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Language contact and grammatical change: the case of Bergen

It is well known that the dialect of Bergen in western Norway diverges in many interesting ways from the rural dialects that surround it. The most important of these differences are the following:

- (a) Like most Norwegian and Swedish dialects, but unlike the 'stri' dialects that surround it the Bergen dialect distinguishes between two wordtones: there is hence opposition between e.g.: *far-en* 'the father, dad' with tone 1, and *fare-n* 'the danger' with tone 2.
- (b) In stressed syllables that were short in Old Norse (cvc and cvcv(c)) it was the postvocalic consonant that was lengthened in Bergen, not the vowel as in all other West-Norwegian dialects, e.g. in the past participles of strong verbs: *skrivve* 'written n.sg.', *borren* 'carried m/f sg.'
- (c) There are only two genders in the Bergen dialect: the masculine and feminine have merged into a common gender, whereas almost all other Norwegian (and Swedish) dialects have kept the original three gender system, e.g.: *en gutt* 'a boy' – *gutten* 'the boy'; *en jente* 'a girl' – *jenten* 'the girl'. In neighbouring Osterøy e.g. 'a girl' is *ei jenta*, and 'the girl' *jento*.
- (d) The preterite and the past participle of the main class of weak verbs, the so-called *a*-verbs like *kaste* 'to throw', end in *-et*, as in Bokmål, not in *-a* as in most Norwegian dialects: *kastet* 'threw, thrown'.

(e) The present of the strong verbs does not show *i*-umlaut, e.g. *kommer* 'come(s)' or *sover* 'sleep(s)' instead of *kejem* or *sov* in most other Norwegian dialects (see e.g. Venås 1967: 342-348). As the forms *kommer* and *sover* show, the ending *-r* is retained in Bergen.

(f) Adjectives do not receive a plural ending when used predicatively in the dialect of Bergen, which in this respect is similar to the dialects of Northern Norway and Sweden, e.g. *vi e færdi* 'we are ready' instead of *ferdige*.

(g) Proper names are treated as common nouns, and hence receive a marker of definiteness (the ending *-en*) when used for mentioning a (known) person, e.g.: *Per'en* 'Per' or *Kari'en* 'Kari'. In other Norwegian dialects the personal pronouns *han* 'he' and *hon* 'she' are used in this function, often in the reduced forms *n* and *a: n* *Per, a Kari*.

Apart from these features that are not found in other West-Norwegian dialects there are a number of innovations that have spread from Bergen to other parts of the country. Among these, the following are the most conspicuous:

(h) Possessive constructions with the reflexive possessive pronoun *sin*, e.g.: *Kari sin hjemmeside* 'Kari's homepage', *hvem er det sin feil?* 'whose fault is it?'

(i) The use of uvular *r* [R] instead of the trilled or flapped *r* that was used in earlier times seems to have spread from Bergen to ever larger parts of the West-Norwegian dialect area (see e.g. Torp 2001).

The nature and the sheer number of the differences between the dialect of Bergen and the surrounding West-Norwegian dialects make it clear that Bergen is a dialect of its own that at some point of time parted company with its West-Norwegian relatives and developed in its own specific way. Why it did so has been the subject of some controversy among Norwegian linguists, but most of them will agree that at least the following factors seem to have played an important role in this process. (A) Bergen was during a

long time the biggest city and trading centre in Norway which attracted people from all over the country. (B) It had, moreover, a large population of Hanse-merchants, who did not merge with the Nordic inhabitants, but kept to themselves in Bryggen, the harbor area of the town. (C) As Bergen was one of the main city centres in the Danish empire, the influence of the state, and hence of its language, especially in its written form, was greater there than in the countryside, that had far less dealings with the state.

In a number of articles Ernst-Håkon Jahr has emphasized the role that language contact (or rather 'dialect contact') between West Norwegian and Low German had for the way in which the dialect evolved. According to Jahr (1998) most of its syntactic, morphological and phonological peculiarities can be explained as the more or less direct result of this language contact. In her dissertation (Nesse 2002) Agnete Nesse takes a closer look at some of these dialect features and arrives at approximately the same conclusion. But although Nesse gives us a meticulous account of the nature of the linguistic contacts between Norwegians and Germans in Bergen during the Hanseatic period (which according to her extends to the eighteenth century), she does not succeed in explaining how the grammar of the mother tongue of the Norwegian inhabitants could be affected by the long lasting presence of a relatively large Low German speaking minority. She simply assumes that the contacts between the two communities must have led to changes in the way the native inhabitants spoke to one another (Nesse 2002: 148-9).

