

Chapter 4

The Old English quantifiers *fela* ‘many’ and *manig* ‘many’, and Ælfric as a linguistic innovator

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This chapter explores the Old English quantifiers *fela* and *manig*, both meaning ‘many’, with special focus on *fela*. It is shown that the works of Ælfric and the *Peterborough Chronicle*, both from the late Old English period, stand out with respect to which constructions *fela* enters into. In those texts, *fela* can occur in agreement constructions or with a partitive genitive, whereas in the rest of the Old English texts, the genitive is used consistently. Thus, *fela* shows clear signs of moving from being the head of the noun phrase, taking a genitive complement, to becoming a modifier of a head noun. *Manig*, on the other hand, has always been a modifier of a nominal head. I show that the variation in the use of *fela* in Ælfric’s texts and the chronicle is determined by semantic factors, and that the trajectory of change is what we would expect for a word of this kind. As the construction with *fela* changed, it was in many cases no longer structurally distinguishable from constructions with *manig*. In addition, as inflections were levelled, the genitive plural case marking was no longer there to support *fela*. Hence, *fela* lost the lexical competition, since *manig* in any case was the most frequent quantifier meaning ‘many’, and did not have to undergo any radical structural changes.

1 Introduction

Mitchell (1985: vol. I, 172–174) groups *fela* and *manig* under “indefinites”, and lists three different uses: i) dependent (attributively in agreement constructions) (1);



ii) independent with a partitive genitive (2), or iii) alone (3).¹ *Fela* is indeclinable and cannot be compared, but it can be accompanied by an intensifying adverb.² Note that when *fela* stands alone, it often means ‘much’ rather than ‘many’, as in (3).

- (1) *fela þing*
many thing.ACC.PL
‘many things’ (OEng.562.416; ÆHS)
- (2) *fela oðra wundra*
many other.GEN.PL wonder.GEN.PL
‘many (of) other wonders’ (OEng.507.515; ÆHS)
- (3) *Fela ic hæbbe eow to secganne*
much I have you to say
‘I have much to say to you.’ (OEng.834.824; Cura)

In contrast to *fela*, *manig* can be declined weak or strong. If an adjective occurs between *manig* and a noun head, the adjective is declined strong unless a possessive or demonstrative intervenes (Mitchell 1985: vol. I, 61). It is unclear whether *manig* can be compared; Mitchell (1985: vol. I, 174 fn. 112) seems to suggest that *mæstra* may be a superlative of *manig* rather than of *micel*. Like *fela*, *manig* can be used dependently (4), independently with a partitive genitive (5) or alone (6).

- (4) *wel monige godcunde lareowas*
well many.ACC.PL religious.ACC.PL teacher.ACC.PL
‘very many religious teachers’ (OEng.970.662; ASC(A))
- (5) *hiora monigne*
them.GEN many.ACC.SG
‘many of them’ (OEng.908.724; Bede)
- (6) *& eac monige cwomon to bicgenne þa þing*
and also many.NOM.PL came to buy DEF things
‘and many also came to buy the things’ (OEng.376.864; Bede)

¹I only gloss according to what is necessary for the purposes of this study. Hence, I gloss the noun phrases for case and number, and in some of the longer sentences presented later in this study, I provide some glosses that are necessary in order to understand the structure of the sentence.

²The *Dictionary of Old English* (–2023) lists three exceptions, where *fela* in fact is declined.

Apart from what is found in Mitchell (1985), it seems that very little has been written about *fela*. Roehrs & Sapp (2018) deal with complex quantifiers, so they specifically do not consider *fela* (2018: 389), but they mention in a footnote that *fela* is probably a head-type rather than a phrase-type quantifier (2018: 389, fn. 6). Wright’s (1925) and Campbell’s (2007) Old English grammars mostly provide phonological information about *fela*. *Fela* has not been deemed worthy of attention in the Old English (Hogg 1992) or Middle English (Blake 1992) volume of the *Cambridge history of the English language* either. The time has therefore come to give *fela* its fifteen minutes of fame.

Section 2 provides information about the texts and corpora used. Section 3 presents the results with respect to which constructions *fela* and *manig* enter into. Section 4 contains the discussion, focusing on *fela* in Ælfric’s texts and the *Peterborough Chronicle*. The latter is of interest because it shows the transition from Old to Middle English. Reference is especially made to Roehrs & Sapp (2018) on complex quantifiers, as it is highly relevant for the present study. Section 5 concludes the study.

2 Material and method

For the purposes of this study, I used both the *Noun Phrases in Early Germanic Languages* database (NPEGL, see Pfaff & Bouma 2024 [this volume]) and the *York–Toronto–Helsinki Corpus of Old English Prose* (YCOE, Taylor et al. 2003). I first searched for *fela*, with the spelling variants *fela*, *feola*, *feala*, and *fæla*,³ including with capital letters, in the NPEGL database,⁴ and I did the same in the YCOE corpus. NPEGL is a noun phrase database that has been created on the basis of the material in the YCOE corpus. The advantage of using both is that the NPEGL database provides the textual context for the examples, while the YCOE provides a syntactic analysis. I extracted all examples of *fela* from all the Old English texts that contain ten or more instances of *fela*, see Table 1.⁵ I then wrote all

³The *Dictionary of Old English* (–2023) lists a few other spelling variants, and I searched for those as well, but they either occur in poetry, or in texts that are not considered in this study, so I do not list them here.

⁴Unless otherwise marked, all the examples are from the NPEGL database, and can be found by entering the unique ID provided, in the format Language.number.number.

⁵The YCOE corpus contains three versions of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, in addition to the *Peterborough Chronicle*. I included two of them, i.e. the text of the A manuscript (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 173), which is the oldest of the extant manuscripts, and the D manuscript (British Library, Cotton Tiberius B. iv), which contains a relatively high number of *fela*. The C manuscript is also included in the YCOE corpus and has more than ten instances of *fela*, but

the examples down manually in a file, in order to sort them into the categories presented in Table 2, and to gain an understanding of the usage through studying each example in context.

Table 1: The texts used in the study. The Old English texts are those that contain ten or more instances of *fela*

Text	Corpus filename	Abbreviation	No. of words
<i>The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> (A ms)	cochronA	ASC(A)	14 583
<i>The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> (D ms)	cochronD	ASC(D)	26 691
<i>Bede's Ecclesiastical History</i>	cobede	<i>Bede</i>	80 767
<i>Cura Pastoralis</i>	cocura	<i>Cura</i>	68 556
<i>Orosius</i>	coorosiu	<i>Oros</i>	51 020
<i>Bald's Leechbook</i>	colaece	<i>Leech</i>	34 727
<i>Vercelli Homilies</i>	coverhom	<i>Verc</i>	45 674
<i>Gregory's Dialogues</i>	cogregdH	<i>Greg</i>	25 593
<i>The Gospel of Nichodemus</i>	conicodA	<i>Nich</i>	8 197
<i>Heptateuch</i> (Old Testament)	cootest	<i>Hept</i>	59 524
<i>The West-Saxon Gospels</i>	cowsgosp	<i>WSG</i>	71 104
<i>The Homilies of Wulfstan</i>	cowulf	<i>Wulf</i>	28 768
<i>Ælfric's Lives of Saints</i>	coaelive	<i>ÆLS</i>	100 193
<i>Ælfric's Catholic Homilies 1</i>	cocathom1	<i>ÆCH1</i>	106 173
<i>Ælfric's Catholic Homilies 2</i>	cocathom2	<i>ÆCH2</i>	98 583
<i>Ælfric's Homilies Supplemental</i>	coaelhom	<i>ÆHS</i>	62 669
<i>Ælfric's Letter to Sigeward</i>	colsigewZ	<i>Sigew</i>	10 420
<i>Old English Peterborough Chronicle</i>	cochronE	<i>OE Pet</i>	40 641
<i>Middle English Peterborough Chronicle</i>	cmpeterb	<i>ME Pet</i>	7 333

As regards *manig*, I limited the extraction to seven texts from Old English (see Table 4), and the spellings were *manig*, *monig*, *mænig*, *maneg*, *moneg*, and *mæneg*, including with capital letters and all possible case forms. In this search, I only used the NPEGL database, as it gives easy access to all forms through the query interface. The reason why I did not analyze *manig* for all the texts is that

it was not included here, as I did not want too much data from what is essentially the same text. Likewise, there are two versions of *Gregory's Dialogues* in the YCOE. I included the H manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian, Hatton 76), which, though having fewer words, contains more instances of *fela* than the C manuscript (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 322).

it soon became apparent that it is very consistent in usage throughout (see Table 4). The possible added value in analyzing all the instances of *manig* for all the texts would therefore be disproportional to the work involved.

