A CRITICAL APPROACH TO SOCIAL FUNCTION IN THE *PREFACE TO THE PASTORAL CARE*[1]

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Abstract: This paper presents a functional analysis of King Alfred's *Preface to the Pastoral Care* premised on the examination of the linguistic realization of the different individuals involved in the text as both a centre of structure and action. The strategic dynamic generated by their linguistic patterns evinces the implicit display of King Alfred's authority as well as the presence of issues of power and social inequality that have been attributed to the preface by traditional research.
Key words: Old English, *Preface to the Pastoral Care*, critical analysis, functional grammar.

Resumen: Este trabajo presenta un análisis funcional del *Preface to the Pastoral Care* del rey Alfredo basado en el examen de la materialización lingüística de los diferentes individuos implicados en el texto como centro de estructura y acción. La dinámica estratégica que sus modelos lingüísticos generan evidencia el despliegue implícito de la autoridad del rey Alfredo así como la presencia de cuestiones de poder y desigualdad social que se han atribuido al prefacio a través de la investigación tradicional.
Palabras clave: Inglés antiguo, *Preface to the Pastoral Care*, análisis crítico, gramática funcional.

1. INTRODUCTION

King Alfred's prose preface to his translation into Old English of Gregory the Great's *Cura Pastoralis* can be considered as the most discussed of Alfred's writings. Composed sometime between A.D. 890 and 896, the preface is presented as a letter exhorting the bishops of the English church to promote Alfred's ambitious educative aims. His reign (A.D. 871-899), marked by the fighting against the Viking invaders, places his educational project within some difficult circumstances that were hardly favourable for cultural improvement. Alfred's *Preface to the Pastoral Care* has been valued as a significant source of information about Anglo-Saxon social and cultural life and as a testimony of Alfred's reflections (Frantzen 1986: 26; Smyth 1995: 528; Hagedorn 1997: 87). From different sides, researchers (Huppé 1978; Szarmach 1980; Frantzen 1986; Nelson 1986; Discenza 2001, 2005) have stressed the importance of the preface as an educational project but also as a religious enterprise that evinces Alfred's commitment to Christianity.[3] The ambition of his

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[3] Education was submitted to the religious mould and established as a complementary service to God. The formula that would contribute to the establishment of medieval culture was organized around a new type of Christian studies (Lendinara 1991; Lees 2002).

plan, unparalleled in Europe at that time, may justify the lack of objectivity denounced by some critical attitudes (Blair 1956: 350; Stenton 1971 [1943]: 275-76) and which can be linked to the performative nature of the text.

Critical discourse analysis takes a particular interest in issues of ideological power and social inequality (Fairclough 1995, 2001 [1989]). In critical analysis, discourse is presented as an instrument of power and control that maintains a dialectical relationship with the situation, institution and social structures that frame it. Such a perspective fits the study of the preface from the viewpoint of traditional lines of debate centred on the text's persuasive nature (Huppé 1978: 119; Shippey 1979: 354-355; Orton 1983: 144; Stanley 1988: 353; Discenza 2001, 2005), the paradoxical association of wealth and wisdom (Orton 1983; Nelson 1986; Discenza 2001) and Alfred's socially selective views (Frantzen 1986: 28; Smyth 1995: 559-560; Discenza 2001: 454). This perception also fits the contextual framework of the Anglo-Saxon period at that moment based on the overwhelming influence of Christianity, whose ideological and institutional weight affected Anglo-Saxon life in many ways (Mayr-Harting 1991 [1972]), but also imposed an idiosyncratic nature on the written texts (Fernández Martínez 2007).