Jahr (1998) suggests that "Siden voksne som lærer nye språk, kjennetegnes ved å være "imperfect adult learners" i forhold til hva barn er, vil vi vente å finne flere og tydeligere språkkontaktresultater i Bergen enn i Oslo og Tønsberg." (Since grown-ups who learn new languages are characteristically "imperfect adult learners" in comparison with children, we expect to find more and clearer indications of language contact in Bergen than in Oslo and Tøns-

berg). But since Norwegian was their mother tongue, the Norwegian inhabitants did not have to learn it as adults. The Hanseatic merchants, on the other hand, probably did not learn the language (Nesse 2002: 139).

The main point to be made in this context is that it is just the grammar of a language (syntax, morphology, phonology, intonation) that is most resistant to foreign influences. When words are borrowed from another language they are usually changed in such a way that they do not come in conflict with the phonology, and to a lesser degree, the morphology of the language. Clear examples of changes in the phonology of a Germanic language that are due to language contact, are to the best of my knowledge not to be found, in spite of the fact that the literature abounds with statements that such and such a change is the result of contacts with some neighbouring language. It has for instance often been claimed (e.g. by Riad 1998, Torp 1998) that the Swedish dialects in Finland, Estland and some parts of Norrbotten (Överkalix) lost their word accents as a result of intensive contacts with Fenno-Ugric languages (Finnish, Estonian and Saami) that don't have them. In her study of the word accents in the dialect of Orsa (Dalarna) Eva Olander (2001) showed however that the dialect speakers, when speaking standard Swedish realised the word accents in the same way as they did when speaking the dialect. This confirms what everybody who tries to learn or teach a foreign language knows, namely that it is extremely hard to get rid of the intonation patterns one is brought up with.

The burden of proof lies thus squarely with those who claim that a given change in the grammar of a language is the result of language contact. Simple statements of the type *prope hoc ergo propter hoc* ('near it, hence because of it') will not do. With this in mind I will now look at the arguments that have been adduced for ascribing the phenomena listed under (a) through (h) at the beginning of this paper to language contact. Item (i), uvular /r/,

belongs to a later period (see Torp 2001), and has probably little to do with the presence of Germans in the city of Bergen (but see Nesse 2002: 246, for a different point of view).

The word tones

It is not entirely clear when the word tones came into existence, but most of the linguists who have expressed their views on the origin of the Scandinavian word accents assume that it in some way or other is connected with the restructuring of the phonology of Proto-Norse in the so-called syncope-period. It is not clear either where in Scandinavia the origin of the word tones is to be found. But from the geographical distribution of the tones we may conclude that they spread rather slowly, and never reached the peripheral parts of the dialect continuum: Iceland, the Faroese Islands, Finland (with the exception of West Nyland), Estland, Överkalix, Northern Norway, South-East Denmark and the countryside surrounding Bergen. Given the means of transport and communication that were available at that time, we may assume that Bergen was central, and that the local dialect introduced the opposition between the two word tones at a relatively early date. This seems to be in line with the fact that accent 2 in Bergen has only one peak, which I think was the original situation before the Central (North) Scandinavian innovation of the two-peaked accent 2 (see Perridon *forthc.*). Since the surrounding rural dialects lack the tonal opposition altogether it seems likely that already at a rather early stage the contacts between Bergen and its hinterland were not very intensive, so that both areas could develop in their own distinct ways. If this was indeed the case, there is no reason to expect that changes in the dialects of Hordaland would spread to the dialect of Bergen, except in some exceptional cases.

