The Ca(u)se for a Clause

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Old English allows internal arguments to be expressed by a clause and exhibits clausal arguments functioning as objects of monotransitive verbs and ditransitive verbs alike. As far as ditransitive verbs are concerned, it will be shown that the clausal argument in a clausal ditransitive construction reveals characteristics typical of nominal objects and, as a result, clausal ditransitives need to be viewed in the same way as ordinary ditransitives, to the effect that proposing one common classification of the two construction types captures the inherent properties of the clausal arguments. Diachronic data concerning the demise of certain types of passive construction corroborate this approach to clausal ditransitives.

This understanding of the nature of the clause in a clausal ditransitive construction has important implications for all other types of constructions in which the clause functions as an argument. Consequently, we will look at how the analysis fares with respect to monotransitive verbs with a clausal object, ditransitive verbs with a prepositional object next to a clausal one and for verbs accompanied by a clause which thematically corresponds to the subject. Another construction type which needs to be examined in this respect are clauses with Experiencer verbs where the status of the arguments is in itself a matter of the theoretical persuasion adopted by a researcher.

My investigation, based on the *Dictionary of Old English Corpus in Electronic Form*, reveals that in all construction types mentioned above the clause needs to be viewed as an option to a nominal argument and that the option should not be seen as a lexical property of particular verbs but is generally available wherever the meaning of the verb is compatible with a clausal argument. This conclusion is supported by the diachronic developments of the relevant constructions.

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