Critical approaches have reiterated their compatibility with functional grammar which, in turn, has claimed its flexibility in the analysis of Old English (Cummings 1980, 1995; Green 1988; Davies 1996; Möhlig and Klages 2002). Assuming this feasibility of functional grammar in the study of Old English, Halliday's (2004 [1985]) lexico-grammar and Martin's (1992) discourse-semantics tools are used in order to analyse the linguistic realization of the participants or individuals involved in the text as both a centre of structure and action. Concerning the first side, Martin's system of identification examines the way in which language is structured to refer to the participants in discourse. Considering that "The more central the participant […] the more likely it is to provide a referent for a phoric item" (Martin 1992: 107), this system enables us to evaluate the relevance of discourse members as a focus of structure in terms of the referential chains they produce. However, in order to face the main limitation brought about by the account of participant identification in Martin's system, namely its lack of attention to the way they are introduced through the nominal group, Halliday's (2004 [1985]: 180-196) nominal structure is also employed. Additionally, van Leeuwen's (1996) socio-semantic categories are attached in order to gain further insight into the critical and sociological relevance of social actors in the text. As regards their function as a focus of action, Martin (1992: 129) comments on the role of the participants as agents within Halliday's transitivity design: "The entry condition for the identification network […] was participant, where this can be defined as a person, place or thing, abstract or concrete, capable of functioning as Agent or Medium in transitivity."[4]

By means of these instruments this paper analyses the linguistic presentation and beha-viour of the individuals involved in the preface. This examination will take into account the connotations of authority and social inequality attributed to the text by traditional research as well as the interest of the author in providing a favouring presentation of his educational and

[4]   Mitchell (1985: 449-464) highlights the difficulty Old English exhibits in order to establish fixed rules to which the syntactic schemes generated by the different kinds of verbs are submitted. Yet, Halliday's transitivity patterns provide a framework to specify the relationships enacted by them that deals with the divergences pro-duced by verbal rections: "the fact is that the same verb can take different constructions not only in the works of different writers or in different places in the works of the same writers, but even in the same sentence" (Mitchell 1985: 453).

religious design. The data obtained also represent an endeavour to discern how this article confers a new viewpoint to the study of these issues tackled by traditional perspectives.

2. SOCIAL FUNCTION: PARTICIPANTS AS A CENTRE OF STRUCTURE AND ACTION[5]

As shown in Figure 1, we can distinguish four main systems of identification in the text that refer to the sender (identification system 1) and receiver (identification system 2) of the letter, a first person plural (identification system 3) and a larger system that embraces the rest of individuals used by King Alfred to elaborate his message (identification system 4). The nominal groups and socio-semantic categories that encode the presentation of this fourth group allow for an extra division in which the distinctions are motivated by the criteria of ideological alignment (religious members) or social rank (common people and elites).

Figure 1. Identification systems.

IDENTIFICATION SYSTEMS (IS)	
IS1	Ælfred kyning, ic
IS2	Wærferð biscep, ðu
IS3	we, us, Ure
IS4	COMMON PEOPLE man, oðrum monnum, menn swiðe feawa, noht monige, swæ feawa hiora hie Creacas, Lædenware, ealla oðræ Cristnæ ðioda
	CLERGY wiotan, ænigne ... lareowa, ðara godena wiotona, gelærede biscepas, se biscep, Gode & his ærendwrecum, ða godcundan hadas, micel men[i]geo Godes ðiowa, Plegmunde minum ærcebiscepe, Assere minum biscepe, Grimbolde minum mæssepri-oste, Iohanne minum mæssepreoste
	ELITES ða kyningas eall sio gioguð ... friora monna, ðara ðe ða speda hæbben

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[5]   Citations in this paper are in the form [page number.line number] from Hatton MS in Sweet's (1871) edition. Transitivity structures only refer to the relevant elements of the fragments selected. Translations into Modern English are also taken from Sweet's edition.

Figure 2. Socio-semantic categories.

SOCIO-SEMANTIC CATEGORIES	
IS1	determination
IS2	individualisation nomination categorisation (classification)
IS3	assimilation (collectivisation)
IS4	COMMON PEOPLE indetermination assimilation (aggregation) genericisation
	CLERGY nomination categorisation **(classification, functionalisation)** association relational identification
	ELITES genericisation + classification

As regards the information provided by the metaphorical connection between both identification systems and socio-semantic categories and participants, the text elaborates a social framework marked by social and ideological inequality. The combination of the four referential chains matches Szarmach's (1980: 63) statement according to which the preface should be contemplated as a complex personal declaration combined with a public interest that is essential to proclaim the transcendence of Christian wisdom. The correlation between van Leeuwen's (1996) socio-semantic categories and participants illustrates the symbolic relationship existing between social rank and linguistic choice in the text. Also, assuming the correspondence between the relevance of a participant and his function as a point of reference (Martin 1992: 107), the long extension of identification system 1 evinces King Alfred's discourse pre-eminence, whereas identification systems 2 and 4 show how the author appeals to the institutional presence of Christianity throughout the message by means of the second person singular and of the rest of religious participants.