Long consonants in originally short stems

In the Old Scandinavian dialects length was a distinctive feature of segments: these could be either long or short. All combinations of short and long segments were possible, see e.g. the following examples from Old Norse:

vc	<i>vit</i>	‘wit’, n.sg. n/a	vcv	<i>fela</i>	‘hide’, inf.
vc:	<i>vitt</i>	‘sorcery’, n.sg. n/a	vc:v	<i>fella</i>	‘fell’, inf.
v:c	<i>sót</i>	‘soot’, n.sg. n/a.	v:cv	<i>áta</i>	‘food’, f.sg.nom.
v:c:	<i>sótt</i>	‘illness’, m.sg.nom	v:c:v	<i>átta</i>	‘eight’

In the late Middle Ages (from the end of the 14th century onward) length became a property of the stressed syllable, in which either a long vowel was followed by a short consonant or a short vowel was followed by a long consonant. If we assume that the consonant(s) following a long vowel are in principle extrametrical, we could say that in the new system stress adds length (one mora) at the end of the syllable. The change from a quantity system based on segment length to one based on the syllable is traditionally called the ‘quantity shift’.

The short stems were lengthened in the following way: (a) the dialects of West Norway, Iceland, the Faroese Islands, South and West Sweden (sydsvenska and götamål) lengthen the vowel; (b) the dialects of Trøndelagen, Oslo, and Bergen lengthen the consonant; (c) the remaining dialects either lengthen the consonant (if it voiceless, and the vowel is closed or half-closed) or the vowel (in all other cases; for a more detailed description see Perridon 2002). Jahr (1998) suggests that the lengthening of the consonant is an instance of ‘levelling’, which in the words of Peter Trudgill (1994) “may just favour the most simple or most natural or most unmarked variant in the mixture. It may, on the other hand, favour that variant which is most demographically dominant.” According to Jahr the forms that are used in Bergen are “in a Norwegian context” less marked, and have a larger geographical distribution

than the corresponding West-Norwegian forms. I don't see any reason why we should restrict ourselves to a "Norwegian context"; in a Scandinavian context vowel lengthening is much more common than gemination, and when we broaden our view to include the other Germanic languages we find that vowel lengthening is the rule (at least in the case of bisyllabic words of the type *cvcv(c)*), and that hence gemination is a North Scandinavian exception, which according to Kortlandt (2000) is in need of an explanation.

It seems to me that the suggestion that the way in which the Bergen dialect implemented the quantity shift is in some way the result of language contact, does not explain anything. Instead it creates a multitude of new, probably unsolvable, problems, since it forces us to come up with a theory that makes geminates more natural than long vowels.

Common gender

In the following parts of the Scandinavian language area masculine and feminine gender have coalesced into a common gender: in large parts of Jutland (with the exception of West-Jutlandic which has a two-gender system of its own: *en*-gender for count nouns, and *et*-gender for mass nouns, and North Jutlandic which has retained the three gender system); in Copenhagen, and hence in Standard Danish; in Central Sweden (the area around Stockholm; Uppland) and hence in Standard Swedish; and in Bergen. Traditionally¹ this coalescence has been explained as the by-product of a phonological development in the dialects in question. After the quantity shift there were no longer long segments in unstressed or lightly stressed syllables, the opposition between long and short *n*'s in the definite forms of nouns was hence lost: *hestinn* 'horseDEF-SG-M' became *hesten*, with the same ending as *bokin* 'bookDEF-SG-F' → *boken*. For

¹ See for instance Pettersen 1996: 19-20, and the references given there.

the same reason the opposition between masculine and feminine gender was lost in adjectives of the *liten*-type, in the possessive pronouns *min*, *din* and *sin* and in the indefinite article *en*. In other dialects short final *-n* fell, often after having nasalized the preceding vowel [ɪ], [æ] or [e], which later turned into [a], e.g. *solin* – *sol̃* – *sola* ‘sun-DEF’, or *soli* in non-nasalizing dialects.