I have only used one text from the early Middle English period, namely the first and second continuations of the *Peterborough Chronicle*.⁶ I searched for the word forms *fela*, *fele*, *feola*, *feole*, *feala*, *feale* and the forms *manig*, *mani*, *manie*, *monig*, *moni*, *monie*, *mænig*, *mæni*, *mænie*, *mane*, *manege* in the *Penn–Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Middle English* (PPCME2, Kroch et al. 2000). The aim was to trace the development of the use of *fela* within the chronicle. *The Peterborough Chronicle* will be discussed in Section 4.3.

3 Results

3.1 Results for *fela* in the individual texts

In Table 2, I distinguish between the following constructions: *fela* with agreement, *fela* with genitive, *fela* standing alone, *fela* in constructions with numerals, and a “miscellaneous” category for occurrences that could not be placed in the previous categories. For the sake of consistency in the table, I have given raw numbers and percentages for each text, but keep in mind that percentages do not say much if the total number of occurrences in a text is low.

Examples (7)–(9) show *fela* with a following noun that is not in the genitive case. For lack of a better term, I call this type “*fela* with agreement”, even though *fela* is indeclinable.

- (7) *fela untrume men*
many sick.NOM.PL man.NOM.PL
‘many sick men’ (OEng.663.860; ÆLS)
- (8) *fela wytegan & ryhtwise men*
many wiseman.NOM.PL and righteous man.NOM.PL
‘many wise men and righteous men’ (OEng.278.158; ÆCH1)
- (9) *fela wintrum*
many winter.DAT.PL
‘many winters’ (OEng.807.991; OE Pet)

⁶The First Continuation covers the years 1122–1132, and the Second Continuation the years 1132–1154. See Section 4.3 for further information about the *Peterborough Chronicle*.

Examples (10)–(12) show *fela* followed by a noun in the genitive case, a partitive genitive.

- (10) *fela wundra*
many wonder.GEN.PL
'many wonders' (OEng.254.309; ÆCH2)
- (11) *fela geara*
many year.GEN.PL
'many years' (NPEGL, OEng.275.716; Bede)
- (12) *fela manna*
many man.GEN.PL
'many men' (OEng.677.479; Greg)

The genitive category also includes those instances in which the noun is definite and preceded by a demonstrative, as in (13) and (14), a few instances of possessives (15), and some examples of pronouns, in which case the pronoun often precedes *fela* (16). Roehrs & Sapp (2018: 386–388) call the quantified constituents in (7)–(12) “non-DP(-size) dependents”, and the ones in (13)–(16) “DP(-size) dependents” (see Section 4.1). DP dependents are always in the genitive case, and they will therefore be disregarded from Table 3 onward, since I want to focus on the possible variation here. There are 54 such instances in total, and many of them occur in *Orosius* and in Wulfstan’s homilies.⁷

- (13) *fela þære hæðenra*
many DEF.GEN.PL heathen.GEN.PL
'many of the heathens' (OEng.411.534; ÆLS)
- (14) *fela þara senatorum*
many DEF.GEN.PL senator.GEN.PL
'many of the senators' (OEng.394.441; Oros)
- (15) *feola his gersuma*
many his treasure.GEN.PL
'many of his treasures' (OEng.569.541; OE Pet)

⁷Note that the *-um* ending in *senatorum* in example (14) is the Latin genitive plural inflection. Latin words sometimes kept their Latin endings.

4 The Old English quantifiers *fela* ‘many’ and *manig* ‘many’

Table 2: The distribution of *fela*

Texts	<i>fela</i> total	Agreement		Genitive		Numeral		Alone		Misc.	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
<i>ASC(A)</i>	12	1	8.3	8	66.7	2	16.7	1	8.3	0	0
<i>ASC(D)</i>	37	4	10.8	19	51.4	7	18.9	6	16.2	1	2.7
<i>Bede</i>	13	1	7.7	10	76.9	0	0	2	15.4	0	0
<i>Cura</i>	19	0	0	12	63.2	0	0	7	36.8	0	0
<i>Oros</i>	46	2	4.4	35	76.1	6	13.0	1	2.2	2	4.4
<i>Leech</i>	14	1	7.1	9	64.3	0	0	3	21.4	1	7.1
<i>Verc</i>	13	0	0	10	76.9	0	0	3	23.1	0	0
<i>Greg</i>	21	3	14.3	16	76.2	0	0	1	4.8	1	4.8
<i>Nich</i>	11	1	9.1	6	54.6	0	0	3	27.3	1	9.1
<i>Hept</i>	18	0	0	12	66.7	1	5.6	5	27.8	0	0
<i>WSG</i>	34	0	0	20	58.8	0	0	14	41.2	0	0
<i>Wulf</i>	70	3	4.3	53	75.7	1	1.4	12	17.1	1	1.4
<i>ÆLS</i>	110	42	38.2	44	40.0	2	1.8	15	13.6	7	6.4
<i>ÆCH1</i>	63	13	20.6	22	34.9	4	6.4	16	25.4	8	12.7
<i>ÆCH2</i>	81	32	39.5	26	32.1	3	3.7	13	16.1	7	8.6
<i>ÆHS</i>	47	10	21.3	24	51.1	1	2.1	9	19.1	3	6.4
<i>Sigew</i>	12	2	16.7	4	33.3	4	33.3	1	8.3	1	8.3
<i>OE Pet</i>	51	16	31.3	15	29.4	12	23.5	2	3.9	6	11.8
<i>ME Pet</i>	13	10	76.9	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	23.1

- (16) and heora feala þær adruncon
 and them.GEN.PL many there drowned
 ‘and many of them drowned there’ (OEng.490.467; OE Pet)

I kept the numerals in a separate category, although these are also partitive genitives. The reason for keeping them apart is that sometimes the numeral itself is in the genitive case, as in (17), while sometimes it is the complement of the numeral that is in the genitive (18). I did not want the numerals, which might also be idiomatic expressions, to interfere with the data, since I was interested in the possible choice between agreement constructions and genitives.

- (17) fela þusenda
 many thousand.GEN.PL
 ‘many thousand’ (OEng.147.776; Sigew)

- (18) *fela hund wintra*
many hundred winter.GEN.PL
'many hundred winters' (OEng.533.562; Wulf)

Fela may occur on its own, as in (19) and (20). As shown in (3), *fela* can also mean 'much', and this is especially the case when *fela* stands alone. In other words, *fela* can sometimes be singular in meaning.

