>
<td>frighten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>hid</td>
<td>hide</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>boil</td>
<td>boil</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>burn</td>
<td>burn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>break</td>
<td>break</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>open</td>
<td>open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>dry</td>
<td>(make) dry</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>be(come) straight</td>
<td>straighten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>hang</td>
<td>hang (up)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>turn over</td>
<td>turn over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>fall</td>
<td>drop</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Alternating verbs in Nichols et al (2004: 156) (slightly adapted)

Haspelmath (1993) distinguishes causatives (C), anti-causatives (A), and non-directives (labile L, equipollent E, and suppletive S) and looks at 31 sets in 21 languages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Russian, German, English, and Indonesian (from Haspelmath 1993: 101)

Note the high number of labile verbs in English!

boil, freeze, dry, wake up, go/put out, sink, learn/teach, melt, stop, turn, dissolve, burn, destroy, fill, finish, begin, spread, roll, develop, get lost/lose, rise/raise, improve, rock,
connect, change, gather, open, break, close, split, die/kill.

Table 3: Alternating verbs in Haspelmath

Abraham (1997) compares English with 8 other Germanic languages and concludes that English verbs are typically mono-syllabic and causatives are not distinguishable from non-causatives, as the verb ‘crack’ shows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>crack</th>
<th>grow</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>(zer)springen/(zer)sprengen</td>
<td>wachsen/anbauen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>stukspringen/laten springen</td>
<td>groeien/telen, kweken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>springe/sprænge</td>
<td>vokse/avle, dyrke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Icelandic</td>
<td>springa/sprengia</td>
<td>vaxa/rækt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwegian</td>
<td>springe/sprenge</td>
<td>vokse/dyrke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>springa/spränga</td>
<td>växa/odla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frisian</td>
<td>springe/springe, barste lite</td>
<td>waakse, groeie/(fer)bouwe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faroese</td>
<td>springa/spreingja</td>
<td>vaksa/vaksu um, fää at vaka</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Two verbs in 9 languages (from Abraham 1997: 14-15)

The Germanic root *springen* can mean ‘crack, break, shatter, burst’. In (5), a non-causative and in (6) a causative of this verb appears in German.

(5) *Ich wollte mal fragen, ab welchem Gefrierpunkt Glas platzt bzw. zerspringt?*  
I wanted once ask from which freezing point glass pops or bursts  
‘I wanted to ask at what temperature glass pops or breaks.’  
(http://de.answers.yahoo.com, March 2010)

(6) Obama will ... El Kaida in Rückzugsgebieten in Afghanistan und Pakistan *zersprengen*  
Obama wants to ... blow up Al Qaeda in areas of retreat in Afghanistan and Pakistan.’  
(www.newsider.de, March 2010)

Plank & Lahiri (2009) criticize Nichols et al’s view that German and Russian are detertransitivizing. Their main argument is that strong verbs in German(ic) are associated with intransitivity and weak ones with transitivity. Transitive verbs “tended to be derived from intransitive verbs” by means of an –i- suffix, and the direction would therefore be transitivizing. I agree with Plank & Lahiri that the –i- suffix plays a major role and, in section 4, I will argue that that this affix was lost. I’ll first construct a table à la Nichols.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intransitive</th>
<th>Transitive</th>
<th>Causative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hilhhan ‘laugh’</td>
<td>behliehhan ‘laugh over’</td>
<td>gesettan to hlæhtre ‘make laugh’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acwelan ‘die’</td>
<td>acwellan ‘kill’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sittan ‘sit’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>etan ‘eat’</td>
<td>(a)fadan ‘feed’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>gefrignan/(ge)learnian ‘learn’ (ge)læran/(ge)tæcan ‘teach’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ge)seon ‘see’</td>
<td>locian ‘look’</td>
<td>sceawian ‘show’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abelgan ‘be angry’</td>
<td></td>
<td>abelgan ‘anger’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ge)aforhtian ‘be afraid’</td>
<td>forhtian ‘fear’ (=psych V)</td>
<td>afyrhtan ‘frighten’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hydan (refl) ‘hide’</td>
<td></td>
<td>hydan ‘hide’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(a)brædan `boil'
brinnan `burn’
bærnan `burn’
brecan `break’
brecan `break’
let X brecan `make it break’
openian `open’
openian `open’
adruwian `dry up’
drygean `dry’
rihtan `restore’
gerihtan `set right’
hangian `hang’
hon `hang’
tyrnan/turrian `turn’
--
tyrian `make it revolve’
feallan `fall’
--
fellan `fell’

Table 5: Verb pairs in Old English

The verb pairs shown in Table 5 do not show a basic valency and quite a bit of lability. A preliminary conclusion might be that Old English was already different from its Germanic neighbors.