The feminine and masculine genders were initially still kept apart by means of the pronouns *hon* and *han*, as Nesse (2002: 220-225) clearly demonstrates in her investigation of the use of anaphoric pronouns by Mester Absalon in the second part of the 16th century. Later on *hon* was no longer used for reference to objects, but replaced by *han* and *den*. Nowadays *den* is obligatory in extraposition, when fronted and when stressed. This latter situation is strikingly similar to the one we find in Modern Dutch as spoken in the western part of the Netherlands. In this language there is no distinction between feminine and masculine gender when reference is made to objects. The pronoun *hij* ‘he’ and the demonstrative *die* ‘that’ compete in much the same way as their counterparts *han* and *den* do in Bergen: *die* is used when stressed, when fronted, in extraposition and in isolation, in which cases *hij* is impossible (for reference to objects). In unstressed position the normal forms are *hij* (subject preceding the finite verb), *ie* (subject in other positions) and *’m* (oblique form). To the best of my knowledge it has never been argued that this state of affairs is the result of language contact², and there is in my opinion no cogent reason to do so in the case of Bergen either, or for that matter, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Standard Swedish or Standard Danish, which all have replaced the old three gender system by a system that in the

² In Belgium there was an intensive language contact between French and Dutch, but just in this area the three gender system is still very much alive. In Holland, on the other hand, there was little or no contact between Dutch and French (or other languages), yet the dialects in this area lost the distinction between feminine and masculine gender for reference to non-persons.

singular makes a distinction between persons (including in the speech of some, their pets) and non-persons; the former are referred to by means of *b*-pronouns (*han* and *hon*), the latter by means of *d*-pronouns (*den* and *det*).

Weak preterites ending in *-et*

The ending *-et* of the weak verbs of the *kaste* type has a great symbolic value as it is one of the forms which aroused, and probably still arouses, the strongest feelings in the language struggle between Bokmål and Nynorsk, the two written standards of Norwegian. It is a form that many associate with conservative Bokmål, and with upper class speech, especially in Oslo. The corresponding ending in Nynorsk and most dialects is *-a*, e.g.: *kasta*, which in its turn is considered to be vulgar by those who favor the *-et* ending of traditional Bokmål. Although both endings are allowed in Bokmål, the traditional ending seems to have the upperhand in the written language, esp. in the popular press. For the adherents of Nynorsk and Progressive Bokmål it has always been somewhat troublesome that the ending *-et* is used in Bergen not only by the members of the upper and middle classes, but by all strata of the population. Since the 'genuinely Norwegian' ending was/is thought to be *-a* (or *-a* in some dialects, but in any case a form without a dental) the *-et* in Bergen had to be of foreign extraction, like its upper class sister in Oslo. According to Jahr (1998) *-et* was the ending of the Danish past participle which was used by Norwegian speakers of Danish as the form of the preterite as well (Danish has an ending *-ede*: *kastede*). In this way the formal identity of preterite and past participle that is characteristic of the dialects: *kasta*, was retained. In much the same way, Jahr writes, the ending *-et* of the past participle of Low German was borrowed in Bergen:

	dialects	Low German	Danish	Bergen/Bokmål
Preterite	-a	-(ē)de	-ede	-et
Past Participle	-a	-et	-et	-et

The idea that the upper classes retained a structural trait of their original dialect when shifting to a new dialect, viz. Standard Danish, is not implausible. But since the inhabitants of Bergen did not shift to another dialect or language the same kind of explanation is less likely in the case of the dialect of Bergen. In my opinion it cannot be ruled out that the Old Norse endings *-aði* and *-at* could develop locally into *-et*. From the careful analysis of the origin of the ending given by Nesse (2002: 201-213) and the data presented there I conclude that this was indeed what happened in Bergen.

The present tense of strong verbs

In the proto-language (Proto-Germanic) the second and third person singular of strong verbs had endings that contained an *i* which caused, or should have caused, *i*-umlaut of the stem vowel of the verb in the various daughter languages.³ In West Norse the umlauted vowel spread to the first person sg., which made the verbal stem in the singular different from the one in the plural, not only in the preterite but also in the present tense, e.g.: 3sg- 3pl of the verb *bjóða* 'to offer'

	<i>present</i>	<i>preterite</i>
3 <i>sing.</i>	býðr	bauð
3 <i>plur.</i>	bjóða	buðu

Later, the forms of the 2/3 person singular spread to the other persons and numbers, which led to the disappearance of number

³ Boutkan (1995: 82; 308f) reconstructs **-esi* and **-eti* as the original endings at some stage between PIE and Pgerm, which became **-is* and **-ip* in PGerm.

and person as grammatical categories with verbs⁴. In most dialects the strong verbs lost the *-r* of the ending, which yielded forms like: *sov* < **soviR* and *fer* < **fariR*.

