Semantic bleaching of 'nu' in Old Saxon

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Abstract

In many Present-Day Germanic languages, reflexes of Proto-Germanic **nu* have developed pragmatic and grammatical uses: in such uses, the earlier, lexical meaning of the word ("now", "presently") has been weakened or lost while new meanings have appeared.

Pragmatic (especially connective) uses of *nu* have been identified in several ancient Germanic languages, but, in such corpora, it can be difficult to distinguish between a genuine discourse marker and mere pragmatic inferences based on the lexical meaning of a given word. Such is certainly the case for Old Saxon, where *nu* seems to be used as a discourse marker in some cases, but where it is hard to determine whether such uses ever truly supplant *nu*'s temporal meaning. This paper systematically examines *nu*'s patterns of co-occurrence to determine whether *nu* is showing any sign of having undergone semantic bleaching.

Examination of the data shows no evidence of semantic bleaching. There is a very strong connection between *nu* and markers referring to the moment of utterance or the situation of utterance more generally. Conversely, there are no cases of co-occurrence with markers whose meaning is strictly incompatible with *nu*'s lexical meaning and few instances of co-occurrence with markers expressing distance (temporal or otherwise) from the situation of utterance. Some patterns hint at the possibility of pragmatic uses of *nu* having already started to conventionalize to a limited extent, but such uses seem to have co-existed with *nu*'s temporal meaning without ever supplanting it.

Keywords

Old Saxon; grammaticalization; pragmaticalization; semantic bleaching; *nu*

1 Introduction[1]

Semantic bleaching has long been recognized as an important feature of grammaticalization (Gabelentz 1891: 241; Meillet 1912; Givón 1979; Heine et al. 1991: 40; Lehmann 1995: 127) and of pragmaticalization (Sankoff et al. 1997).[2] Originally conceived in purely negative terms, as a process of loss and degradation resulting in semantically empty words (e.g. Meillet 1912: 140), semantic bleaching and the semantics of function words have since received more nuanced descriptions. Pragmatic and grammatical words are not truly semantically empty. Rather, they express meanings of a different order (von Fintel 1995). As a consequence, semantic bleaching is better understood as part of a broader phenomenon of semantic redistribution: the earlier lexical meaning may indeed be weakened or lost, but new (related) grammatical and/or pragmatic meanings arise through processes of metaphors and metonymy (Marchello-Nizia 2006: 35–36).

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[1] My thanks to the anonymous reviewers who have helped me improve this paper.

[2] Whether pragmaticalization (the transformation of a linguistic item into a discourse marker or modal particle, see further footnote 4) should be understood as a phenomenon distinct from grammaticalization or as a subtype of it is open to debate (see Aijmer 1997, Brinton 2010 and Diewald 2011 for different takes on the issue). Whether or not pragmaticalization is understood as a distinct process, however, it seems to behave much like grammaticalization as regards semantic change.

The semantic evolution of Proto-Germanic *nu* reflects that process. *nu* has gone through grammaticalization and/or pragmaticalization in most Present-Day Germanic languages,[3] where it can now be used as a subordinator, a discourse marker and/or a modal particle.[4] While many of the new meanings show some continuity with the original temporal meaning (Auer & Maschler 2016a), there are also obvious signs of semantic bleaching, such as when the marker is associated with past verbal forms.[5]

Such instances constitute particularly blatant evidence of change, but they are usually not necessary to ascertain grammaticalization and/or pragmaticalization in present-day languages, because other types of evidence are readily available. In the case of discourse markers, stress and syntactic position can provide strong evidence, so that it is usually possible to tell adverbial and pragmatic uses apart, even in utterances where the semantic criterion is not very helpful (i.e. in utterances where a temporal interpretation cannot be ruled out on semantic grounds). Additionally, native speakers can be questioned to clarify the meaning of certain utterances.

A few studies have looked into pragmatic uses of *nu* in old Germanic languages, particularly Old English, and have found evidence of their existence relatively early on, at least as regards text-structuring uses.[6] Those studies also agree on the fact that there is continuity between *nu*'s lexical meaning and its pragmatic uses in the earlier corpora, which means that it might occasionally be difficult to pinpoint the limit between strictly lexical meanings and pragmatic meanings.

By comparison with present-day sources, ancient Germanic sources present us with specific difficulties. The sources we have access to are necessarily written, often reflect a narrow variety of genres and can be difficult to locate precisely in terms of date or dialect. Additionally, we obviously have no access to native speakers. These circumstances have several implications.

First, the data can only give a partial and slightly distorted view of the languages considered. Certainly, not much can be gleaned concerning spoken usage or informal interaction. That fact is always true when one studies an ancient language, no matter which aspect of the language is under consideration, and is to a large extent inescapable: awareness of the problem and reluctance to make definitive claims are the only options open to us (unless one wishes to give up altogether on studying early corpora).

Second, our understanding of the meaning of extant utterances is not as accurate as with present-day languages and we cannot ask native speakers for help. As a consequence, it seems unlikely that

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[3] For a useful overview of the topic in many European languages (including Dutch, German, Swedish and Icelandic), see the collection of essays edited by Auer & Maschler (2016b). Other useful references include Schiffrin 1987, Hasselgård 2006 (English) and Hilmisdóttir 2001 (Icelandic).

[4] It would be much beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the terminological and theoretical issues presented by discourse markers and modal particles and the connections between the two. To put it briefly, the term "discourse marker" is used here in the sense intended by Schiffrin (1987) and Brinton (1990, 2010) among others, as a type of marker with both text-connecting and (inter)subjective functions, which do not contribute to the syntactic structure or semantic content of the proposition. Modal particles can have similar functions, but they have distinctive formal features, in particular as regards their position in the Middle Field of the clause (Degand *et al.* 2013: 3–8).

[5] See for instance this passage, quoted by Schiffrin (1987: 237), "So Russia was split down the middle. Now, the reason why Catholicism was able to creep into Poland".

[6] See Fries 1993: 540; Aijmer 2002: 57–96; Defour 2007; Defour 2008; Lenker 2010: 61–6; Louviot 2016: 158–170. Fries and Lenker and primarily interested in connective functions and Aijmer holds that (inter)subjective uses develop later on in the English corpus. Conversely, Defour and Louviot find evidence of (inter)subjective uses as early as Old English. See also Betten 1992 (Middle High German); Saari & Lehti-Eklund 2016 (Old Swedish).

we should be capable of reliably making very fine distinctions such as the difference between pragmatic inferences based on context and the intrinsic meaning of a given word.