The two referential chains generated by both interlocutors are initiated by complex noun groups (*Ælfred kyning* [3.1], "King Alfred" and *Wærferð biscep* [3.1], "bishop Wærferth") in which, besides the identification of the individuals that the proper noun provides through the socio-semantic class of nomination, the category of classification in *kyning* and *biscep*

attaches their social rank with the purpose of inflicting an institutional and authority support on them. King Alfred's role as sender of the message is further strengthened through the first person singular (*ic, minum, me selfum*) combined with a first person plural, whereas he draws on the interlocutor through the explicit second person (*ðu*) and through an implicit presence that remains throughout the letter. On a metaphorical level, the contact line set up by sender and receiver symbolises the joint implication of state power and religion on the social scheme embodied by the fourth identification system.

Identification system 4 presents a contrast between some indeterminate and collective presentations and some more individualized and specific socio-semantic classifications assigned in terms of the social and ideological alignment of the members involved. The socio-semantic disparity between sub-groups certifies the superiority of some participants as opposed to other inferior strata represented as collective or undetermined referents. In this sense, the text includes the categories of indetermination and aggregation that underpin respectively *man* [3.11] and the quantifier *monige* [3.16]. The generalized and massive reference to the common people is related to the strategic purpose to sustain the universality of the letter as a means to assist Alfred's authority. Indeed, the use of nouns such as *man* did not imply that Alfred was really thinking about the entire social schema existing at that time (Frantzen 1986: 29). The same purpose to handle participants as statistics also supports the nominal groups made up of indefinite quantifiers (*swiðe feawa* [3.13], "very few", *noht monige* [3.16], "not many", *swæ feawa hiora* [3.17], 'so few of them") emphasized by preceding adverbs (*swiðe, noht, swæ*) leading to nominal structures that underline the intellectual decadence at that moment. This device together with the use of the category of genericisation in *menn* [5.22], "men" and in *hie Creacas* [7.1], "the Greeks", *Lædenware* [7.3], "the Romans", *ealla oðræ Cristnæ ðioda* [7.4-5], "all other Christian nations" and *ða kyningas* [3.5], "the kings", exert a strategic effect that also contributes to the universal character of King Alfred's reform. This fact together with the emphasis on the intellectual rot elaborate the persuasive nature of the preface with the aim of both expanding the scope of participants involved in the message and making them aware of the need to perform an educational reorganization.

Ecclesiastics, as representatives of the Christian institution, epitomize the role of Christianity as a leading agent in this process. Their distinguished presentation in comparison to the rest of the components of the same identification group 4 is due to the interest of the author to pervade the text with an institutional tone that also manifests the beneficial role of religious people. This idea justifies the use of categories and structures showing their social usefulness and function. Consequently, the nominal groups *Plegmunde minum ærcebiscepe* [7.21], "Plegmund my archbishop", *Assere minum biscepe* [7.21], "Asser my bishop", *Grimbolde minum mæsseprioste* [7.22], "Grimbold my mass-priest" and *Iohanne minum mæssepreoste* [7.22], "John my mass-priest" combine the categories of nomination and classification in order to offer an individualized reference and impose an institutional rank, both of which enhance the relevance of the participants. At the same time, a third category of relational identification evinces the interpersonal quality provided by possessive deictics, which claims the connection between political power, represented by the sender (*minum*), and religious sides. These phrases also verify the educational scope added to the link between religious and secular domains, since as Orton (1983: 144) states,