In East Norse (Swedish and Danish) the various umlauts were not allowed to create the kind of allomorphy that is characteristic of the West Norse dialects. The forms of the strong verbs that in principle were susceptible to *i*-umlaut, were either never affected, or were at a later stage replaced by analogical forms. The South-East Norwegian dialects⁵, as well as the city dialects of Stavanger, Bergen and Ålesund in West Norway, follow in this respect the East Norse dialects. In these dialects we find forms like *sover*, *kommer* and *fa(re)r*.

Why do we find these differences between these two groups of dialects? Werner (1984) and Braunmüller (1985) suggest that only small communities with little contact with the outside world can allow sound laws to have such devastating effects on the integrity of the morpheme. In more open societies ease of pronunciation, which tends to lead to morphologically opaque forms, has to give way to simplicity of the morphological system, which makes it easier for outsiders to master the language. Although there are major languages that have morphological systems of an astonishing complexity⁶ the idea that one – *ceteris paribus* - should expect more transparency in the morphology of city dialects and standard languages than in rural dialects, seems to me basically sound. It is

⁴ The tendency to use the 2/3s sg. form also with plural subjects seems to be rather old. Examples of sg. instead of pl verb forms with plural subjects are found in *Jyske Lov* (Flensborg ms.) *alle the thar thenna bok ser* 'all those who see this book' (Skautrup 1944: 273; Karker 1993: 79) and *Skånske Lov* (Bjerrum 1966: 56-57).

⁵ See map 2 in Venås (1967)

⁶ The verbal morphology of French, one of the world's major languages, for instance, is in some cases extremely opaque, the forms of e.g. the present of the verb *avoir* have little in common: *ai* [e], *as* [ɑ], *a* [a], *avons* [avõ], *avez* [ave], *ont* [õ].

possible that the presence of a large group of foreigners in Bergen strengthened the already present tendency to keep the morphological system as transparent as possible. But as the identical developments in Stavanger and Ålesund show, it is not necessary, or even likely, that language contact played a major role in this process.

The form of the predicative adjective

Uninflected adjectives in predicative position are characteristic of West Germanic, e.g. Dutch *mooie bloemen* 'beautiful flowers' but: *die bloemen zijn mooi* 'those flowers are beautiful'. In North Germanic, on the other hand, adjectives are usually inflected for gender and number in this position, e.g. Swedish: *vackra blommor* 'beautiful flowers' – *de där blommorna är vackra* 'those flowers are beautiful'. In Bergen, as well as in large parts of Northern Sweden, the predicative adjective is only inflected for gender, in the plural the form of the common gender sg. is used, e.g.: *di e så liten* 'they are so small', *vi e ferdig* 'we are ready' (Pettersen 1996: 144-6). If an adjective is predicated of a neuter noun in the singular it ends in *-t*, e.g.: *de e billikt* 'it is cheap'. According to Jahr (1998) the system of adjective inflection is simpler in Bergen than in those Norwegian dialects that have plural marking on predicative adjectives. And since simplification of the grammar is one of the possible outcomes of language contact, it is likely that the change in the agreement system is due to intensive contact with Low German. I doubt, however, that a system in which predicative adjectives only agree in one particular instance, viz. with a noun (phrase) that is neuter sg., can be called simpler in any meaningful sense of this word than a system in which they agree in all instances. Moreover, Jahr's hypothesis that the lack of a plural marker in predicative adjectives might be due to language contact in the case of Bergen does not offer us any explanation of the same lack of such a marker in the dialects of Northern Sweden, unless of course one wants to claim

that it is the result of language contact, too, in this case with Saami.