Third, some types of evidence are less readily available. In particular, we have limited information on stress and virtually none on intonation. Syntactic evidence is less problematic, but, in verse texts, metrical constraints might make the data harder to interpret. This means that differentiating adverbial and pragmatic uses of the same marker on purely formal grounds is likely to be much more difficult than in present-day corpora.

In that context, I believe semantic bleaching can constitute a potentially useful criterion. Admittedly, lack of semantic bleaching does not rule out grammaticalization and/or pragmaticalization. However, its presence would certainly prove that *nu* has undergone a fundamental change. Furthermore, semantic bleaching can be detected through relatively objective means: when *nu* co-occurs with markers whose meaning is incompatible with the present tense, it can safely be assumed that *nu* no longer carries that meaning. Conversely, if *nu* very systematically co-occurs with markers highly compatible with reference to the present tense, a lack of semantic bleaching seems likely (see further below, Section 3).

2 Corpus

At first sight, Old Saxon may not seem like an obvious object of investigation in that the extant texts constitute a corpus that is both particularly small and unbalanced. It comprises some 60,000 words, very unevenly distributed among a handful of texts. The two mid-ninth-century poems *Heliand* and *Genesis* (c. 46,500 and 2,600 words respectively) and an eleventh-century book of tax records from Freckenhorst (c. 6,000 words) represent the lion's share, whereas the rest is made up of glosses and textual fragments (mostly ninth- and tenth-century religious prose), the longest of which only amount to a few hundred words.

An exhaustive survey of the TITUS database of Old Saxon has yielded 162 instances of *nu*: 0 in tax records (including the *Freckenhorst Register*), 127 in *Heliand*, 28 in *Genesis*, 2 in the *Saxon confession*, 1 each in the *Cologne baptismal vow*, the *Sermon for all saints* of Pseudo-Beda and a *Creed* fragment, and 2 in glosses.

The relevant corpus is thus disproportionately represented by only two texts, which happen to be two ninth-century alliterative poems. The very narrow nature of the corpus is genuinely problematic in that it cannot be considered representative of much: certainly not of Old Saxon spoken usage,[7] but probably not even of ninth-century Old Saxon verse production either. It is a sample, valuable because it is all we have from that particular language, but it cannot pretend to represent much beyond itself. Additionally, the size of that sample means significant statistical analysis cannot be achieved, but such is often the case for ancient corpora. On the plus side, the size of the corpus means it can be examined exhaustively, which makes it a good place to test hypotheses that could then be brought to bear on larger corpora.

The fact that the corpus is almost exclusively made of verse, however, is not a drawback, on the contrary. Some linguists are reluctant to study poetry from the mistaken belief that it is inherently further removed than prose from spoken usage. However, such is not obviously the case for early medieval texts. Early Germanic prose, which comprises laws, tax records and translations from Latin texts but virtually no personal letters (at least none that were not written with a view to

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[7] Like much of the extant Old Saxon prose, those poems exhibit a mix of dialectal forms which may very well have had no spoken equivalent (Doane 1991: 43–44).

posterity) cannot be expected to reflect language use in spontaneous conversation. If anything, it is particularly vulnerable to the influence of Latin textual models. By contrast, Early Germanic poems are freer from Latin influence,[8] and steeped in orality, which means they can be expected to show typically Old Saxon uses of discourse markers, even if those uses are likely quite different from what would have occurred in spontaneous spoken interaction (Brinton 1990: 58–59; Cichosz 2010: 45–46).

Furthermore, *Heliand* and *Genesis* are particularly rich in dialogue, which makes them fertile ground for certain types of discourse markers, especially those with a strong intersubjective dimension.

Additionally, *Heliand* and *Genesis* can provide us with some information on stress patterns. This is significant because, together with semantic change, phonetic reduction (including loss of stress) has been identified as a typical feature of grammaticalization (Lehmann 1995: 164) and pragmaticalization (Hirschberg and Litman 1993) and can therefore be expected to co-occur with it. Discourse markers can carry stress, but this is most likely to occur when the discourse markers constitute a separate tone unit (i.e. followed by a pause) at the beginning of an utterance. In other contexts, short discourse markers such as "now" are typically unstressed, whereas sentential uses of the same word are typically stressed (Schiffrin 1987: 232; Hirschberg & Litman 1993; Defour 2007: 275).

Old Saxon verse, like Old English, is governed by Kuhn's Law (Suzuki 2004: 281–284), which means that short Old Saxon adverbs such as *nu, thar* 'there' or *hêr* 'here' are typically unstressed and located together with other unstressed words in the first "dip" (unstressed section) of a clause (Kuhn 1933: 8; Momma 1997: 56). However, it is also possible for such adverbs to be stressed, in which case they can be located elsewhere in the clause, which is a marked choice, i.e. that position is likely to be used not merely for lexical uses of *nu*, but for lexical uses where some contrast or emphasis is intended. As for pragmatic uses, the most distinctive pattern (independent tone unit at the beginning of an utterance) is not available in Old Saxon poetry, as it would imply a stressed occurrence in initial position (perhaps even constituting its own half-line, which is probably the closest equivalent to a tone unit), which is impossible. Discourse markers in Old Saxon poetry should therefore be unstressed. As a consequence, unstressed instances of *nu* may either correspond to pragmatic uses or to non-emphatic lexical uses.

For practical reasons, the texts used are those found on the TITUS database (see the editions on which it is based in the bibliography). However, in the case of *Heliand*, Sievers' 1878 edition of the two main manuscripts (manuscript C or London, British Library, Cotton Caligula A VII, and manuscript M or Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 25) has also been consulted, especially whenever the presence of *nu* in one of the manuscripts was in doubt.