- (19) *Fela sind gelaðode and feawa gecorene*
many are invited and few chosen
'Many are invited and few are chosen.' (OEng.021.630; ÆCH2)

- (20) *and fela þær wurdon ofslægen*
and many there became killed
'and many were killed there' (OEng.037.151; ASC(D))

A few occurrences of *fela* did not fit into the previous categories, so I collected them into a "miscellaneous" category, cf. Table 2. Some examples are given in (21)–(25). In (21), the case endings do not match, as we would expect either *oðra* if it is a genitive, or *tacn* if it is agreement. In (22), it is not possible to be certain about the case, since *ðrowung* is a feminine noun and thus can have an *a*-ending in the nominative, accusative and genitive plural.⁸ Example (23) is unusual in the sense that there is a demonstrative before *fela*. There are in addition two instances of *fela* in combination with the preposition *of*. In (24), from the *Homilies of Wulfstan*, there is clear case marking on the adjective and noun,⁹ while in (25), from the *Peterborough Chronicle* year 1070, the case marking is opaque.

- (21) *fela oðre tacna*
many other tokens
'many other signs' (OEng.652.573; ÆCH2)
- (22) *hu fela ðrowunga*
how many sufferings
'how many sufferings' (OEng.664.564; ÆCH1)
- (23) *þa fela rican*
DEF many rich
'the many rich (people)' (OEng.094.050; ÆCH1)

⁸The YCOE corpus has tagged it as a genitive.

⁹The case is either genitive or dative here; the YCOE corpus analyzes it as dative, governed by the preposition *of*.

- (24) to *fela* [...] of godcundre heorde
 too many of religious.GEN./DAT.SG flock.GEN./DAT.SG
 ‘too many [...] of the religious flock’ (OEng.965.861; Wulf)

- (25) *fela* of þa oðre gærsume
 many of DEF other treasures
 ‘many of the other treasures’ (OEng.771.849; OE Pet)

For the sake of illustration, the examples provided so far are quite straightforward, with *fela* followed by a noun phrase, except for a couple of examples of a preceding pronoun. However, language is seldom completely straightforward, so (26)–(28) serve to illustrate some variation in constructions with *fela*.

- (26) & se cyng ofsloh heora swa feala swa he offaran mihte
 and DEF king killed them.GEN.PL as many as he overtake could
 ‘and the king killed as many of them as he was able to reach and attack’
 (OEng.901.366; OE Pet)

- (27) & hi him þar foregislas sealdon swa feala swa he habban
 and they him there hostage.ACC.PL gave as many as he have
 wolde
 would
 ‘and there they gave him as many hostages as he wanted’
 (OEng.134.533; OE Pet)

- (28) wundra on þyssere worulde *fela*
 wonder.GEN.PL in DEM world many
 ‘many of the wonders in this world’ (OEng.571.901; ÆLS)

3.2 Agreement versus genitive with *fela*

Table 2 gives an overview of the entire distribution of *fela*, but I am particularly interested in the variation between agreement and genitive. Therefore, in Table 3, I disregard the instances of *fela* standing alone, the instances of *fela* with a numeral, and the “miscellaneous” instances. I also exclude the “DP dependents”, i.e. constructions with a pronoun (16), or with a demonstrative (13) or possessive (15) preceding the noun, since these are always in the genitive case, as well as the two instances of constructions with the preposition *of*.

Table 3 is thus meant to show the distribution when the writer in principle had a choice between agreement and genitive. With DP dependents, there is no

Table 3: The distribution of *fela* used with agreement vs. genitive in Ælfric's texts and the *Peterborough Chronicle* (Old English parts) vs. the rest of the Old English texts

Texts	<i>fela</i> total agr + gen	Agreement		Genitive	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Ælfric's texts	202	99	49.0	103	51.0
The OE <i>Peterb. Chron.</i>	26	16	61.5	10	38.5
All other OE texts	191	16	8.4	175	91.6

choice, because the grammar dictates that they always occur in the genitive. But with non-DP dependents, there was apparently a choice for Ælfric and for the writers of the first part of the chronicle.

In Table 3 we can clearly see the difference between Ælfric's texts and the *Peterborough Chronicle* on the one hand, and the rest of Old English on the other. Ælfric's texts and the chronicle are quite similar, but the chronicle is even more "modern" than Ælfric, in the sense that agreement is used more than the genitive. The distribution seen in Table 3 will be further discussed in Section 4.

3.3 Results for *manig*

Table 4 shows the distribution of *manig* in the seven Old English texts studied here. I distinguish between *manig* with agreement, *manig* with genitive, *manig* standing alone, and miscellaneous cases. Examples are given below.

Table 4: The distribution of *manig* in the texts

Texts	<i>manig</i> total	Agreement		Genitive		Alone		Misc.	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
<i>ASC(A)</i>	19	11	57.9	2	10.5	4	21.1	2	10.5
<i>Bede</i>	195	122	62.6	17	8.7	34	17.4	22	11.3
<i>Oros</i>	101	79	78.2	1	1.0	5	5.0	16	15.8
<i>ÆLS</i>	95	69	72.6	3	3.2	15	15.8	8	8.4
<i>ÆCH1</i>	57	36	63.2	0	0	14	24.6	7	12.3
<i>ÆCH2</i>	55	33	60.0	1	1.8	12	21.8	9	16.4
<i>OE Pet</i>	71	54	76.1	1	1.5	7	9.9	9	12.7

4 The Old English quantifiers *fela* ‘many’ and *manig* ‘many’

Examples (29)–(31) show *manig* with agreement, while (32)–(34) are examples with a genitive.

- (29) *manegum ðeowracum*
 many.DAT.PL threat.DAT.PL
 ‘many threats’ (OEng.393.842; ÆLS)
- (30) *swa manege gersumas*
 so many.ACC.PL treasure.ACC.PL
 ‘so many treasures’ (OEng.407.002; OE Pet)
- (31) *hu monega gefeoht*
 how many.ACC.PL battle.ACC.PL
 ‘how many battles’ (OEng.777.881; Oros)
- (32) *monige [...] lifigendra manna*
 many.NOM.PL living.GEN.PL man.GEN.PL
 ‘many [...] living men’ (OEng.773.105; Bede)
- (33) *mænigo þara wergra gasta*
 many.ACC.PL DEF.GEN.PL evil.GEN.PL spirit.GEN.PL
 ‘many of the evil spirits’ (OEng.847.366; Bede)
- (34) *Manega tacna*
 many.NOM.PL sign.GEN.PL
 ‘many signs’ (OEng.941.407; ÆCH2)

Manig can also stand alone, as in (35)–(36).

- (35) *þæt manega cumað fram eastdæle*
 that many.NOM.PL come from eastpart
 ‘that many come from the east’ (OEng.086.173; ÆCH1)
- (36) *& mænige gewundedon þærinne*
 and many.ACC.PL wounded therein
 ‘and wounded many there’ (OEng.749.054; OE Pet)

As Table 4 shows, there were more instances of *manig* in the miscellaneous category than of *fela* in the same category. I show a few of them here. Quite commonly, the construction with *manig* is the complement of a noun, so that both *manig* and its noun are in the genitive case, cf. (37). Hence, this is not a relevant construction for my purposes.

- (37) manegra ðeoda fæder
many.GEN.PL people.GEN.PL father.NOM.SG
'the father of many peoples' (OEng.270.759; ÆCH1)

Quite a few of the examples sorted into the miscellaneous category contained a feminine noun, so that it is strictly speaking not possible to determine case on the basis of the form alone. In (38), *leoda* could in principle be either accusative or genitive; the ending would be the same. The YCOE corpus annotates such cases as agreeing with *manig*, so that *leoda* in (38) would be an accusative plural. This is of course the most likely analysis, since *manig* is very consistent in occurring with agreement. I have, however, chosen to keep such instances apart.