Definite proper names

In colloquial Danish pronouns are used with proper names in much the same way as demonstratives in West Germanic languages like English and Dutch. Danish *Kender du ham Ole / hende Karin* translates for instance into Dutch as: *Ken je die Ole/Karin?* with a distal demonstrative *die* and into English as: *Do you know this Ole/Karin?* with the proximal demonstrative *this*. Bergen is like colloquial Danish in this case, e.g. *jeg skal treffe hon Kari* 'I will meet (this) Kari' (Nesse 2002: 234-5). In most Norwegian and North Swedish dialects, however, constructions like *han Per* or *n Per* 'Per', *hon Lisa* or *a Lisa* 'Lisa' have a somewhat different, 'bleached' meaning. Here the pronoun functions no longer as a demonstrative, but rather as a definite article. It has hence become (almost) obligatory when the person referred to is being talked about, but usually not when s/he is being addressed. The dialect of Bergen goes one step further: it treats proper names like ordinary common nouns and provides them with an ending *-en*, which expresses definiteness: *Lisbethen* 'Lisbeth-DEF', *Olofen* 'Olof-DEF'. In German, too, proper names can be made definite by means of a definite article: *die Birgit*, *der Johann*. It is therefore not impossible that this use may have exerted some influence upon the development of the proper noun forms in Bergen. Nesse (2002: 240) suggests that the formal marking of definiteness in proper nouns was not so much a direct borrowing from Low German, but rather the result of a process of simplification, which to some extent was brought about by language contact: the language got rid of the grammatical distinction between proper and common nouns, and simplified in this way its grammar. The actual origin of the definite forms of proper nouns may, according to Nesse, be the use of common nouns denoting an occupation as proper names, a local blacksmith for instance, who is called Peder, may be referred to as *Peder Smed* or simply as *smeden*

'blacksmith-DEF', which then may be reanalysed as the definite form of the proper name *Smed*. These explanations are ingenuous, but I don't think they are correct. The use of definite articles with proper names is quite common in languages that have articles⁷ (see note 7), and there is no reason to suppose that in all these cases language contact played a decisive role.

Genitival constructions with resumptive pronouns: the 'Garpe-genitive'

Possessive constructions with a resumptive possessive pronoun, like *Frankrike sin posisjon* 'France's position' are called *garpegenitiver* in Norwegian, 'kraut-genitives', a name that clearly shows that they are thought to be of foreign, German, origin. It is generally assumed that on Norwegian soil the construction was first used in Bergen, and that it spread from there to other parts of the country, first to the north and the west, and later to the east. The earliest attestations of the construction stem from the 16th century (see Nesse 2002: 170ff).

Possessive constructions with a resumptive pronoun are found in most Germanic languages from the late Middle Ages onward. They are attested in Middle Dutch (cf. Stoett 1977: 49-50), in

⁷ There are many European languages that either require or permit the definite article with unmodified proper names. In Modern Greek, for instance, the article is obligatory: *o Kostas* 'Kostas'– *i Anna* 'Anna'; in Portuguese, on the other hand, the article is usually absent in the standard language, but is used frequently in colloquial speech (Cunha 1976: 157). As a general rule proper names in Standard Italian or Spanish reject the article, but in Italian colloquial speech it is often used before names that refer to women: *ho visto la Teresa* 'I saw Teresa' (Regula & Jernej 1965: 103). In dialects (e.g. genovese) the article seems to be as obligatory as in Modern Greek. In Spanish the article is occasionally used in informal speech with unmodified proper names, in which case it denotes contempt: *Llamó el Pérez* 'That Perez (guy) called' (Solé & Solé 1977: 277). In substandard speech the use of the article is less limited, e.g. *Ayer visité a la María* 'Yesterday I visited Maria' (cf. Baauw 2001).

Middle High German (Schröbler 1982: 308), Middle Low German (Lübben 1882: 108-9), Old Frisian (Bor 1971: 27) and Middle English. They are still in frequent use in Modern Dutch, Afrikaans and German, but have become obsolete in English. In Scandinavia the *garpegenitive* is found not only in Norway, but also in West Jutland. It is absent in the other Scandinavian languages.

It is not clear whether the construction had one common origin or was (re)invented in most or all of the languages that had/have it. It may be argued that the preconditions were identical in at least those languages that were on the verge of loosing case as a grammatical category. There are only a restricted number of syntactic possibilities for the expression of a possessive relationship between two noun phrases: there are only two possible orders, the possessor phrase (np1) either precedes or follows the possession phrase (np2). The relation between them is either left unexpressed, as in Old French where we find constructions like *le filz le rei* 'the son of the king', or is expressed by means of a special element. In the Germanic languages a linking element, a preposition, has to be present if np2 precedes np1. But both constructions with and without a linking element are possible when np1 precedes np2. In compounds and semi-compounds like *the Bush plans* the two noun phrases of the possessive construction are juxtaposed without any intervening elements. In other cases a linking vowel, consonant or syllable is attached to np1, e.g. in Dutch *mensenwerk* 'work of man'. The possessor phrase can be turned into an adjective by means of a suffix, e.g. *the Sudanese government*. Finally, a possessive pronoun or a clitic (*s* as in English, Danish and Swedish) can be used as a link between the two noun phrases. Only in this latter case the possessor phrase functions as a determiner which makes the whole noun phrase definite. Preposed genitives have the same function, compare e.g. *Münchens Museen*, which is definite, but lacks the article, with *die Museen Münchens*, which is made definite by the article, not