3 Method and outline

The most objective way of assessing the semantic content of a word is to observe "the company it keeps" (Firth 1957). While individual readers may differ in their interpretation of the meaning of

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[8] It should be noted that "freer" does not mean "entirely free". Both *Heliand* and *Genesis* are ultimately based on Latin texts. *Genesis* is only very loosely based on the Bible itself, but parallels have been noted with various Latin poems and in particular with Avitus of Vienna's *Poematum de Mosaicae Historiae Gestis Libri Quinque* (Stévanovitch 1992: 167–177). As for *Heliand*, it is ultimately based on Tatian's *Diatessaron*. However, neither *Genesis* nor *Heliand* is a close translation of a Latin text and both display conventional Germanic poetic diction.

a word in a given text, what other linguistic forms that word may or may not co-occur with can be ascertained through objective means, and is thus less open to bias.

For nouns, it can be particularly useful to look at the adjectives that may modify them or at the verbs that can take them as a subject or an object. For Present-Day English, such investigations can be carried out by looking at a fairly narrow window around the noun. The term "collocation" typically implies that type of co-occurrence within a relatively small range. For a temporal adverb like *nu*, the situation is slightly different. It may occasionally be part of a slightly larger adverbial phrase and therefore contribute to patterns of collocation of the type just described. However, most often, *nu* constitutes an adverbial phrase on its own, and that adverbial phrase operates at the level of the whole clause, locating the action expressed by the predicate. It is therefore interesting to determine not just what words *nu* can collocate with on a small scale, but what words it can co-occur with, at clause level.

In some cases, it can seem that *nu* operates at the level of the whole sentence, for instance when it appears in a main clause which has one or several complement clauses. However, the concept of sentence is not very reliable for Old Saxon, since, in the absence of explicit punctuation in the manuscripts, sentence boundaries often depend on editorial choices. There are also instances where *nu* seems semantically connected to elements present in neighbouring clauses, but where the exact nature of the connection is hard to pinpoint and therefore eminently subjective. It is therefore preferable to rely for quantitative analysis on the unit of the clause, which can be defined objectively as a group of words organized around one finite verb. Potentially relevant forms occurring outside the clause boundaries will also be mentioned whenever appropriate, but they are not taken into account for quantitative analysis.

This paper tries to answer three main questions:

(i) Bearing in mind that lexical *nu* expresses temporal identity with the situation of utterance, does *nu* frequently co-occur with words denoting temporality or with deictics expressing identity with or proximity to the situation of utterance?

(ii) Can *nu* co-occur with markers incompatible with the notion of present (in particular past verbal forms and, to a lesser extent, deictics expressing distance from the situation of utterance)?

(iii) Does *nu* regularly co-occur with certain words which have nothing to do with temporality, suggesting a redistribution of meaning is already underway?

To answer these questions, this paper uses both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Qualitative analysis takes into consideration all instances of *nu* in Old Saxon and their contexts (not limited to the clause where *nu* appears). It is used to understand not just what words can co-occur with *nu*, but in what type of context and to what effect. It is particularly crucial here, because the size of the corpus means quantitative analysis cannot be considered entirely reliable on its own.

Quantitative analysis can only be used on a more selective corpus, to avoid undue bias. Out of the 162 instances of *nu* in Old Saxon, an overwhelming majority (155) is located in *Heliand* and *Genesis*, which constitute a fairly homogeneous corpus in terms of style and dialect. The rest are scattered in rather more heterogeneous sources, so it seems their inclusion would introduce more difficulties than benefits. Clauses containing *nu* in *Heliand* and *Genesis* amount to 1,343 words in total, with 598 different forms. That corpus could be compared to *Heliand* and *Genesis* as a whole, which total 48,856 words (with 7,785 different forms), but such a comparison would not actually be very conclusive. In practice, *nu* only occurs in Direct Speech (154 instances in *Heliand* and *Genesis*) or in passages presenting a similar type of interaction (1 narratorial address to the audience

in *Heliand* and 4 of the 5 instances in prose fragments). As a consequence, clauses containing *nu* are bound to present a rather different profile from clauses found in narrative, and thus from clauses in the two complete poems. To avoid that problem, I have chosen to compare clauses containing *nu*, not just with the poems as a whole, but also with Direct Speech within these poems (20,546 words, with 4,472 different forms). This should allow us to make the difference between trends characteristic of interactive speech and trends specific to clauses containing *nu*.

Frequency lists have been compiled for all three data sets, which have made it possible to compare the frequencies of various linguistic forms. A recapitulative table (Table 2) showing the number of occurrences and corresponding frequencies of the markers discussed in the paper has been included as an appendix. Linguistic forms appear in it in the order they are discussed.

Evaluating the significance of discrepancies in frequency between two of the data sets can be done through the use of mutual information, which compares the frequency of co-occurrence of the two markers with the probability that they should co-occur given their respective frequencies in the corpus (Church & Hanks 1990).

It must be noted that this tool is notoriously unreliable for small numbers of occurrences, which tend to be overestimated: a form which occurs only once in the corpus, but happens to occur in the same clause as *nu* (e.g. *biddiu* 'I beg') gets the highest possible score. That being said, the mutual information score largely confirms what can already be seen from the raw frequencies themselves, with a score of 4 or above for markers which appear noticeably more often in clauses containing *nu* and a score below 3 for markers showing no such preference. The mutual information score has been included in the last column of the recapitulative table (Table 2).

4 Analysis

4.1 Co-occurrence with words highly compatible with the notion of present

Not only is *nu* almost systematically used with the present tense, but it frequently co-occurs with words highly compatible with the notion of present. It must be noted, however, that, given the limited size of the whole corpus, few patterns are so common as to appear in high numbers. Most patterns only represent a handful of occurrences. As such, they are not very significant when taken individually. It is the fact that the patterns observed seem to point in the same direction that gives them significance.

4.1.1 Words with a temporal meaning

The most striking association is that of *nu* and *forð*, which has a clear temporal meaning: "from now on". The form it takes is not rigid: the phrase *nu forð* occurs (*Heliand* 1362, 1390, 5863), but the two adverbs can also be separated by a few words (*Heliand* 2062, 2149) or occur in adjacent clauses (*Heliand* 1144, *Genesis* 649b–650) and there are closely related variants (*forðuuardes nu*, *Heliand* 976; *forðuuardas nu*, *Genesis* 664b; *nu furður*, *Heliand* 1437). Interestingly, in all cases the word *forð* is stressed and in the variants, both *nu* and *furð-/forð-* are stressed, which further confirms that in such instances a full lexical meaning is retained.