3. Valency in Old English

3.1 Visser

Visser (1963: 97-188) lists 223 Old English examples of exclusively intransitive verbs. The first 30 or so of these 223 examples are given in Table 6.

Table 6: Some of the Old English intransitive verbs in Visser (1963: 98), translations from Clark Hall (1916) and Bosworth & Toller (1898)

These are both unergative and unaccusative; note that they are strong as well as weak.

(7) a. Ac ðonne we slapad fæste ðonne we...
   But then we sleep-P fast then we ...
   ’But then we are fast asleep.’
   (Pastoral Care, Hatton 195.5; Visser 1963: 97)

b. ðæt hi mægen iernan & fleon to ðæs lærowes mode
   ’that they may run and flee to the teacher’s heart.’
   (Pastoral Care, Hatton 103. 22)

(8) a. ða unrotnesse ðe ðæræfter cumad
   the sadness which thereafter comes
   ’the sadness which comes thereafter.’ (Pastoral Care, Hatton 187. 15)

---

1 I have constructed the table using Bosworth & Toller, the OED, and the Historical Thesaurus to the OED.
a.  *Donne feallad da truman ceastra, donne da mod* ...
   'Then fall the strong castles, then the minds .... ‘
   *(Pastoral Care, Hatton 245.22)*

Not all of the unergatives are always intransitive. For instance, *ablin(n)an* in (9) is transitive and *cidan* 'chide' typically has a dative object, as in (10).

(9)  *ne ablin þu ðæt þu begunnen hæfst*
    not cease you that you begun have
    'Don’t cease what you have begun.' *(Aelfric Homilies I, 426.9-10, Thorpe edition)*

(10)  *Hwilum eac donne mon ðæm ricum cidan sceal*
    sometimes also then man the-DAT rich-DAT chide shall
    'Sometimes, we also have to rebuke a rich person, ....
    *(Alfred, Pastoral Care, Hatton, 185.9-10, Sweet edition)*

Visser: Modern English only has 58 exclusively intransitive verbs, based on the pre-1933 OED. Of his 58, only half or so remain in non-archaic Modern English; many have developed transitive uses (mainly as prepositional verbs, e.g. *compete, concur, co-operate, depend, and result*); and more intransitives can be added e.g. *arrive, bloom, escape, remain, seem, and go*. This leaves roughly 30 clear intransitives in English. So, *223 have dwindled to 30.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>appear, arise, balbutiate, beetle, blossom, booze, bugle, caper, caterwaul, cleave (adhere), (co)exist, cohere, coincide, collapse, compete, concur, co-operate, crochet, depend, didder, die, disagree, disappear, elope, exist, exult, lie, gab, gambol, glimpse, glisten, glitter, gruntle, gyrante, hale, interfere, last, limp, lurk, lurch, luxuriate, migrate, prate, pullulate, recur, relunct, result, roister, sally, secede, shimmer, strive, swoon, thrive, ululate, vacillate, wax, yap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 7: Modern English intransitives, according to Visser (1963: 100)

To add a footnote: some verbs have interesting histories. The now unaccusative verb *arrive* is a transitive verb, when it is first borrowed, as in (11ab), meaning ‘to bring to shore’, but first used passively, i.e. unaccusatively, and intransitively, as in (11c), before a transitive use in (12). The transitive use is lost in the 17th century 2.