by the postposed genitive phrase⁸. This shows that there are, in fact, only two possible replacements of the preposed genitive constructions, viz. the *s*-genitive and the resumptive pronoun construction (which henceforth will be called RP-genitives, for ease of reference). It is therefore hardly remarkable that we find exactly those two constructions in the Germanic languages that have lost their morphological case system.

Although it is not necessary to assume a common origin for the various RP-genitives it is not unlikely that the presence of a RP-genitive in a given language may have tilted the scales in favour of a similar construction in a related neighbouring language. I suppose that this was what happened in Bergen. In other parts of Scandinavia, with the exception of West Jutland, the *s*-genitive came out the winner, but in Bergen Low German gave the RP-genitive a decisive advantage over its competitor.

In the Norwegian RP-genitive the pronoun is a reflexive *sin*, in the other languages, which all lack reflexive possessive pronouns, it is an ordinary possessive pronoun. According to most linguists that have dealt with the *sin*-genitive (e.g. Knudsen 1967; Torp 1973, 1992, 1999; Nesse 1998, 2002) the use of a reflexive pronoun in this construction is in conflict with the rules of Norwegian grammar, and has hence to be explained in some way or other. They point at the formal similarities between the Low German pronoun *sîn* 'his' and the North Germanic reflexive possessive pronoun *sin*. In my opinion it is hardly likely that the inhabitants of Bergen that had frequent contact with the Low German speaking merchants in their town would not have noticed that the Germans did not use a reflexive pronoun, but two different possessive pronouns in the construction in question, viz. *sîn* (masc. and n. sg)

⁸ The differences between the preposed morphological genitive and the *s*- and RP-genitives are rather small from a structural point of view. The decisive step in the development towards the two periphrastic genitives was taken when the genitive was preposed and reinterpreted as a determiner.

and *er* (pl. and fem.sg.). Since they were able to understand the meaning of these two pronouns in other contexts, there is no reason to believe that they were not able to do so in this particular instance. The reason why Norwegian uses a reflexive pronoun in this case must be that such a use is in agreement with the rules of the grammar of the language. This can be argued for in the following way. In constructions with ditransitive verbs the relation between direct and indirect object is often one of possession: the indirect object, most often a person, possesses the direct object. In this case Norwegian may use a reflexive possessive pronoun in the direct object phrase if pronoun and indirect object are coreferential, e.g.:

- (1) a. *de tre mennene; gav ham; sitt; livs sjokk*
 the three men gave him the shock of his life
 b. *gi barna; en fremtid i sitt; eget land*
 give the children a future in their own country

These sentences contain according to Vinje (1987: 221) a ‘hidden clause’ in which the indirect object is the subject: *han fikk sitt livs sjokk* ‘he got the shock of his life.’ Even though I do not agree with this analysis, the idea that the relation between indirect and direct object is similar to the one between subject and direct object in a sentence with a finite verb seems sound enough. Constructions like (1) were common⁹ in Old Norse, e.g.:

- (2) Egill; þakkaði konungi; orð sín;
 EgilNOM thanked kingDAT wordPL-ACC hisACC-PL
 ‘Egil thanked the king for his words’

In Old Scandinavian and Modern Icelandic noun phrases in the dative may in some cases have subject properties which are nor-

⁹ I found no cases of a non-reflexive pronoun in the construction ‘X þakkar/þakkaði Y for Y’s Z’ in the *Njáls saga*, *Laxdælasaga*, *Egils saga*, *Eyrbyggjasaga*, *Fóstbræðrasaga* or the *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*. ‘Y’s’ is always rendered by a reflexive pronoun in this construction.