Nu also occurs consecutively with *noh* (*noh nu* 'still now', *Heliand* 328, *Genesis* 659b), in which case *noh* is stressed. The two adverbs can also be found in adjacent clauses, in which case neither adverb is stressed (*Heliand* 5092–5093, 5604–5606, 5934–5935), but there is no extant example of the two occurring non-consecutively within the same clause.

It can also occur consecutively with the adverb *lango* 'long' (*Heliand* 523) or with the adjective *lang* used in the phrase *nis nu lang te...* 'it won't be long now until...' (*Heliand* 2254 and 4087; see also *Heliand* 3988, *Ni that nu furn ni uuas* 'it hasn't been long now since...'), which has a close equivalent in the past, with the adverb *thô* (*thô ni uuas lang te...* 'it was not long then until...' *Heliand* 2781). *Nu* also occurs non-consecutively with the comparative form of the adverb *lango*, *leng* (*Heliand* 4665b, 5100) and with the phrase *lango huîla* 'a long while' (*Genesis* 659b–660). Even when the two words are not consecutive, the semantic connection between them seem strong (1).

> (1) **Nu** [*ni*] *uuilliu ik iu* **leng** *helen* (*Heliand* 4665b)[9]
> **Now** I do not want to hide from you **any longer**

There are also two instances where *lango* occurs in an adjacent clause, but still shows a semantic connection with *nu* (2).

> (2)   *Ik uuilliu sie selƀo* **nu**
> *lôsien mid mînu lîƀu,*   *thea hêr* **lango** *bidun* (*Heliand* 3538b–3539)[10]
> I want to set them free personally **now** with my life, those who have **long** waited here

Other temporal markers found with *nu* in the same clause include *sniumo/sliumo* 'soon' (*Heliand* 1014, 4666 and 4805), *ginâhid* 'close' (*Heliand* 1144 and 4620), *at/an hendi/handun* 'at hand' (*Heliand* 2989, 4567 and 4619), *te aldre* 'for life' (*Heliand* 5013b), *tîdi* 'times' as the subject of the clause (*Heliand* 4620a and 4458) and *oƀar tuâ naht* 'over two nights' (*Heliand* 4458). One may also mention *ofstlîco* (*Heliand* 5935), whose literal meaning is "quickly", but which can also be interpreted as "at once", "immediately".

It is worth noting that this last example is the only one where the temporal meaning of *nu* might seem to be reinforced by the addition of a near synonym (and even then, only provided the phrase *îli thu nu ofstlîco* is interpreted as "make haste now immediately" and not as "make haste now quickly"). If phrases like this one were more common, it could suggest that the temporal meaning of *nu* has weakened (hence the need for reinforcement). However, it is not the case and the patterns observed suggest the opposite: that *nu* retains its full temporal meaning and can thus be used effectively as a point of reference to locate periods or moments in time.

4.1.2 Words with a spatial meaning

Even more common than patterns involving temporal markers are those involving markers of spatial proximity: especially the adverb *hêr/hier* 'here' as well as, to a lesser extent, *hinan* 'from here, hence' and *herod* 'to here, hither', but also many lexical phrases denoting a similar meaning. This is not entirely surprising: "here" and "now" are two essential coordinates of the situation of utterance and they are naturally complementary when they both retain their lexical meanings.

Whereas instances of *thar* in close proximity to *nu* are few (see Section 4.2.2. below), there are eighteen instances of *hêr/hier*, *hinan* or *herod* in the same clause as *nu* (not necessarily consecutively) and many more occurring in neighbouring clauses.[11] Taken together, *hêr*, *hinan* and

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[9] All translations are my own. *Nu* is systematically translated as "now" so as not to unduly orient interpretation.
[10] See also *Heliand* 2955–2956, as well as *Heliand* 484b–487a, where the two words are even further apart, but clearly connected through their temporal meaning.
[11] *Hêr* in the same clause: *Heliand* 523, 2439 (stressed), 3945 (stressed), 4575 (stressed), 4666, 5102, 5323 (stressed), 5614, 5756, 5822 (stressed), 5851 (stressed), *Genesis* 570, 659b (stressed); *hinan* in the same clause: *Heliand* 482, 5863 (stressed), *Genesis* 558b–559a (stressed); *herod* in the same clause: *Heliand* 4805 (stressed), 5824 (stressed). *Hêr* in the immediate context, but not in the same clause: *Heliand* 725–727, 919–920, 1425–1427 (stressed), 1517–1519

herod are almost twice as frequent in clauses containing *nu* than in Direct Speech overall (and twice as frequent in Direct Speech than in *Heliand* and *Genesis* as a whole). There is no reason to suppose that in such cases *hêr/hier* does not carry its full lexical meaning. On several occasions *hêr/hier* is supplemented by a lexical phrase specifying the location – (3) and (4) – and/or it carries metrical stress (4):

> (3)   *That gihôrid [**hêr nu**] manno filu,*
> *rinko **an thesumu rakude** (Heliand 5102b–5103a)*[12]
> Many people have **now** heard that **here**, many young men **in this temple**

> (4)   *Thuo sprak im eft selƀo angegin*
> *heƀanes uualdand: "**Hier** scalt thu noh **nu**," quađ he,*
> *"libbian **an thesun [lande]** lango huîla. (Genesis 658b–660a)*[13]
> Then the ruler of Heaven himself spoke to him again in answer: "**Here** shall you still **now**," he said, "live **in this land** for a long while."

Additionally, several instances of *nu* are found in the same clause as a lexical phrase expressing location. In such cases, the phrase's main noun is not always determined by a demonstrative, but when it is that demonstrative is more often *these, thius, thit* (17 instances) than *the, thiu, that* (7 instances). Most of the phrases used – *an thesum landa* 'in this land', *an thesaro uueroldi* 'in this world' and *fan thesumu liohte* 'from this light' meaning 'from this earthly life' – are fairly generic and can be considered poetic equivalents of the plainer *hêr/hier*.[14] Phrases referring to a crowd of witnesses (e.g. *far theson liudion* 'in front of this people') play a similar role.[15] Indeed, either type can be used together with the adverb *hêr/hier*, as if to reinforce its meaning (e.g. *Heliand* 524 and 5323). Occasionally, a more specific place is mentioned, such as a tomb or a sanctuary (*Heliand* 522, 5103 and 5852).