- (38) manega leoda
many.ACC.PL peoples
'many peoples' (OEng.206.233; ÆCH1)

In (39), *huses* has an unexpected ending for a neuter, plural noun: it should be *hus*. But this example is from the *Peterborough Chronicle* year 1117, so clearly the generic plural form in *-(es)* is starting to develop. I could have analyzed this as agreement, but chose to place this example in the miscellaneous category.

- (39) manige mynstras & turas & huses
many.NOM.PL minster.NOM.PL and tower.NOM.PL and houses
'many minsters and towers and houses' (OEng.042.102; OE Pet)

With *fela* there were two examples of an *of*-construction. With *manig*, there were eight in the texts under consideration here. Two of them are shown in (40) and (41).

- (40) monige of his folce
many.NOM.PL of his people.DAT.SG
'many of his people' (OEng.608.943; Bede)
- (41) swyðe manega of þæs cynges hired
very many.NOM.PL of DEF.GEN.SG king.GEN.SG court.ACC.SG
'very many of the king's court' (OEng.908.344; OE Pet)

3.4 Agreement versus genitive with *manig*

In the same way as for *fela*, I also made a table for *manig* comparing the distribution of agreement and genitive constructions. I excluded the instances of *manig*

4 The Old English quantifiers *fela* ‘many’ and *manig* ‘many’

Table 5: The distribution of *manig* used with agreement vs. genitive in the texts

Texts	<i>manig</i> total agr + gen	Agreement		Genitive	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
<i>ASC(A)</i>	11	11	100.0	0	0
<i>Bede</i>	126	122	96.8	4	3.2
<i>Oros</i>	72	72	100.0	0	0
<i>ÆLS</i>	70	68	97.1	2	2.8
<i>ÆCH1</i>	36	36	100.0	0	0
<i>ÆCH2</i>	34	33	97.1	1	3.0
<i>OE Pet</i>	54	53	98.1	1	1.9

standing alone and the “miscellaneous” instances, as well as constructions with a demonstrative or a pronoun, and the eight instances with the preposition *of*.

As Table 5 shows, *manig* overwhelmingly occurs with agreement. While Ælfric’s texts show variation between agreement and partitive as concerns *fela*, they are very consistent with respect to *manig*, like the other Old English texts.

4 Discussion

In this section I first give an outline of a study (Roehrs & Sapp 2018) that has been useful for this chapter, before I go on to a discussion of the findings of the texts under consideration here. The assumption is that *fela* originally occurred with the genitive, and that there was a development away from this, before *fela* eventually disappeared. Ælfric seems to have been ahead of the field in this respect, and the variation is also evident in the *Peterborough Chronicle*. I propose that the variation is not random, but is conditioned by the following factors:

- Cardinal vs. proportional reading. *Fela* + agreement, i.e. the newer construction, can only have a cardinal reading. *Fela* + genitive, i.e. the older construction, mostly has a proportional reading, but can have a cardinal reading in some cases. In earlier times, when *fela* + genitive presumably was the common construction, it was used to convey both cardinal and proportional meaning, hence we would expect to see remnants of this variation in the old construction, whereas the new construction with agreement

would be consistent. Cf. Drinka (2017: 404): “Innovations virtually never completely occlude previous categories, but build on them.”

- Concrete and countable nouns vs. abstract nouns. *Fela* + agreement is mostly used with concrete, countable nouns, while *fela* + genitive is mostly used with abstract nouns.
- Constructions with *fela* + genitive are frequently objects and prepositional complements rather than subjects. If *fela* + genitive functions as subject, it is usually in existential/presentative constructions, or in passive constructions, which testifies to their non-agentive nature, as opposed to *fela* + agreement constructions, which are more likely to be agentive.

4.1 Roehrs and Sapp (2018)

Of particular relevance for this chapter is Roehrs and Sapp’s (2018) study of complex quantifiers in Old English, with Old Icelandic and Old High German playing supporting roles. They propose a distinction between head-type quantifiers and phrase-type quantifiers. Head-type quantifiers are not inflected and are not modified by degree words (2018: 389). Examples are *awiht* ‘some/any (thing)’, *nanþing* ‘no(thing)’, *(ge)hwa* ‘some/any (one)’. As regards Old English, the dependents of such quantifiers are, with a few exceptions, in the genitive (2018: 390). Phrase-type quantifiers, on the other hand, are adjective-like (2018: 398) and take dependents that are either genitives or in agreement (they call it concord) with the quantifier (2018: 399–401). Examples are *ælc* ‘each’, *(ge)hwæðer* ‘either (of two)’ and *nænig* ‘no/none’. If the dependent of a phrase-type quantifier is what they call a “DP-size dependent”, i.e. pronouns, and nominals with an overt determiner (2018: 388), it is in the genitive (2018: 399). If the dependent is a “non-DP dependent”, i.e. dependent nouns and constructions with an adjective plus a noun (2018: 388), it is overwhelmingly in agreement with the quantifier (2018: 399–401). Of the three languages, Old English shows the most variation, as Old High German has genitive dependents regardless of the type of quantifier, while Old Icelandic mostly has agreement.

On the basis of their empirical findings, Roehrs and Sapp propose a syntactic analysis of the variation, couched within the generative framework. Head-type quantifiers are, as the name suggests, in a head position (in the syntactic structure), whereas phrase-type quantifiers are in a specifier position. Furthermore, DP-size dependents are always the complement of N, whereas non-DP genitive dependents are in a specifier position, and non-DP agreement dependents are in the nominal projection line (2018: 381, 396, 398, 404). I will not enter into a

detailed discussion about this proposal, but merely point out that if this is meant to be valid for quantifiers in general, *fela* does not quite fit in, as we shall see.

A few more relevant points from Roehrs and Sapp’s work is that they do not find that semantics plays a role in the choice between genitive and agreement (2018: 417). They also mention diachronic change (2018: 416), and propose that Old High German is the “oldest” language, since it may be assumed that genitive dependents represent the older stage, while Old Icelandic is the “youngest”, since quantifiers occur in agreement constructions. As usual with Old English, it is somewhere in between. But Roehrs and Sapp (2018: 416) make the interesting point that a change is taking place with some Old English writers, since there are instances of head-type quantifiers that have non-DP dependents that are not in the genitive case.

As mentioned, Roehrs & Sapp (2018) specifically study complex quantifiers, so *fela* is not included, apart from a mention in a footnote where they say that *fela* is probably a head-type quantifier (2018: 389), since according to Mitchell (1985: vol. I, 172), *fela* mostly occurs with the genitive. But now that we have seen the data for *fela* and the variation that exists, the questions that arise are: what caused the variation, and what type of quantifier is *fela* in this terminology – head-type or phrase-type? *Fela* is indeclinable, i.e. not adjective-like, so in that sense it is like a head-type quantifier.¹⁰ But it can be modified by a degree adverb, *swiðe* ‘very’, though admittedly this is rare. Furthermore, as we have seen, in Ælfric’s texts and the *Peterborough Chronicle*, *fela* commonly occurs with agreement, which we would not expect with head-type quantifiers.

4.2 Ælfric’s texts

If we assume that *fela* + genitive was the original construction, as indicated both by other Germanic languages (cf. Roehrs & Sapp 2016), and by the great majority of Old English texts, Ælfric’s usage was clearly unusual with respect to *fela*. His use anticipates what we see in the *Peterborough Chronicle*, and this change would be as expected in light of the general developments of English and the way in which noun phrases are structured in Present-day English, i.e. with quantifiers modifying a nominal head, rather than the noun being the complement of the quantifier. Note that Wulfstan, Ælfric’s contemporary, and even a little younger, is much more conservative in the use of *fela* (cf. Table 2).¹¹ The question is: can we discern any patterns of usage when it comes to Ælfric’s use of

¹⁰Note also that Roehrs and Sapp (2016) demonstrate that the Old High German cognate *filu* is a head-type quantifier, being indeclinable and occurring exclusively with genitive nouns.