(11)  a.  *Nu beoð of Brutaine beornes ariued ... i þis lond at Tottenæs*
    Now are from Brittany the barons brought to shore in this land at Totnes
    *(Layamon, Caligula 8016-18, Brook & Leslie edition, from the OED but edition adapted)*

    b.  *Hou Seint Thomas the holi man at Sandwych aryved was.*
    *(c1300 Beket 1854, from the OED)*

    c.  *þat folc of Denemarch ... aryued in þe Norþ contreye.*

2 Visser (1963: 100-127) provides a long list of verbs, such as *arrive*, and examples “illustrating the use of the transitive homonyms of a number of verbs usually marked ‘intransitive’ in Modern English grammars.” Since he claims wide-spread transitivization, it is not clear what the point to the list is. Most of the transitive uses are no longer occurring and that would mean detransitivization.
The people of Denmark arrived in the north country.
(1297 R. GLOUC. 371, from the OED)

be wynde aryueþ þe sayles of vlixes
'the wind landed the sails of Ulysses.'
(Chaucer, Boethius IV. iii. 1, from the OED, Benson edition 445)

The second group of intransitives that Visser (1963: 98) looks at is the labile ones (amphibious). The verbs that are labile/ambivalent/amphibious are "considerably less numerous" and number 55 (all given in Table 8).

Table 8: Labile verbs in Old English (Visser 1963: 98)

(13) a. Ond seldon in hatum baðum heo baðian wolde
and seldom in hot bath she bathe would
'and she would seldom bathe in hot water.' (Bede 4.19)

b. and wolde seld-hwænne hire lice baðian butan to heahtidum
'and would seldom bathe her body except at high-holidays.'
(Aelfric, Lives; from Visser 1963: 99, as in Skeat 1881: 434.44-5)

Note that these verbs are not uniform: the intransitive ones can be unergative (baðian 'bathe') or unaccusative (abrecan 'break' and gladian 'be/make glad'). The 'transitive' counterparts add a Theme and Causer respectively.

In accordance with Visser’s views, many of these verbs are labeled transitive and intransitive in Clark Hall’s dictionary. Although according to the OED, not all these verbs may be labile, e.g. glad(i)an in (14) and burn in (15)

(14) a. abrahame feder iowrum gifeode ðætte gisege dæg minne & gisæh &
gladade vel glaed was
'Abraham, your father, rejoiced to see my day and saw (it) and was glad.'
(Rushworth, John 8.56; Visser 1963: 99)

b. Ac utan gladian georne God ælmihtigne
‘but let us make God the almighty glad eagerly.’
(Wulfstan Homilies; Visser 1963: 99, Bethurum edition 229.1)

(15) a.  *heofoncandel* barn
  candle burned
  ‘the candle burned’. (seg 1, 115)
  
b.  *swa ... fyw wudu byrneō*
  such … fire wood burns
  ‘As the fire burns the wood.’ (seg 3, 82.10)

There are some that could be added, however, to Table 8: *brædan* `broaden’, *hydan*
`hide’, and *tyrnan* `turn’ (the latter two from Table 5).

Visser notes the following about transitivity in the course of English: (a) loss of
purely intransitive verbs, (b) increase in labile verbs, and (c) increase in transitivity. Does
that mean OE was transitivizing?

3.2  *A*-affecting changes: labile verbs and theme preserving lability

There is a causativizing affix –*i/-j* in early Germanic. Van Hamel (1931: 186-7) discusses
the –*jan* verbs in Gothic as derived from strong intransitive verbs, as in (16a), nouns, as
in (16b), or adjectives, as in (16c), with a causativizing function.

(16) a.  ur-reisan `arise’ (aufstehen) > ur-raisjan `make arise’
  sliupan `walk silently’ > af-slaupjan `make slip away’
  brinnan `burn’ intr. > ga-brannjan `burn something’
  sitan `sit’ > satjan `put’
  
b.  stains `stone’ > stainjan `to stone’
  
c.  laus `loss’ > lausjan `to loosen’

(from van Hamel 1931: 186; see also Feist 1939)

Prokosch (1938: 153) adds a number of verbs from Gothic, including the following.

(17) drigkan `drink’ > drakjan `make drink’
  ligan `lie’ > lagjan `lay’
  -redan `prepare’ > rodjan `make think’

Lass (1994: 166) says that, by Old English, this function as causativizer is visible only in
a small group of verbs and Visser and Bosworth & Toller agree. I think there is some
distinction left, as there is in present-day English between *sit* and *set*, *lie* and *lay*, *fall* and
*fell*.