Phrases using distal demonstratives tend to be specific to some extent, referring to Heaven or to Bethlehem for instance, rather than simply to "somewhere else". The seven instances are relatively evenly distributed between clauses locating an event occurring elsewhere (*Heliand* 401, 4085 and 5757) and clauses where the mention of a distant place is actually strongly connected to the present situation in some way. Three occurrences are concerned with the addressee's imminent departure to another place (*Heliand* 655, 3990, 4420) and another one (*Heliand* 419) is a call to honour God in heaven, i.e. to do something here, in the situation of utterance, for the glory of God who is somewhere else.

(stressed), 2823–2824, 3369–3370, 3436–3439, 3538–3539, 3854 (stressed), 4087–4088, 4411, 4664–4665 (stressed), 4861–4864, *Genesis* 656b.

[12] *Hêr* and *nu* are both unstressed in this sentence. The square brackets are there because the two words are present in manuscript M, but not in manuscript C.

[13] In this passage, *hier* is stressed and provides the alliteration for the line.

[14] *an thesara middilgard* 'on this earth', *Heliand* 524; *an thesaro uueroldi* 'in this world', *Heliand* 943; *aftar thesumu landskepie* 'into this land', *Heliand* 1874; *fan thesumu liohte* 'from this light', *Heliand* 4034; *an thesun/m lande/a* 'in this land', *Genesis* 660 and 665). Similar phrases also occur in adjacent clauses (for instance subordinate or coordinate clauses), see *Heliand* 484, 724–727, 881, 942–943, 1425–1427, 2062–2063, 2439–2441, 4563–4564, *Genesis* 569. See also *Heliand* 771, 1362 and 1390, where similar phrases occur in the same clause as *nu*, but as a direct object rather than as a locator.

[15] *for thesumu folke* 'in front of this group of people', *Heliand* 1454; *far thesoro menigi* 'in front of this crowd', *Heliand* 2057; *undar thesaru menigi* 'among this crowd', *Heliand* 4411; *for thesumu uuerode* 'in front of this crowd', *Heliand* 4568; *for thesaru thiodu* 'in front of this people', *Heliand* 4569; *for thesun Iudeon* 'in front of these Jewish people', *Heliand* 5089; *for theson liudion* 'in front of these people', *Heliand* 5323.

An examination of demonstratives more widely (both pronouns and determiners, whatever their function) also reveal some interesting trends. Generally speaking, proximal demonstratives (also known as compound demonstratives as they etymologically correspond to an intensified form of the other demonstrative form, and thus to a marked choice) are much rarer than distal demonstratives: 474 vs. 2147 occurrences in *Genesis* and *Heliand* combined, even when the frequent but ambiguous forms *the* (also a relative pronoun) and *that* (also a conjunction) as well as the less frequent *thana* (also an adverb) are removed (4015 if they are retained). This trend holds true even in Direct Speech and in clauses containing *nu*, but it is significantly attenuated: in the two poems overall, the ratio between forms of *the, thiu, that* (*the, that* and *thana* excluded) and forms of *these, thius, thit* is 4.5, but only 1.8 in direct speech, and 1.2 in clauses containing *nu*.

The difference between Direct Speech and clauses containing *nu* is not due to a higher frequency of *these, thius, thit* in clauses containing *nu* (0.019 against 0.018 in direct speech, so virtually identical), but to a lower frequency of *the, thiu, that* (ambiguous forms excluded): from 0.032 in direct speech (against 0.044 overall) to only 0.024 in clauses containing *nu*. The difference between clauses containing *nu* and direct speech is thus almost as marked (-25 %) as the difference between the whole poems and direct speech (-27,3 %). Examples of how *the, thea, that* is used in clauses containing *nu* are further examined below (Section 4.2.2).

4.1.3 Other markers with a strong connection to the situation of utterance

Nu also frequently co-occurs with markers that have nothing to do with time or space, but show a strong relation with the situation of utterance and are therefore highly compatible with words referring to the moment of utterance, i.e. with the present time.

Interjections imply a strong connection with the immediate situation, but *nu* co-occurs with interjections in the same clause on only two occasions (*huat*,[16] *Heliand* 3100; *uuela*, *Genesis* 556a). It must be noted, however, that interjections themselves are not very frequent in the corpus (only 25 occurrences of *huat/huuat* as a possible interjection in *Heliand* as a whole and 2 in *Genesis*; only 1 occurrence of *uuela* in *Heliand* and 1 in *Genesis*). Consequently, the interjections *huat* and *uuela* taken together are about as frequent in clauses containing *nu* as in Direct Speech more widely.

First and second person pronouns offer a more interesting picture as they are widespread enough for quantitative analysis to provide stronger insights.[17] Those pronouns are naturally quite frequent in Direct Speech overall, but they are especially so in clauses containing *nu*.

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[16] Old Saxon *huat* and Old English *hwæt* in non-interrogative sentences have been interpreted as interjections since the time of Jacob Grimm, but Walkden (2013 and 2014) has recently called into question that analysis, suggesting they might be better interpreted as exclamative pronouns. This, in itself, would not make the co-occurrence of *nu* and non-interrogative *huat* less significant, since (direct) exclamations, especially when they are used to open a speech, also imply a strong connection to the present situation. Aside from *Heliand* 3100, one may also note *Heliand* 2550–2251, 4086–4087 and 5751–5753, where *nu* occurs in a neighbouring clause.

[17] Third persons are very often referred to through noun phrases rather than pronouns, so there would not be much point in including third person pronouns in the comparison.