¹¹Mitchell (1985: vol. I, 174) comments that in Ælfric’s texts the verb is usually plural after *fela* + genitive, whereas *fela* + genitive is followed by a singular verb in Wulfstan. In my data from

fela? Roehrs and Sapp find that the choice between agreement and genitive is not semantically motivated for the complex quantifiers they study (2018: 417), but I will argue that it conditioned the use of *fela* in the texts that show variation. Language change has to start somewhere, and if an individual shows signs of it in his language, it would not be unlikely that the variation arises due to different shades of meaning in certain constructions. Furthermore, Ælfric was known as a great and conscious stylist (Gatch 1977; Godden 2004; Harris 2006), and my point of departure is therefore that the distribution with respect to the use of *fela* in Ælfric's texts is a result of linguistic choice.

Roehrs & Sapp (2018: 417) comment that for Present-day English, there is, for non-DP dependents (e.g. Old English *fela men*, *fela manna* 'many men', *fela gode men* 'many good men'), a distinction between a cardinal reading, denoting members of a set, and a proportional reading, denoting members of a pre-established set. For example, *many men fought the battle* can mean that the number of men that fought the battle was large (cardinal reading), or it can mean that a large proportion of the men fought the battle (proportional reading). DP dependents (e.g. Old English *fela þara manna*) only have a proportional reading (cf. Present-day English *many of the men fought the battle*). According to Roehrs & Sapp (2018: 417), this interpretative distinction likely held in the older languages as well, since if it did not, the question arises as to when and why that distinction arose later. I follow Roehrs and Sapp in this assumption, also because there are so few instances of *fela* + a noun preceded by a demonstrative. We would expect more constructions with a demonstrative if that was the only way of indicating proportionality.

As concerns the complex quantifiers that Roehrs and Sapp study, they find that DP dependents are always in the genitive, but that non-DP dependents are in agreement with phrase-type quantifiers in Old English and with all quantifiers in Old Icelandic. If non-DP dependents can also have a proportional reading in the older languages, we might expect to see more genitives for non-DP dependents, on a par with DP-dependents. Since DP-dependents are always in the genitive and always have a proportional reading, proportionality and the genitive case seem to be associated. But Roehrs and Sapp find that non-DP dependents agree with the quantifier. There are only a few cases of genitive, and they are mostly idiomatic expressions. Hence, they conclude that although the distinction between

Wulfstan's homilies, there are only 12 cases of a *fela* construction that functions as the subject of a verb, and of those, nine have a singular verb, whereas plural verbs are the most common in Ælfric's texts. This is an interesting difference between the contemporaries, because it supports the impression that for Ælfric, *fela* was becoming a quantifier, with the noun governing the verbal concord, while for Wulfstan, it was a partitive, with *fela* governing the verbal concord.

cardinal and proportional readings existed in earlier language stages, the distribution they see for the complex quantifiers is better explained structurally rather than semantically (2018: 417).

However, as we have seen in the present study, *fela* can occur with non-DP dependents either in agreement or with genitive case in Ælfric and the *Peterborough Chronicle*. This means that the status of *fela* was probably vacillating between head and specifier, and Ælfric and the chronicle thus represent both an older and a newer stage with respect to this construction. Considering semantic factors might therefore provide some insight, so in the following sections I have consequently studied some aspects of these texts in more detail, with the purpose of unearthing possible patterns.

4.2.1 The type of noun in agreement and genitive constructions in Ælfric’s texts

One question was whether the type of noun plays a role with respect to whether *fela* would occur with agreement or with genitive. In (42), the nouns found with *fela* + agreement in Ælfric’s texts are listed alphabetically (a total of 53), and in (43) those with *fela* + genitive (a total of 26).

- (42) *ælmyssan* ‘alms’, *ærendracan* ‘messengers’, *bec* ‘books’, *bedredan*¹² ‘bedridden (people)’, *bisceopas* ‘bishops’, *blinde* ‘blind (people)’, *cnapan* ‘knives’, *cnottan* ‘knots’, *corn* ‘grains’, *cristene* ‘Christians’, *cynincgas* ‘kings’, *cyrkan* ‘churches’, *dæda* ‘deeds’, *deade* ‘dead (people)’, *earfopnyssum* ‘difficulties’, *englas* ‘angels’, *estmettum* ‘delicate meats’, *fugolcynn* ‘fowl-kind’, *gearum* ‘years’, *gerefan* ‘stewards’, *gereord* ‘languages’, *gesetnyssa* ‘decrees’, *geþoh-tas* ‘thoughts’, *gewinn* ‘battles’, *gewissungum* ‘instructions’, *gewitan* ‘witnesses’, *gleda* ‘coals’, *god* ‘good deeds/things’, *godspel* ‘gospels’, *goldhor-das* ‘gold hoards’, *halgan* ‘saints’, *heahfæderas* ‘patriarchs’, *herereaf* ‘plunders’, *hundas* ‘dogs’, *lande* ‘lands’, *mædenu* ‘maidens’, *menn* ‘men’, *næd-dran* ‘adders’, *oðre* ‘others’, *reoflige* ‘leprous (people)’, *sceoccan* ‘demons’, *þearfan* ‘poor (people)’, *þing* ‘things’, *tunna* ‘barrels’, *unlybban* ‘poisons’, *unþeawas* ‘vices’, *untrume* ‘sick (people)’, *werod* ‘bands (of angels)’, *witan* ‘wise men’, *wode* ‘mad (people)’, *wyrta* ‘plants’, *wytegan* ‘wise men’, *yfelu* ‘evils’.
- (43) *byrðena* ‘loads (of earth)’, *cnihta* ‘boys’, *daga* ‘days’, *engla* ‘angels’, *gasta* ‘spirits’, *gereorda* ‘languages’, *gewitnyssa* ‘testimonies’, *goda* ‘good deeds/

¹²Nominalized adjectives are always in agreement.

things', *laca* 'offerings', *læca* 'physicians', *leorningcnihta* 'disciples', *manna* 'men', *muneca* 'monks', *munuclifa* 'monasteries', *musa* 'mice', *searacræfta* 'treacherous arts', *þinga*¹³ 'things', *tacna* 'signs', *templa* 'temples', *tida* 'time periods', *ungelimpa* 'misfortunes', *wildeora* 'wild animals', *winboga* 'vine branches', *wundra*¹⁴ 'wonders', *yfela* 'evils', *yrmda* 'calamities'.

We may note several things here. First, the number of distinct nouns occurring with *fela* + agreement is double the number of nouns occurring with *fela* + genitive. Second, the majority of the nouns in (42) are animate nouns denoting people or groups of people, or human-like spirits of various kinds, or they are tangible nouns denoting objects or substances. There are some such nouns in (43) as well, but here we see a larger proportion of abstract nouns, such as *gewitnyssa* 'testimonies', *searacræfta* 'treacherous arts', etc.

If we take Ælfric's usage of *fela* + agreement to be of the new type, the fact that it occurs with so many different nouns indicates that his usage was perhaps even more advanced than the data in Table 3 indicate. The numbers there show an even distribution between agreement and genitive with *fela*, but here we see that the distribution is uneven with respect to noun types, which points towards the *fela* + agreement construction being the more productive pattern for Ælfric. Moreover, it might indicate that the change in the use of *fela* towards a construction with *fela* as specifier of a noun head started with concrete, countable nouns, which would not be unexpected with a word meaning 'many'.