beyond their role as bishops, Plegmund and Asser were also leading assistants in Alfred's translation programme. In *Gode & his ærendwrecum* [3.6], "God and his ministers", the complex paratactic noun group illustrates firstly, the function of ecclesiastical members (functionalisation) in the noun *ærendwrecum*. Secondly, the value of relational identification conveyed by the possessive (*his*), together with the category of association that the whole structure generates, increase the dimension of their social function by imposing their identification in terms of their link with divinity. Huppé (1978: 273) explains how this phrase specifies the origin of state power, but also the role of ecclesiastics as members of the Christian institution: "it springs from their obedience to God and His messengers (*ærendwrecum*), the latter term seeming to define the role of the church as the expositor of God's word, and thus by implication reserving temporal rule to the king". Together with the value of relational identification that also appears in *Godes ðiowa* [5.11], "God's servants" through the possessive deictic *Godes*, the presentation of religious people is enacted through the category of classification in *se biscep* [9.6], "the bishop" or *gelærede biscepas* [9.4], "learned bishops". In the latter, the epithet *gelærede* specifies their scholarly character thus reflecting the link between religion and education. A further dimension in the mixture of religious and secular areas is contemplated through the references to the communities of secular clergy that, as suggested by Orton (1983: 142-145), *Godes ðiowa* realizes. Despite living communally and observing canonical hours, these communities would not follow monastic rules. The flattering depiction of ecclesiastics, especially evident through the interpersonal metafunction, corroborates the purpose of the text to convey a favouring propaganda of Christianity at that time. These structures show the complimentary attitude displayed by Alfred in presenting them as a centre of structure so as to highlight their social and educational function and show their link to the supreme power embodied by divinity, to the state power and to the educational labour.

Occasionally, the generic categories combine with that of classification in order to allow for the inclusion of the Crown (*ða kyningas* [3.5], "the kings") and other social elites defined as *eall sio gioguð ðe nu is ón Angelcynne friora monna, ðara ðe ða speda hæbben* [7.10-11], "all the youth now in England of free men, who are rich". Alfred's program of translation and education would not distribute benefits equally to all members of West Saxon society, since it would strengthen certain individuals who were already powerful. According to Smyth (1995: 560-561), this structure represents Alfred's limited educational objectives: "The youth (*gioguð*) in question were inevitably male, free-born (sons of *friora monna*), with enough *sped* –wealth or ability or both." Nelson (1986: 37) had previously talked of a mere reference to young aristocrats and of the political implications in the acquisition of wisdom, although more recently, Discenza (2001: 452) questions that the definitions of both *friora monna* and *speda* can be established precisely. Taking into account that apart from accompanying the *Pastoral Care*, the main purpose of Alfred's letter was to sketch "his hopes for the education of the free-born youth of Wessex" (Smyth 1995: 559), this structure justifies the relevance of power connotations in the depiction of participants and thus in the social layout of the text.

Alfred merges explicit expressions of authority with some other approaching intentions which counteract power and engender an oscillating stance of affection and control over

the rest of the participants. The third referential line enacted by the first person plural (*we*, *ure*, *us*) combines with the first person singular in order to strengthen the charisma of the author. Despite not implying a distinction of individuals in terms of a social or ideological scale, the use of *we* represents one of the most solid testimonies of the strategy sustaining the contact between all the individuals with the aim of nourishing the universality purpose of the text under the façade of an affective pose. The first person plural encodes an inclusive identity to all the individuals through the fusion of all the identification systems. At the same time, the socio-semantic category of assimilation supporting it imposes an institutional unification on them. By unifying all the reference systems, Alfred is equalized with the rest of individuals in an attitude of cease of authority. Similarly, in the greeting transitivity construction that initiates the preface, the concluding adverbial phrase imposes a sense of warmth and kindness between the interlocutors: "actor (*Ælfred kyning*) + process (*gretan*) + goal (*Wærferð biscep*) + circumstance (*luflice & freondlice*)" in *Ælfred kyning hateð gretan Wærferð biscep his wordum luflice & freondlice* [3.1-2], "King Alfred bids greet bishop Wærferth with his words lovingly and with friendship". Rather than giving "a sense of the personal and humanizing to the formal phrases of salutation" (Huppé 1978: 124), this concluding phrase fixes a metaphorical affective relationship between state power and Church that disguises Alfred's pretension to control.