Table 1: Frequency of 1st and 2nd person pronouns in Direct Speech overall and in Clauses with *Nu*

	Direct Speech (20,546 words)		Clauses with *nu* (1,343 words)		Ratio: frequency in clauses with *nu* / in Direct Speech
	number of tokens	frequency	number of tokens	frequency	
1st person singular	479 (nominative: 278)	0.0233 (nominative: 0.0135)	66 (nominative: 42)	0.0491 (nominative: 0.0313)	2.11 (nominative: 2.32)
1st person dual and plural	129	0.0060	12	0.0089	1.48
2nd person singular	446 (nominative: 281)	0.0217 (nominative: 0.0137)	43 (nominative: 29)	0.0320 (nominative: 0.0216)	1.47 (nominative: 1.58)
2nd person dual and plural	421	0.0205	33	0.0245	1.2
Total	1475	0.0715	154	0.1145	1.6

The tendency is stronger in the singular than in the dual or plural, with the first person than with the second and with the nominative than with other forms. The pronominal form showing the strongest attraction to *nu* is thus *ik* 'I'. In other words, while it is common for the syntactic subject of a clause to refer to the speaker in Direct Speech, it is even more common when *nu* occurs in the same clause. This is consistent with the view expressed about Present-Day English "now" that it is "ego-centered" (Schiffrin 1987: 245; see also Aijmer 2002).

With second person pronouns, the pattern is less clear-cut, but it is still noticeable, especially when one takes into account the fact that *nu* also co-occurs relatively frequently with another way of referring to the addressee – terms of address.[18] This can be seen from the list of most frequent words in clauses containing *nu*: the words *frô* 'lord' and *uualdand* 'ruler' are among the most frequent lexical words in that list, with 6 occurrences each, and all those occurrences correspond to uses as terms of address. The word *frô* is especially interesting as it is only ever used as a term of address and it is clearly overrepresented in clauses containing *nu*, with a frequency of 0.0045 (against 0.0012 in Direct Speech). *Uualdand*, which can be used in other contexts, is also overrepresented in clauses containing *nu* (0.0045 vs. 0.0026), but only to a lesser extent.

However, that fact does not necessarily undermine the idea of a privileged connection with the speaker, on the contrary. Close reading shows that in many cases where the subject refers to the addressee, the utterance actually conveys the speaker's intent regarding the addressee rather than an acknowledgment of the addressee's concerns or initiatives. Orders (5) or quasi-orders ([6], which is part prediction, part order) are particularly common, and also, to a smaller extent, accusations and reproach (7).

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[18] I have noted 21 instances of terms of address occurring in the same clause as *nu* in the corpus, with up to three used together: *Heliand* 480, 971–972, 1361, 1389, 2098–2099, 2550–2551, 2824, 2990–2991, 3100–3101, 3807–3808, 4030–4033, 4793–4794, 4861, 5017–5018, 5935–5936; *Genesis* 756–757a (one may also note Genesis 762b–763, 789b–790, 814–815a, where *nu* occurs in the main clause and a term of address occurs in the complement clause). Terms of address may be used in various contexts, but they are especially common (and numerous) when the addressee is Christ/God (the same is true for Old English verse narratives, where this trend echoes the very frequent use of terms of address in prayers).

(5) *ac îli **thu nu** ofstlîco endi them erlon cûði,*
bruoðron mînon, that ik ûser bêðero fader,
[alauualdan] iuuuan endi mînan,
suoðfastan god suokean uuilliu." (*Heliand* 5935–5938)[19]
but make haste **now** quickly and make known to the men, to my brothers, that I want to seek the father of us two, your and my all-powerful lord, the true god."

(6)   ***Nu** sculun **gi** im that mên lahan,*
*uuerean mid uuordun,   al sô ic giu **nu** geuuîsean mag,*
seggean sôðlîco,   gesîðos mîne,
*uuârun uuordun,   that **gi** thesoro uueroldes **nu** [forð]*
[sculun salt uuesan] (*Heliand* 1359b–1363a)[20]
Now you shall rebuke them for their sins, hinder them with words, as I can **now** teach you, tell you truthfully, my companions, with true words, that **you** shall **now** be the salt of this world

(7) *"huat, **thu nu** uuiðeruuard bist," quað he,   "uuilleon mînes,*
thegno bezto! (*Heliand* 3100–3101a)[21]
"So, **now you** are opposing my will," he said, "best of thanes!

A last association worth noting here is that between *nu* and *sus/thus* 'thus, in this way'.[22] Like *the* and *these*, *sus/thus* is a deictic. It is only used eight times in *Heliand* and *Genesis*, all of them in Direct Speech. They are all used to refer to the present situation (typically the present state of the speaker or addressee), except one instance which is used to refer to what the speaker is going to say next. Two of those eight instances are found with *nu* in the same clause, further confirming the strong connection of *nu* to the situation of utterance.[23]

(8) ***nu** uuit **sus** gifrôdod sint* (*Heliand* 150b)[24]
now we are **so** old / old **like this**

The derived form *sulic* 'thusly, such' is more frequent, with 99 instances found in the two poems, but its connection to the situation of utterance is not as systematic. In some instances, *sulic* does point to the situation of utterance, but there are many counter-examples (e.g. *Heliand* 590 and 592, where it refers to an event foretold in the past). The frequency of *sulic* in the corpus is consistent with that observation: it is more frequent in Direct Speech (0.297 or 61/20,546) than overall (0.203 or 99/48,856) and more frequent in clauses with *nu* (0.521 or 7/1,343) than in Direct Speech, but the discrepancy is not quite so pronounced as it is with *sus/thus*. In at least three of the seven instances where *sulic* is used in the same clause as *nu*, it does point very clearly to the situation at hand, as in the following example:

(9) *thoh **thu nu** an **sulicoro** pînu sîs.* (*Heliand* 5606b)[25]

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[19] Other orders include *Heliand* 482, 704, 3661, 5578, 5756, 5824, 5863 and 5935.

[20] For similar instances (with the use of the modal *skulan*), see *Heliand* 1888 and 4419 as well as Cain's condemnation in *Genesis* (664–666a).

[21] For other instances of accusations, see the incipit of *Genesis* and *Genesis* 636b, *Heliand* 3945, 4574, 4910 and 5158.

[22] The two forms *sus* and *thus* correspond to two dialectal variants of the same morpheme (Doane 1991: 434).

[23] The frequency of *sus/thus* is thus 0.016 in *Genesis* and *Heliand* overall (8/48,856), 0.039 in Direct Speech (8/20546) and 0.149 in clauses including *nu* (2/1343).

[24] See also *Heliand* 481.