Furthermore, if we look into some of the animate nouns in (43), it becomes apparent that they mostly get a proportional reading. Compare (44) and (45). *Fela englas* (with agreement) in (44) has a cardinal reading and denotes angels arriving, armed for fight. It is many angels, not many angels out of a pre-established set. The context is that the Roman general (and later saint) Gallicanus relates how he was converted to God. He was besieged in a town, along with a small army, and tried sacrifices to the gods to get out of this predicament. This did not help, but he was told that if he would bow to the God of heaven, he would be victorious. He did so, and immediately an angel came with a cross, and thereafter many splendidly armed angels. Only a cardinal reading is possible here.

In (45), *fela engla* (with genitive) are also arriving, but in the company of the Lord, so here they are a part of the entourage, and it is possible to give (45) a proportional reading, meaning not all the angels, but a sizable proportion of the heavenly host, a presupposed set of angels. Note that this is a possible reading.

¹³There was only one example of the noun *þing* with genitive; this noun, which occurs quite frequently, is categorically in agreement.

¹⁴*Wundra* occurs frequently, and always in the genitive.

It is not impossible to give this example a cardinal reading. The point is that *fela* + agreement must get a cardinal reading, while *fela* + genitive can, and in most cases does, have a proportional reading. The newer construction, i.e. *fela* + agreement, is the marked alternative. It marks a certain nuance, and it is consistent. The older construction, i.e. *fela* with genitive, retains the possibility of both meanings. However, I argue that the proportional reading is the most likely one in most cases, and that the cardinal–proportional distinction was in fact a conditioning factor in Ælfric’s usage.

- (44) Ic him fyligde ða, and fela englas coman on manna
 I him followed then and many angel.NOM.PL came in man.GEN.PL
 gelicnyssum, mærlíce gewæpnode
 likenesses splendidly armed
 ‘I followed him then, and many angels came in the likeness of men,
 splendidly armed.’ (OEng.837.589; ÆLS)
- (45) Þær com eac se hælend mid þam heofonlican leohte, and fela
 there came also DEF Lord with DEF heavenly light and many
 engla mid him
 angel.GEN.PL with him
 ‘There the Lord also came with the heavenly light, and many angels with
 him.’ (OEng.938.505; ÆLS)

In (46), *fæla muneca* can also get a proportional reading. The context is that (saint) Julian established one monastery for himself and one for (saint) Basilissa; hence Julian became the spiritual father of many monks (*fæla muneca*), and Basilissa the spiritual mother of many nuns (*manega mynecena*, which is in fact a very rare example of the genitive after *manig*). A possible reading here is that these monks are members of a pre-established set of monks, since the existence of monasteries implies monks.¹⁵

¹⁵A reviewer points out that Mitchell (1985: vol. I, 172–173) is sceptical with regard to a proportional reading of *fela* + non-DP dependent. Mitchell says that *fela oðerra muneca* ‘many other monks’ cannot be proportional because there is no demonstrative *para*, giving *fela para oðerra muneca*. But this reasoning is somewhat circular: a reading is proportional when a demonstrative is present, and a demonstrative is present because the reading is proportional. In addition, the example *fela oðerra muneca* does not exist. Mitchell refers to it, but he has it from another source, and he comments that he was not able to find it anywhere. I have not found it either. It is therefore not possible to check the context for it. If it is a real example, there are two possibilities: either it is from a non-Ælfrician text, in which case the genitive would be used in any case, or it is from a text by Ælfric, in which case it might have a proportional reading,

- (46) He wearð þa fæder ofer fæla muneca
 he became then father over many monk.GEN.PL
 ‘He then became the [spiritual] father of many monks.’
 (OEng.939.611; ÆLS)

In (47) we have *fela* + genitive as well, but here a proportional reading is not possible – it is not many mice out of a pre-established set of mice. It is rather a mass of mice, for which it is probably not possible to count individuals, that happens to pour out of the idol. The description continues by saying that the mice were *flocmælum yrnende geond þa widgillan flor* ‘flockwise running across the wide floor’ so men might know that this was the abode of mice, and certainly not of anything divine. It may be that the mass meaning of the noun pushes it towards genitive here, since *fela* + agreement is mostly used with concrete, countable, agentive nouns.

- (47) Þar wearð þa micel gamen þæt feala musa scutan of
 there happened then much mirth that many mouse.GEN.PL shot from
 þære anlicnysse
 DEF idol
 ‘Then the amusing thing happened that many mice poured out of the
 idol.’ (OEng.019.729; ÆHS)

4.2.2 *Fela men* (agreement) vs. *fela manna* (genitive) in Ælfric’s texts

As a final exercise in trying to disentangle Ælfric’s use of agreement vs. genitive with *fela*, I consider the use of *fela* with the noun *man*. This noun occurs with both agreement and genitive, even within the same text, but the variation is particularly apparent in the *Lives of Saints*. Table 6 shows the distribution, including whether there is also an adjective present, as in (48)–(50).¹⁶

With two exceptions, in all the instances of *fela* with *man* in agreement in Ælfric’s texts, there is also an adjective, as in (48) and (49). *Fela* with *man* in the genitive may contain an adjective, cf. (50).

but we cannot check it. In any case, I do not agree with Mitchell here, and the main reason is that demonstrative determiners are in fact rare in these constructions, except in *Orosius*. In Ælfric’s texts, the type with demonstrative only occurs 12 times, e.g. *fela þæra læca* ‘many DEF.GEN.PL physician.GEN.PL’, and of those 12, five are singulars with the noun *folc* ‘people’, e.g. *fela þæs folces* ‘many DEF.GEN.SG people.GEN.SG’. I therefore think it likely that the type without demonstrative could also express proportional meaning.

¹⁶There were no instances in Ælfric’s letter to Sigeward.

4 The Old English quantifiers *fela* ‘many’ and *manig* ‘many’

Table 6: The distribution of *fela* with the noun *man* in Ælfric’s texts

Texts	Agreement		Genitive	
	+adjective	-adjective	+adjective	-adjective
<i>ÆLS</i>	7	2	1	5
<i>ÆCH1</i>	1	0	4	0
<i>ÆCH2</i>	0	0	2	5
<i>ÆHS</i>	1	0	2	1

- (48) *fela adlige menn*
 many sick.NOM.PL man.NOM.PL
 ‘many sick men’ (OEng.530.902; *ÆLS*)
- (49) *fela cristene menn*
 many Christian.NOM.PL man.NOM.PL
 ‘many Christian men’ (OEng.553.207; *ÆLS*)
- (50) *fela ricra manna*
 many rich.GEN.PL man.GEN.PL
 ‘many rich men’ (OEng.524.280; *ÆCH1*)

The presence of adjectives lends weight to an analysis of *fela* in a specifier rather than a head position (see Roehrs & Sapp 2018: 403). Furthermore, it seems that this change – if it was indeed a change from head to specifier – was taking place in Ælfric’s grammar in particular, because in the other Old English texts, adjectives rarely occur with *fela*, though there are examples scattered here and there, often with the adjective *god* ‘good’ (see ex. (57)).¹⁷ As mentioned, Roehrs & Sapp (2018: 398) find that with complex phrase-type quantifiers and non-DP dependents, there is almost always agreement. *Fela* is not quite like that, since its non-DP dependents can also be in the genitive. But the fact that Ælfric in his late texts chooses agreement when the noun is modified by an adjective shows that *fela* is not in a head position. The one example in the *Lives of Saints* of *fela* with adjective + *man* in the genitive is a special case, because a participle intervenes between *fela* and the noun phrase complement (51). The participle *gehælde* has a nominative plural ending, so it agrees with the meaning of *fela* rather than

¹⁷The adjective-like word *oðer* ‘other’ also often occurs with *fela*.

its indeclinable form.¹⁸ The reading here is thus that many were healed, of both people and animals. The focus is on ‘many’ and ‘healed’, and it is then specified who the ‘many’ are.