New causativizer: –*en* in Middle English. Skeat (1892: 275-6): –*en* reversed its
meaning from Gothic passive marker (cf. *lear-n, ow-n, daw-n, drow-n*) to English
causativizer: the –*n* in *full-n-an* `to be filled’ was reanalyzed as –*en* in *blacken* and *darken*
`to make black/dark’. There are remnants of the earlier passive –*n* in Scandinavian: *sof-na*
`fall asleep’. This suffix is very productive, as Table 10 shows. It is, however, no
longer a pure causative since many of these are labile ergative verbs.

awaken, blacken, brighten, broaden, cheapen, coarsen, dampen, darken, deafen, deepen,
fasten, fatten, flatten, freshen, frighten, gladden, harden, hasten, hearten, heighten, lengthen, lessen, lighten, loosen, madden, moisten, neaten, quicken, quieten, redder, ripen, roughen, sadden, sharpen, shorten, sicken, slacken, smarten, soften, stiffen, straighten, strengthen, sweeten, tauten, tighten, toughen, waken, weaken, whiten, widen, worsen

Table 10: The causative suffix –en (from Earle 1880: 291; Skeat 1892: 275-6; Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1995: 96)

Skeat has a footnote about this reversal of –n from passive to causative being controversial in that it is often seen as inchoative (i.e. indicating change of state). Whatever its origin, this suffix was used to replace –i-. In addition:

Table 11: Zero-derivation adjective-verb pairs (from Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1995: 95)

Both –en and zero derivation derive a causative out of an unaccusative.

**Conclusion so far**

(a) There is a loss of purely unergative verbs. They become transitives; O-affecting processes are what we look at next. However, it remains unclear how many unergative verbs in Table 6 are really intransitive, i.e. unergative, and not labile. Even in Old English, *run* has a transitive sense, as in (18). It seems to remain constant between Old, Middle, and Modern English (19), where it is also a causative in (20).

(18) *þæt hie ne moton toslupon, ac bið 3ehwerfde eft to þam ilcan ryne þe hie ær urnon* `that they cannot slip but are turned again to the same course which they ran before.’ (Alfred, *Boethius* xxi, from the OED)

(19) We ran the extra mile.

(20) researchers at the University of Sheffield have *run* a detached eddy simulation of a circular cylinder at Reynolds number 1.4e+5 (COCA, Mechanical Engineering Febr 2009)

(b) Germanic has verbal affixes indicating valency (e.g. –i- and –n-). These were lost in early Middle English and (unaccusative) verbs and adjectives became increasingly labile in English (though not in the other Germanic languages as *springen* in Table 4 shows).

3.3 O-affecting changes

Visser (1963: 99; 127) mentions an increase in transitivity between Old and Modern English. There are indeed many changes regarding the grammatical O role between Old and Middle English: (a) accusative Case went from inherent to structural, (b) the aspectual licensor *ge-* is lost by late Old English, (c) transitivizing suffixes are lost, and (d) new definiteness markers appear in the form of articles, also by late Old English.

Inherent Case:
(27) *se þæm feonde ætwand*
who-NOM the-DAT enemy-DAT escaped
'he who had escaped the enemy.' (Beowulf 143, Visser 284)

(28) *sipðan him scyppend forscrifen hæfde*
since him creator banned had
'since the creator had banned him.' (Beowulf 106, Visser 292)

(29) *ond æt guðe forgrap Grendelæs mægum*
and at battle [he] seized Gendel-GEN kinsmen-DAT
'and he crushed Grendel's kinsmen to death in battle.' (Beowulf 2353)

(30) *þæt he sæ-mannum onsacan mihte*
that he sailors-DAT strive-against might
'that he might strive against the sailors.' (Beowulf 2954, Visser 395)

Genitive: “limit of involvement” of the object (see Allen 2005: 240):

(31) *Dar com eft ongean Swegen eorl to Eadwerde cinge and gyrende to him landes*
There came back again Swegen earl to Edward king and craved of him land-GEN
*þæt he mihte hine on afedan.*
that he might it on sustain
'Then Swegen came back again to King Edward and wanted land from him so
that he’d be able to sustain himself' (Chronicle D, anno 1049.9)

(32) *þe cyng …. gyrende heora fultumes*
the king … desired their support-GEN
'the king wanted their support' (Peterborough Chronicle 1087.37-9)

Even in the pre-1121 Chronicle "we find a trend towards replacement of the genitive
objects" (Allen 1995: 177) and that in the additions "no certain examples of genitive
objects" occur.