[25] *Heliand* 2991 and 4032 are very similar. *Heliand* 3253 is hard to interpret whereas in *Heliand* 5020 and 5116 and *Genesis* 770b–771, *sulic* is used to refer to words pronounced shortly before by the speaker or by others. While *sô* 'so', whose meaning as an adverb is close to *sulic*, does not seem to be used particularly frequently with *nu* (admittedly, the data are distorted by *sô*'s frequent use as a conjunction), some of the instances where they do co-occur are very similar to *Heliand* 5606b in drawing attention to a striking element of the present situation (e.g. *Heliand* 4283 or 4723).

though you are **now** in **such** pains.

In others, such as when Peter refers to his recent denials of Christ (*Heliand* 5020), the connection is admittedly more tenuous.

The evidence presented here strongly suggests that *nu* retains its temporal meaning in the Old Saxon corpus. There is certainly no discernible sign that it does not. At the same time, some patterns, especially the connection with first person markers and more specifically with the expression of the speaker's intent, tend to suggest that *nu* may already have become part of conventionalized patterns which have less to do with temporality (see further Section 4.3).

4.2 Co-occurrence with forms incompatible with the notion of present

4.2.1 Verbal past forms

As mentioned above, Old Saxon *nu* is overwhelmingly used with verbs in the present tense. Out of the 160 relevant occurrences,[26] only 14 are used in conjunction with past forms and in most cases the past form can be interpreted in a way that is not incompatible with *nu*'s temporal meaning.

3 instances – two in (10) and one in (11) – are in the subjunctive mood and convey a counterfactual present meaning rather than a past one:

> (10)   "*thar thu mi, hêrro mîn,*" *quað siu,*
> "*neriendero bezt,   nâhor uuâris,*
> *hêleand the gôdo,   than ni **thorfti** ik [**nu**][27] sulic harm tholon,*
> *bittra breostkara,   than ni **uuâri nu** mîn brôðer dôd* (*Heliand* 4030b–4033)
> "If you, my lord," she said, "had been nearer to me, best of protectors, good saviour, then I **would** not **need now** to suffer such grief, bitter heartbreak, then my brother **would** not **be** dead **now**

> (11) "***uuâri** it [**nu**] thîn uuillio,*" *quâðun sie,   "uualdand frô mîn,*
> *[that sie ûs hêr an speres ordun   spildien môstin] (...)*." (*Heliand* 4861–4862)[28]
> "if it **were now** your will," they said, "my lord and ruler, that they should kill us here on the point of their spears

In one instance (12), the verb form conveys an optative meaning, and *nu* has a clear temporal (and contrastive) value, which could be translated as "from then on":

> (12) *te thiu / also thar er inna begangan vuarth thiu / menigi thero diuuilo. that thar **nu** inna **began/gan** uuertha thiu gehugd allero godes / heligono.* (*Sermon for all saints* 8–10)
> for this purpose also that where in that place previously the multitude of the devils was worshipped, there in that place **now** the remembrance of all of God's saints **should be worshipped.**

In all other instances, the past form is not used to refer to a past event disconnected from the present situation, but, on the contrary, to refer to an event with direct repercussions in the situation of utterance. In fact, it is often better translated as a present perfect in Present-Day English ([13] and the second verb in [14], possibly the third as well) and on one occasion (the second verb in [14]) the clause introduced by *nu* appears to be in correlation with another clause introduced by *nu* where the verb is in the present tense (the first verb in [14]), which confirms the strong connection with the present situation.

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[26] The two glosses are irrelevant as they do not contain full sentences.

[27] The bracketed *nu* is found in manuscript C, but not in M.

[28] *Nu* is bracketed on Titus (based on Taeger's edition), but Sievers (1878) shows the word in both manuscripts C and M.

(13) *Gabriel bium ic hêtan,   the gio for goda standu,*
anduuard for them alouualdon,   ne sî that he me an is [ârundi] [huarod]
*sendean uuillea.   **Nu hiet** he me an thesan sîð faran,*
hiet that ic thi [thoh] gicûðdi (*Heliand* 120–123a)
Gabriel I am called, who always stand before God, present before the ruler of all, unless he wants to send me hither on his errand. **Now** he **has ordered** me to go on this journey, ordered me to let you know

(14)   ***Nu uuêt*** *ik that ik scal an thînum heti libbian,*
*forð an [thînum] fîundscepi,   nu ik mi thesa firina **gideda**,*
so mi mina sundia nu   suîðaron thunkiat,
misdâd mera,   than thîn mildi hugi,
so ik thes nu uuirðig ni bium,   uualdand this guodo,
that thu mi alâtas   lêðas thingas,
 *tianono atuemeas.   **Nu** ik ni **uuelda** [mîna triuuua] haldan,*
[hugi] uuid them thinum [hluttrom] muoda,   nu uuêt ik, that ik hier ni mag êniga huîla libbian,
huand mi [antuuirikit,]   [sô huuat] sô mi an thisun uuega findit,
aslehit mi bi thesun sundeun. (*Genesis* 649b–658a)
Now I **know** that I shall live in your hatred, henceforth in your enmity, **now** I **have done** this crime. So it seems to me now that my sins (are) greater, a bigger misdeed than your generous mind, so I am not worthy of this now, good ruler, that you absolve me of a hateful thing, that you free me of evil sins. **Now** I **have** not **wanted** [since I **did** not **want**?] to keep my good faith, my heart, with your pure mind: now I know that I may not live here any longer, therefore whosoever finds me in this direction will kill me, he will slay me on account of this sin.

In some (but not all) cases, the finite verb is located at the end of the clause. Since Old Saxon main clauses typically have their finite verb in first or second position (see e.g. Eyþórsson 1995; Erickson 1997; Dewey 2006), while the final position is more typical of subordinate clauses, *nu* might be better interpreted as a conjunction that could be translated by "since" or "now that". This suggests a shift from a purely temporal to a more causal meaning, but the fact remains that none of the instances examined so far are strictly incompatible with *nu*'s temporal meaning.