- (51) and wurdon fela gehælde untrumra manna and eac swilce
and became many healed.NOM.PL sick.GEN.PL man.GEN.PL and also too
nytena þurh ða ylcan rode
animal.GEN.PL through DEF same cross
‘and many sick men and also animals were healed through the same
cross’ (OEng.401.711; ÆLS)

Let us now dig a little deeper and look at the constructions where *man* is not modified. In the *Lives of Saints*, Ælfric gives us two examples of *fela* with *man* in agreement (52)–(53) and five of *fela* with *man* in the genitive (see Table 6). Two of the latter are shown in (54) and (55).

- (52) Oft wurdon eac gehælede fela untrume men þurh his
often became also healed many sick.NOM.PL man.NOM.PL through his
reafes fnæda, þe fela men of atugon, and bundon on
garment.GEN hem that many man.NOM.PL out pulled and bound on
þa seocan, and him wæs bet sona
DEF sick and them was better immediately
‘Many sick men were also often healed through the hem of his garment,
from which many men pulled out [threads] and bound on the sick, and
they immediately recovered.’ (OEng.551.536; ÆLS)
- (53) Wurdon þa on fyrste fela men gebigde þurh heora
became then in time many man.NOM.PL turned through their
drohtnunge fram deofles biggengum to Cristes geleafan and to
conversation from devil.GEN worships to Christ.GEN faith and to
clænum life
clean life
‘In time, through their conversation, many men turned from worship of
the devil to faith in Christ and to a clean life.’ (OEng.275.096; ÆLS)

¹⁸ A reviewer points out that *gehælde* could be a predicative adjective. It is possible, since it can be difficult to determine whether a participle is predicative or verbal (Mitchell 1985: vol. I, 649), but considering that there is an expressed “agent”, i.e. the cross, it seems that a verbal reading is more likely here.

- (54) and *fela manna þa gehyrdon on his forðsiðe singendra*
 and many man.GEN.PL then heard on his death singing.GEN.PL
engla swiðe hlude stemna
 angel.GEN.PL very loud.ACC.PL voice.ACC.PL
 ‘and upon his death many men heard very loud voices of singing angels’
 (OEng.320.345; ÆLS)

The question is why Ælfric uses different constructions like this. It could of course be free variation; when you have access to parallel constructions in your grammar, you may want some variation for variation’s sake. But if we consider that Ælfric was a conscious language user, we want to look for clues that might explain the variation, and this is what I will briefly attempt here.

As mentioned, my proposal is that if the noun, in this case *man*, has a cardinal reading, is concrete, and refers to agentive individuals, Ælfric would use agreement, whereas if the noun is abstract, non-agentive, or the reading is proportional, Ælfric would use the genitive.

In (52), the hem in question is St. Martin’s hem, and we can think of the *fela men* as individuals that one by one come and take threads from the hem in order to use them for healing. The reading is obligatorily cardinal, as there are many such men. In (53), the reference is to the saints Chrysantus and Daria, and the *fela men* who became Christians through conversing with them. Again the reference is to many individual men, and not a proportion of a pre-established set of men, so the only possibility is a cardinal reading. For (52) and (53), we would therefore expect agreement.

Example (54), on the other hand, is clearly proportional, since these are the men surrounding St. Martin when he dies. A possible, and likely, reading is thus ‘many of the men who were there’, and a genitive would be as expected. I also checked the remaining three examples of *fela manna* in the *Lives of Saints*, and in those as well, the (hypothesized) criteria for the genitive are fulfilled.

In (55), however, with genitive, we are faced with a counterexample. A proportional reading of *fela manna* is not possible, since it is a part of a presentative construction that introduces a new section of the story; hence the men are not members of any pre-established set. Recall that the genitive is the older construction, which would retain the possibility of both old and new readings in the event of a change. In other words, while we would expect the new, marked, construction to be consistent, the possibility for variation would be kept with the old construction. Hence it would be as expected to come across examples like (55).

- (55) Auitianus hatte sum hetol ealdorman, wælhreow on his
Avitianus was.called a.certain evil alderman cruel in his
weorcum, se gewrað fela manna, and on racenteagum gebrohte
actions DEM tied many man.GEN.PL and in chains brought
to þære byrig Turonia
to DEF city Tours
‘There was a certain evil alderman called Avitianus, cruel in his actions,
who put many men in chains and brought them to the city of Tours.’
(OEng.890.917; ÆLS)

To sum up concerning Ælfric: When it comes to *fela*, Ælfric uses *fela* both with agreement and genitive, and it is not done randomly. If we assume that *fela* goes from being a head to being a specifier, we can, through studying Ælfric in some detail, see that this process follows an expected trajectory of change for a quantifier, with the agreement construction appearing with nouns that are concrete, countable, or get a cardinal reading. The genitive remains longer with nouns that are abstract and invite a proportional reading.

As we have seen, Ælfric is a linguistic innovator when it comes to the variation in the use of *fela*. The other Old English texts do not show this, with the exception of the *Peterborough Chronicle*, to which we now turn.

4.3 The *Peterborough Chronicle*

The *Peterborough Chronicle* is a fascinating text, as it shows the transition from Old to Middle English. It is one of seven surviving manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, i.e. the ‘E’ manuscript (Bodleian MS Laud Misc. 636). After the Norman invasion of 1066, English book production largely ceased, but at Peterborough, chronicle writing continued into the post-conquest era as well. However, there was a fire at Peterborough in 1116, which destroyed the original manuscript, so the first part of the chronicle, the annals up until 1121, is copied from other sources, and by the same hand. The *First Continuation* of the Peterborough Chronicle covers the years 1122 to 1131, and the *Second* or *Final Continuation* the years from 1132 to 1154, with the year 1154 marking the end of the English chronicle tradition. The continuations are regarded as Early Middle English, with the Second Continuation being even more solidly so than the First Continuation. We may also note that interpolations occur in the copied part of the chronicle; these are additions made by the copyist, and they contain information that would only be evident in retrospect. The language of the interpolations

is quite different from regular Old English. (See Bergs & Skaffari 2007: 5–12 for further information about the chronicle.)

This information about the provenance of the *Peterborough Chronicle* is necessary in order to understand the distribution of *fela* in the text. Below I show that the copied part differs from the interpolations with respect to how *fela* is used, and that the continuations in their turn show further developments of *fela*. In other words, I propose that the change that we see the beginnings of in Ælfric’s texts continues in the chronicle. Table 7 shows the distribution of *fela* (with the spellings *fela*, *feola*, *feala*, *feale*, *feole*) in the different parts of the *Peterborough Chronicle*. Recall that we still, as in Table 3, disregard *fela* standing alone or with a numeral, genitives with demonstratives, genitive pronouns, instances of *of*, and cases where the construction is opaque.

In the copied part of the chronicle, i.e. the oldest part, the distribution of *fela* with agreement or with genitive is quite even; (56) and (57) are two examples of agreement and genitive, respectively.

Table 7: The distribution of *fela* in the *Peterborough Chronicle*

Text parts	Agreement	Genitive
Copied part	10	9
Interpolations	6	1
First continuation	10	0
Second continuation	0	0

- (56) *scipu & gislas swa fela swa hi woldon*
ship.ACC.PL and hostage.ACC.PL as many as they wanted
‘as many ships and hostages as they wanted’ (OEng.642.022, OE Pet)

- (57) *feala godra manna*
many good.GEN.PL man.GEN.PL
‘many good men’ (OEng.481.782; OE Pet)

As was the case in Ælfric, the nouns occurring with agreement in the chronicle are largely concrete and countable nouns. They are: *Bryttas* ‘Britons’, *foregislas* ‘foremost hostages’, *hreowlice & hungerbitende* ‘miserable and hunger-bitten (people)’, *lande* ‘lands’, *sceattas* ‘treasures’, *scipe* ‘ships’, *scipu* ‘ships’, *scipu & gislas* ‘ships and hostages’, *peodan* ‘peoples’, *pingan* ‘things’, *wintrum* ‘winters’.