mally reserved for nominative subjects; in such cases the reflexive pronoun is coreferential with the dative, e.g. in Old Norse (*Egils saga* ch 9):

- (3) *Honom; þótti dóttir sín; vel gipt*
 himDAT seemed3SG daughterNOM.SG.F herREFL well married
 'he thought he got his daughter married off well'

If we also take into account that in German the possessor phrase is often in the dative in RP-constructions, e.g. *meinem Vater sein Hut* 'my father's hat,' then there is every reason to assume that the relation between the two noun phrases in a RP-genitive is identical to the one between indirect (*ham*) and direct object (*sitt lívs sjokk*) in ditransitive constructions (*de tre mennene, gav ham, sitt, lívs sjokk*) and between dative 'subject' and nominative 'object' in constructions like (3) in Old Norse.¹⁰

There is therefore no reason to doubt that the use of reflexive possessive pronouns in RP-genitives is in complete agreement with the rules that govern the use of reflexives in Norwegian, or for that matter, in any language that has reflexive pronouns. This view is corroborated by the fact that the other Mainland Scandinavian languages also use a reflexive pronoun in a construction which is rather similar to the RP-genitive, viz. the *var sín*-construction. Swedish *var sín* (Danish and Bokmål: *hver sín*) has a distributive meaning 'each a', e.g.: *hon gav dem, var sín, julklapp* 'she gave each of them a Christmas present'.¹¹ In Danish the reflexive pronoun *sín* can only be used for reference to singular objects, for the plural the non-

¹⁰ In the by now rather extensive literature on so-called 'quirky subjects' the dative (*honom* in 3) is in fact often analysed as the subject of the sentence, and the nominative *dóttir sín* as the direct object.

¹¹ In Old Norse distributive *hvárr sinn* is also found in constructions with a dative 'subject', e.g.:

þótti sinn veg hvárum
 seemedPRET3SG his wayACC.SG.M eachDAT.SG
 'each had its own opinion, they disagreed'

reflexive *deres* 'their' is used. Interestingly, both *hver sin* and *hver deres* are used, although in both cases a plural referent is presupposed, e.g.: *giv bornene hver deres værelse* 'give the children each their room → give each child a room (of its own)'; *farverne har hver sin bølgelængde* 'the colours have each its own wave length → each colour has its own wavelength.' *Hver sin* has become a fixed phrase¹², but the competing phrase *hver deres* shows that the rules for the use of reflexive pronouns are observed: only possessive pronouns that can be used reflexively are permitted in this construction.

Conclusion

In cases of intensive language contact it is sometimes possible that the grammar of one or both of the languages is changed (cf. Thomason 1997), but I don't think that this happened in the contacts between (Mainland) Scandinavian and Low German during the Hanse-period, perhaps with the exception of some South Jutlandic dialects spoken in areas that now belong to Germany, such as the now extinct dialect of Fjölde (German: Viöl). Lots of words were borrowed from Low German, and even derivational affixes, such as *be-*, *för-/fjör-* (<MLG: *ver-*), *-heit/-het/-hed* and *-else*, but the grammar was not affected, at least not in any serious way. In Bergen, where the contacts between Low German and Scandinavian were perhaps more intensive than in other cities, the local dialect developed in ways different from the rural dialects that surround it. It seemed obvious to many that there was a direct connection between this peculiar development and the presence of a second, closely related language in the city. In the preceding paragraphs I have looked into some of the changes the local dialect

¹² Also Swedish *varsin* has become a fixed phrase. The pronoun is no longer felt to be a determiner that makes the np definite, the phrase *varsin* functions now as a kind of distributive quantifier. Consequently, a following adjective may have a non-definite form, e.g.: *hon gav dem var sin stor brödskena* 'she gave each of them a big slice of bread.'

went through. Only in the case of the so-called 'garpegenitiv' I think it is plausible to assume that Low German exerted some minor influence on the way the dialect changed its grammar, as it helped the dialect in its choice for the RP-genitive as a replacement of the preposed morphological genitive. In all other cases the hypothesis that language contact with Low German was (co)-responsible for a number of changes in the grammar of the dialect of Bergen does not explain anything, but only complicates the description of the history of the dialect.

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