(33) *benam ælc ḏone riht hand*
took every the-ACC right hand
'deprived each of their right hands.' (PC 1125.9)

(34) *him me hit beræfode*
him man it-ACC bereaved
'He was deprived of it.' (PC 1124.51)

(35) a. *For þe king ne mai .. bruken nanes drenches*
Because the king may not … use no-GEN drink-GEN
'Because the king can’t use any drink (except …).'
(Layamon, Caligula 9857)
b. *For þe king ne may ... dringke none senche*
because the king can not … drink no refreshment
(Layamon, Otho 9857)

(36) a. *he ... wilnede þeos mæidenes*
he … desired that maiden-GEN (Layamon, Caligula 1599)
b. *wilnede … ðt mayd[lе]*
'wanted that maiden.' (Layamon, Otho 1599)
Passive:

(40) \(\text{ða him gebeacnod wæs}\)
    which him-DAT indicated was
    'when he was shown by means of a sign.' (Beowulf 140)

(41) \(\text{Him wæs ful boren}\)
    Him was cup given
    'He was given a cup.' (Beowulf 1192)

(42) \(\text{þær him aglæca ætgræpe wearð}\)
    there him monster grabbed became
    'here he was grabbed by the monster.' (Beowulf 1269)

Passives nominative subjects don’t start to appear until 1300.

(43) \(\text{he wass i flumm Iorrdan Fullhtnedd}\)
    'He was baptized in the river Jordan.'
    (Ormulum, Dedication 192, Visser 2087, but spelling as in Holt 1878)

(44) \(\text{þis ilke bok es translate vnto engliss tung to rede.}\)
    'This same book has been translated into English to be read.'
    (\textit{Cursor Mundi}, Göttingen, 232-3)

In Old English, there are also verbs with just dative objects (see Visser 280), another indication of inherent Case.

In Old English, \textit{ge}- is often seen as a perfectivizing prefix although, as e.g. Brinton (1988: 200) summarizes, the system is not coherent. The prefix is also involved in transitivising verbs. Visser mentions 34 such pairs with \textit{ge}-, as shown in (45).

(45) \(\text{aernan} ‘\text{to run’}\) \(\text{geaernan} ‘\text{to reach’}\)
    \(\text{feran} ‘\text{to go’}\) \(\text{geferan} ‘\text{to reach’}\)
    \(\text{gan} ‘\text{to go’}\) \(\text{gegan} ‘\text{to overrun, subdue’,}\)
    \(\text{restan} ‘\text{to rest’}\) \(\text{gerestan} ‘\text{to give rest’}\)
    \(\text{winnan} ‘\text{to labor, toil’}\) \(\text{gewinnan} ‘\text{to gain, conquer’}\)
    \(\text{wadan} ‘\text{to go’}\) \(\text{gewadan} ‘\text{to traverse’}.\) (from Visser 1963: **)

Other prefixes likewise transitivize. Streitberg (1891), among others, recognized this. Brinton (1988: 202) provides the following (partial) list.

(46) \(\text{adruwian} ‘\text{dry up’}\) \(\text{aswapan} ‘\text{sweep off, clean’}\)
    \(\text{bedrincan} ‘\text{absorb’}\) \(\text{belucan} ‘\text{enclose’}\)
    \(\text{forsweltan} ‘\text{die’}\) \(\text{formeltan} ‘\text{melt away’}\)
    \(\text{forðbringan} ‘\text{produce’}\) \(\text{forðsiþian} ‘\text{go forth, die’}\)
    \(\text{fulfremman} ‘\text{fulfill’}\) \(\text{fullbetan} \)
    \(\text{gelæran} ‘\text{persuade’}\) \(\text{geirnan} ‘\text{reach’}\)
    \(\text{oflætan} ‘\text{give up’}\) \(\text{oftredan} ‘\text{tread down’}\)
    \(\text{oferhelian} ‘\text{conceal’}\) \(\text{ofergan} ‘\text{overrun’}\)
    \(\text{tobeatan} ‘\text{beat apart’}\) \(\text{tosyndrian} ‘\text{separate’}\)
    \(\text{þurhtrymman} ‘\text{corroborate’}\) \(\text{þurhdreogan} ‘\text{carry through’}\)
    \(\text{ymbhringan} ‘\text{surround’}\) \(\text{ymbhyçgan} ‘\text{consider’}\)
Many of these verbs lose the transitivizing prefix and end up replaced by French loans (*bedrincan, forðbringan*) or later by phrasal verbs (*adruwian, þurhdreogan*). This is dealt with in detail in Brinton (1988: 215-231).