King Alfred's authority is premised on further linguistic features that strengthen his social relevance, his function as God's agent and his influential role on the receiver and on the potential readers. One source of linguistic supervision emerges from his role as a focus of action in three transitivity patterns. In *ic ðe bebiode ðæt ðu … befæstan mæge, befæste.* [5.1-4] and *Ond ic bebiode ón Godes naman ðæt nan món … from ðæm mynstre* [9.2-3], the verbal process *bebiode* enacts the task of command Alfred exerts over the second person singular and over a collective reference. In this case, Alfred gives specific instructions about his book moving from a particular audience to a universal one. "The *bebiode* of the conclusion differs from the others in that it is not addressed to Wærferð, but to all men, present or future, who will make use of the book" (Huppé 1978: 131). Also, the construction 'senser + process + phenomenon" allows Alfred to set up his role as a centre of reflection. Thus, the combination "first person singular + mental process", in e.g. *ic … geðencean* [3.17-18], "I remember", *wundrade ic* [5.19], "I wondered" and in the recurring *ic … gemunde* [5.8], "I considered", legitimates Alfred's subjectivity as a source of faithfulness in the message. In fact, the *Preface*'s five major sections "begin with some reference to the writer's powers of memory, usually *Đa ic ða (ðis eall) gemunde*, "When I then remembered (all this)"" (Shippey 1979: 346). Alfred's relevance is further reinforced through his double function as sayer and receiver in the same transitivity configuration: 'sayer (*ic*) + process + (*andwyrde*) + receiver (*me selfum*)" in *ic ða sona eft me selfum andwyrde* [5.21-22], "again I soon answered myself". This twofold position in the same structure fuses his responsibility as a main interlocutor, acting both as sender and addressee, and as a trustworthy source of deliberation.

Under the menace of worldly punishment (*Geðenc hwelc witu ús ða becomon* [5.5], "Consider what punishments would come upon us"), King Alfred devises an alert mecha-

nism that places participants in a situation of despair.[6] By means of the first person plural
Alfred unifies participants in a plight and increases the dimension of disaster. Alfred also
locates the first person plural within a network of constructions referring both to wisdom
and Christianity and that establish a pattern of behaviour to follow by any potential reader:
'senser (*we*) + process (*lufodon / lefdon*) + phenomenon (*hit*)" in *ða ða we hit nohwæðer ne
selfe ne lufodon ne eac oðrum monnum ne lefdon* [5.5-6], "if we neither loved it (wisdom)
ourselves nor suffered other men to obtain it" and 'senser (*we*) + process (*lufodon*) + phe-
nomenon (*ðone naman anne ... ðæt[te] we Cristne wæren, & swiðe feawe ða ðeawas*)" in
ðone naman anne we lufodon ðæt[te] we Cristne wæren, & swiðe feawe ða ðeawas [5.6-8],
"we should love the name only of Christian, and very few of the virtues". Assuming that
this construction shows the divergence between the exterior side of Christianity and the
authenticity of behaviour that is traditional in Christian literature (Szarmach 1980: 61), its
persuasive nature with the aim of producing an ideological and behavioural reaction on the
participants is quite noticeable.

The preface contains explicit references to power that engender a tripartite design
sustained on the three angles of wisdom, religion and power. This device uncovers the eco-
nomic concerns of religion but also the submission of state power to God and his ministers:
"actor (*ða kyningas*) + process (*hersumedon*) + goal (*Gode & his ærendwrecum*)" in *ða
kyningas ðe ðone ónwald hæfdon ðæs folces [on ðam dagum] Gode & his ærendwrecum
hersumedon* [3.5-6], "the kings who had power over the nation in those days obeyed God and
his ministers". Power is also presented as an object of wisdom and as an element not only
interlinked with it but valued as responsible for the intellectual decline. Note the contrast
between "actor (*Ure ieldran*) + process (*begeaton*) + goal (*welan*)" in *Ure ieldran, ða ðe
ðas stowa ær hioldon, hie lufodon wisdom & ðurh ðone hie begeaton welan & ús læfdon*
[5.13-15], "Our forefathers, who formerly held these places, loved wisdom and through it
they obtained wealth and bequeathed it to us" and "actor (*we*) + process (*habbað forlæten*)
+ goal (*welan*)" in *we habbað nú ægðer forlæten ge ðone welan ge ðone wisdom* [5.16-17],
"we have lost both the wealth and the wisdom". The connection between religion and state
power and the bond between wisdom and Christianity get reinforced with an extra link
referring to wealth. These explicit references place the activity sequences of participants
into the much-discussed paradox of the association between wealth and wisdom (Orton
1983; Nelson 1986; Discenza 2001) and within a solid framework of tripartite intercon-
nection between Christian religion, education and power. Participants are placed within
transitivity structures in which the idea of power (*ónwald, welan, speda*) appears as a goal,
either explicit or implicit, obtained or lost, which manifests a global social concern for the
acquisition of power seemingly contradictory with Christian ideology.