They also have a cardinal reading. Out of the nine occurrences with *fela* and a genitive, five contain the noun *manna*. In all of those cases, *manna* has a proportional reading ‘many of the men’, as in (58), which is about King William fighting a battle in which his son William is wounded and many of his men (alternatively many of the men fighting the battle) were killed.

- (58) & eac his sunu Willelm wearð þær gewundod. & fela
and also his son William became there wounded and many
manna ofslagene
man.GEN.PL killed
‘and his son William was also wounded there, and many men were killed’
(OEng.433.102; OE Pet)

The remaining four are: *þegna* ‘thanes’, *þinga* ‘things’, *þunra* ‘thunderstorms’, *tuna* ‘towns’. Except for *tuna*, these either have a proportional reading (*þegna* and *þinga*) or denote an uncountable mass (*þunra*). The exception is *feala tuna* ‘many towns’, which occurs in a description of a flood (*sæflod* ‘tide’) immersing many towns. Here we cannot justify a proportional reading, unless we construe it as ‘many of the towns that were near the sea’. However, as mentioned above, we would not expect the distribution to be completely consistent for the old variety, and we also have to remember that the copied part of the chronicle was originally written by several scribes over many years.

In the interpolations, which, recall, were inserted by the scribe that copied the chronicle after the fire, there is only one instance of a genitive, namely (59), so here the scribe is presumably using his own grammar.¹⁹

- (59) fela minstra
many minster.GEN.PL
‘many minsters’ (OEng.800.699; OE Pet (interpolation))

The rest are agreement constructions, as in e.g. (60). However, at this point the case system is becoming blurred, so it might be that what we see in (60) is levelling of inflections rather than true case inflections.

¹⁹Odd Einar Haugen (p.c.) informs me that in scholarship on Old Norse, the relation between the scribe’s own linguistic norm and the manuscript being copied is often discussed (see e.g. Mårtensson 2013), and it would be as expected to see the scribe using his own norm in the interpolations. See also Benskin & Laing (1986: 15, Section 3.3.2) on how the scribe moves from copying visually to copying via “the mind’s ear”, and Thaisen (2014: 500–501) on how scribes introduced their own spelling when copying.

- (60) *feola oðre rice men*
 many other.NOM.PL rich.NOM.PL man.NOM.PL
 ‘many other rich men’ (OEng.869.650; OE Pet (interpolation))

When we arrive at the First Continuation, the genitive is gone, as Table 7 shows, and by the Second Continuation, *fela* itself has disappeared.²⁰ In the First Continuation we see examples like (61) and (62). *Tunes* is the new *-(e)s* plural, which we have in Present-day English as well. Note that the scribe who copied the chronicle up until 1121 was probably also responsible for the First Continuation (Bergs & Skaffari 2007: 6–7), hence the similarity between the use of *fela* in the interpolations and in the First Continuation.

- (61) *feole shipmen*
 ‘many shipmen’ (PPCME2, CMPETERB,42.16; ME Pet)
- (62) *feola tunes*
 ‘many towns’ (PPCME2, CMPETERB,47.172; ME Pet)

The First Continuation also contains an example like (63), which was placed in the “miscellaneous” category, since it shows traces of genitive case, but with the wrong endings; in Old English it would have been *fela oðra godra cnihta* in the genitive, or *fela oðre gode cnihtas* in the nominative or accusative. So here there is clearly no steady case system in the scribe’s grammar.

- (63) *fela oðre godre cnihte*
 ‘many other good knights’ (PPCME2, CMPETERB,45.110; ME Pet)

In the Second Continuation there are no examples of *fela*, but some of *manig*, one of which is given in (64).

- (64) *manie munekes*
 ‘many monks’ (PPCME2, CMPETERB,57.494; ME Pet)

What we see with the development of *fela* in the *Peterborough Chronicle* is language change in progress, and it can be argued that *fela* shows the stages of the change that we would expect. In the copied part, there is variation in the use of agreement versus genitive with *fela*. In the interpolations to the Old

²⁰Obviously, this does not mean that *fela* abruptly disappeared from the language altogether. The *Middle English Dictionary* (–2023) provides attestations of *fele*, but the word is now used in more restricted contexts and with more idiomatic meanings. There are no attestations in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (–2023) after 1598.

English part, which were inserted by the scribe that copied the chronicle at the beginning of the 12th century, *fela* occurs with agreement, with one exception, so it probably reflects the scribe's own grammar. The same scribe is at work in the First Continuation, where the genitive disappears with *fela*, and in the Second Continuation, *fela* itself disappears. There was no longer any good reason to keep *fela*, since the language already had the more frequent word *manig*, and the two were no longer used in structurally different constructions. *Fela* was changing from head to modifier, while *manig* had always been a modifier.

5 Conclusion

This chapter is a study of the quantifiers *fela* 'many' and *manig* 'many', with particular focus on *fela*. I have shown that *fela* quite consistently occurs with a partitive genitive in Old English rather than with a complement in agreement, and can thus be argued to be a head-type quantifier in Roehrs and Sapp's (2018) terminology. The notable exceptions are Ælfric's texts and the *Peterborough Chronicle*, and the question was what conditioned the variation in these texts. When Ælfric's texts were studied in some detail, it emerged that the variation is not random, but rather a result of semantic factors, with *fela* occurring with agreement when the construction has a cardinal reading and the noun is concrete, countable and agentive (though not necessarily all of these factors at the same time). The tendency for *fela* with genitive is to occur when the noun is more abstract, non-agentive and has a proportional reading (or sometimes possibly a mass reading). There are some exceptions, which is not surprising, considering that it is the older construction. The newer construction, i.e. *fela* + agreement, behaves in a consistent manner, while the older construction to some extent retains the possibility of variation. In terms of general patterns of language change, the development of *fela* that we see in Ælfric's texts and the *Peterborough Chronicle* is in line with the trajectory of change that we would expect. *Fela* changes from being a head to becoming a quantifier modifying a nominal head, and as such the expectation is that this change would happen first with concrete, countable, agentive nouns with a cardinal reading.

The only surprise is perhaps that this should be so evident in Ælfric's texts in particular, and not in the other Old English texts apart from the chronicle. However, as mentioned in Section 4.1, Roehrs & Sapp (2018: 417) notice a change with some Old English writers from genitive to agreement with respect to the complements of certain complex quantifiers. It is thus not inconceivable that individual writers can be trailblazers in this respect.

Fela has, however, disappeared from English, while its semantic competitor *manig* survived. In the chronicle, *fela* disappears completely towards the middle of the 12th century. Attestations are found throughout the Middle English period, but with a much more limited use. If we assume that *fela* was changing from head to modifier, as Ælfric’s texts and the chronicle indicate, it was on its way to becoming structurally identical to *manig*, which has always been a modifier. As inflections levelled and the case system disappeared, there were no longer distinct genitive plural case inflections that could mark constructions with *fela* as structurally different from constructions with *manig*. Hence, the language had two words meaning the same thing and that were no longer in complementary distribution. One of them was destined to become superfluous, and that was *fela*, since *manig* was the more frequent word.

Abbreviations

ACC	accusative	GEN	genitive
DAT	dative	NOM	nominative
DEF	definite	PL	plural
DEM	demonstrative	SG	singular

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