Articles are introduced in the late Old and early Middle English period. The OED gives examples from the *Peterborough Chronicle* and the *Ormulum* as the first. In the late Old English (47), there is a *þe* instead of *þæs* and in the early Middle English (48), *þe* is very frequent.

(47)  *Ic Wulfere gife to dæi Sancte Petre 7 þone abbode Saxulf 7 þa munecas of þe mynstre þæs landes 7 þæs wateres*  
I Wulhere give to ... St Peter and the abbot Saxulf and the monks of the abbey the lands and the waters... (*Peterborough Chronicle* anno 656:40, Thorpe edition).

(48)  *& gaddresst  swa þe clene corn All fra þe chaff togeddre*  
and gather-2S  so the clean wheat all from the chaff together  
`and so you gather the clear wheat from the chaff.’ (*Ormulum* 1485, Holt edition)

In (47), the demonstrative forms do not show the forms expected either, e.g. the accusative *þone* should be the dative *þæm*.

When the ASP is used for licensing objects in Middle English, there is another consequence, namely objects become more frequent, also resulting in more reflexive objects, as between (49-50a) and (49-50b).

(49)  a.  *Begunnon hi to cidenne*  
began they to chide (Aelfric, *Homilies* II, 158.13)  
b.  `They began to chide *themselves.*’

(50)  a.  *Ondreardon*  
fear-PST.P (Lindisfarne Gospels, Matthew 9.8)  
b.  `They feared *them.*’

Conclusion to section 3: the Old English causative and transitive constructions come about through affixes on the verb (a suffix in the case of the causative and a prefix in the case of the transitive). When the affixes are lost by late Middle English, the causative argument continues to be licensed by the (labile) verb and the theme/object through structural case. I will go into the details of this analysis now.

4.  **Changes in English Argument/Event structure.**

4.1  **What can change?**

Reflexives; V and P incorporation. In the history of English, there are changes in the valency system that have to do with a loss of marking transitives (e.g. through verbal prefixes) and causatives (e.g. though the suffix –*i*–). Typologically, this means Old English was transitivizing and causativizing and lost that.

4.2  **Structural change?**

In section 1, I have introduced a possible tree that I will now be using. The unergative is derived through N to V movement in (51) and the unaccusative just has a VP.
The labile verbs typically build on unaccusative verbs or adjectives (and some of the verbs in Table 5 fit here too). Thus, the unaccusative use in (14a) is represented in (52) but the causative one is represented in (53). In both, the ResP is an AP. Tree (54) is for a transitive, as in (28). In these trees, I use arrows to indicate early and later merge.

I will argue that the v in Old English has a [u-phi] probe (as it does in other languages). In order to license an Agent/Causer argument, there has to be overt movement (internal merge) of the V into v, as occurs in (51), (53), and (54). In (53), an additional morpheme is needed to license the Agent/Causer since the V already licenses a Theme (God). In (54), the additional argument is licensed by what I call the ASP position (in keeping with the literature), but it is possible to see this as another position too.

5. Conclusion
If Table 5 is correct, it would be hard to speak of a basic valency in Old English. However, as in Plank & Lahiri (2009), I see more of a transitivizing tendency in Old English. Many changes are taking place that have to do with a loss of marking causatives and transitives morphologically. As a result, many verbs become labile and they lose the 'basic valency' of intransitive in terms of the framework of Haspelmath, Comrie, and Nichols et al. In terms of (51) to (54), the features and elements in the v and ASP change.