The parts of the preface describing the environment of educational debacle also rest
on some existential constructions that depict the lack of learned people in the past: *swiðe
feawa wæron behionan Humbre ðe hiora ðeninga cuðen understondan on Englisc* [3.13-
15], "there were very few on this side of the Humber who could understand their rituals in

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6   According to Orton (1983: 148), Alfred only alludes to the Vikings in passing as he recognized that the prob-
lems he was up against were rooted in the English Church. Yet, the *witu* in this structure refers almost certainly
to the Viking attacks "and the placing of this observation next to the appeal to present bishops may imply some
criticism of them" (1983: 145).

English"; *noht monige begiondan Humbre næren* [3.16], "there were not many beyond the Humber"; *Swæ feawa hiora wæron* [3.17] "there were so few of them". The combination "adverb + quantifier" supporting the existential element in these transitivity schemes displays a statistic value, whereas the attachment of *swiðe*, *noht* and *swæ* reinforces quantifiers presenting participants as a progression of poor statistics. Huppé (1978: 127) regards as very relevant this incremental variation as the portrayal of the dearth of learned people at the time of Alfred's arrival to the throne gives, in turn, particular effectiveness to the subsequent statement of thanksgiving, "when there is *ænigne onstal ... lareowa*". Opposing the problem posed by the lack of learned people, Alfred highlights the role of religious members as a focus of action. The experiential structure "carrier (*ða godcundan hadas*) + process (*wæron*) + attribute (*giorne*) + circumstance (*ægðer ge ymb lare ge ymb liornunga, ge ymb ealle ða ðiowotdomas ðe hie Gode [don] scoldon*)" in *ða godcundan hadas hu giorne hie wæron ægðer ge ymb lare ge ymb liornunga, ge ymb ealle ða ðiowotdomas ðe hie Gode [don] scoldon* [3.9-11], "the sacred orders how zealous they were both in teaching and learning, and in all the services they owed to God" depicts the role of clerics in the past, namely their dual contribution to society as educational and spiritual agents. Their responsibility in the bygone cultural splendour is strategically used as a mechanism to present them as a medium to restore the phase of intellectual decline, also affecting an ideological sphere in terms of the link between educational and religious domains at that time. Although Alfred blamed the English Church for the problems they had to face (Orton 1983: 148), there is an exemplifying purpose supporting this clause that has also been acknowledged by previous research: "He notes that simultaneously the religious orders were eager to teach and to learn, and to perform holy services as well. So excellent was this civilization that it was a model to foreign scholars who arrived in England to study" (Frantzen 1986: 28).

3. CONCLUSION

The instruments of analysis proposed in this paper have outlined the linguistic presentation of the individuals involved in the preface as both a centre of structure and action. This examination has allowed for the connotations of authority and social inequality attributed to the text by traditional research, but it has also uncovered Alfred's interest in providing a favouring and persuasive presentation of his educational and religious design. The examination of the individuals involved has evinced the role played by the preface in realising social action within an ideological framework dominated by the power concerns of Christian ideology. All things considered, the critical and functional approach suggested in this article illustrates how some of the statements made by traditional research may still be tackled from new perspectives that reveal the vast range of possibilities of further research to be developed in the study of Old English texts.

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