4.2.2 Other markers denoting distance from the situation of utterance

Careful examination of the contexts in which *nu* appears yields very few markers whose meaning might seem in contradiction with *nu*'s temporal meaning. In particular, the adverb *thô* 'then', corresponding to Old English *þa*, whose own role as a discourse marker in Old Saxon is well-known (Wilbur 1988; Betten 1992; see also, for Old English, Enkvist & Wårvik 1987; Enkvist 1994; Wårvik 1994; Wårvik 2011), seems to be strictly incompatible with *nu*. *Thô* is clearly the dominant boundary marker in narratives set in the past, whereas *nu* is only found in interactive discourse connected to the situation of utterance. The only instances when *thô* occurs in dialogue is when a character narrates past events (e.g. *Heliand* 576–582) and, aside from the passage in the *Sermon for all saints* already quoted above (12), the only instance when *nu* occurs in a narrative is when the poet addresses the audience (*Heliand* 3661a).

The adverb *than* (Old English *þonne*), which can also be translated as "then" in Present-Day English, presents us with a perhaps more interesting case. It is worth noting that "now then" occurs as a collocation with discourse functions in English from a very early date (Aijmer 2002: 65; Bolinger 1989: 293) and that it also exists in German (*nun denn*). In the extant Old Saxon corpus, *nu than* never occurs as a collocation, but the two markers do occur in close proximity on several occasions, as in (15) and (16); see also (10), quoted above.

(15)   *Ôc is an them êo gescriƀan*
uuârun uuordun,   sô gi uuiton alle,
than man is nâhiston   [niudlîco scal]
minnian an is môde (...)   endi scal is fîund hatan,
*(...)   **Than** seggeo ic iu [te uuâron **nu**],*[29]
fullîcur for thesumu folke,   that gi iuuua fîund sculun
minneon an iuuuomu môde (*Heliand* 1446–1455)
It is also written in the law in true words, as you all know, that one should love their neighbour very much in their heart (...) and should hate their enemy (...). **Then** I say to you **now** truly, fully in front of this people, that you should love your enemy in your heart

(16)   *sô ist thesoro liudeo thau.*
***Than** haƀas thu **nu** uunderlîco   uuerdskepi thînan*
gemarcod far thesoro menigi (*Heliand* 2055b–2057)
such is the custom of this people. **Then** you have **now** organised your entertainment for this crowd in an astounding manner

Together, *than* and *nu* contribute to setting up a new idea or argument against the backdrop of the preceding words. Such instances are interesting because they may very well represent the very first step in the advent of "now then" as a discourse marker in its own right in Low-German. However, they are not evidence of a semantic change of *nu*. While, in many occurrences, Old Saxon *than* has a temporal meaning and clearly expresses a connection to the past (see e.g. *Heliand* 306), it may also be used to introduce a logical consequence, without any suggestion of a past meaning, and it seems that it is in the latter sense that *than* is used in those instances where it occurs in close proximity to *nu*.

While the distal deictic *thar* 'there' is relatively frequent in the overall corpus,[30] there are very few instances of it occurring in close proximity to *nu*, especially in the same clause. One of them is the extract from the *Sermon for all saints* already discussed (12), another appears as part of an existential structure (*Heliand* 3281, *ên is thar noh nu* 'there is still one thing now'), and yet another appears close to a past verbal form whose meaning is actually perfective and therefore fully compatible with *nu*'s temporal value (*Heliand* 4084, *he thar nu bifolhen uuas fiuuuar naht endi dagos*, 'he has been buried there now for four days and night'). Here is the fourth and last one:

(17)   ***nu** lâtu ic iu **thar** hôrien tô,*
thar ic it iu te uuârun hîr   uuordun seggeo (*Heliand* 2129b–2130)
Now I want you to be attentive **to this** as I tell you here in true words

The second *thar* is used as a conjunction with near-temporal meaning (Behaghel 1897: 324), with a simultaneous rather than past meaning, and is therefore not relevant here. As for the first one, it is a true deictic, but not a typical distal one. Rather, it seems to be an R-pronoun (van Riemsdijk 1978), i.e. a pronoun allowing preposition stranding in Germanic languages (so-called because such pronouns usually contain the letter <r> in some way), which is used cataphorically, hence the translation "to this". The possibility of using *thar* and *hêr* with a stranded preposition in Old Saxon has long been noted (see Wende 1915). If *thar* is indeed an R-pronoun used cataphorically here,

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[29] Sievers (1878) retains this reading for both manuscripts, but shows manuscript M actually has *nu te uuâron*.
[30] It is in the top ten for most frequent words in *Heliand* and *Genesis* combined, with a frequency of 0.0127 (620 occurrences in a corpus of 48,856 words). By comparison, it still appears in 12th position if one restricts the corpus to Direct Speech only (frequency of 0.0088) and beyond the 50th position if one restricts the corpus to clauses containing *nu* (frequency of 0.0022).

then this is actually another example of *nu* being associated with a marker strongly connected to the moment of utterance (more precisely, oriented towards the upcoming speech).

As noted above (Section 4.1.2), clauses containing *nu* also seem to show some aversion to the use of the demonstrative *the, thiu, that* (roughly equivalent to Present-Day English *that*, whether determiner or pronoun, and *the*), even by comparison with Direct Speech. Furthermore, close reading shows that *the, thiu, that* rarely occurs in key positions such as a subject noun phrase or a temporal or spatial adverbial phrase located just after *nu* (such as in Present-Day English "now those people..." or "now in those days...").[31] The following are rather typical examples:

> (18)   *Nis **nu** lang te **thiu**,*
> *that thia strômos sculun   stilrun uuerðan* (*Heliand* 2254b–2255)
> It won't be long **now** until **that**, until the waves shall become quieter

> (19) *sô ik **thes nu** uuirdig ni bium,   uualdand thie guodo,*
> *that thu mi alâtas   lêdas thingas,*
> *tianono atuemeas.* (*Genesis* 653–655a)
> So **now** I am not worthy of **that**, good lord, that you that you absolve me of a hateful thing, that you free me of evil sins.

> (20) *that thu an **themo** fleska, the thu **nu** an bist te duomesdaga gistandan scalt* (*Cologne Baptismal Vow* 16–17; *idem* Creed Fragment 1)
> that you in **that** flesh, in which you are **now**, shall stand on doomsday

In those examples, *nu* retains a strong temporal meaning, and is used as a point of reference to locate a future time (18), assess the consequences of past actions (19) or point to a person who is present right now, but who is distinct from the speaker (20).

It is also worth noting that, in two cases – (18) and (19)[32] – *the, thiu, that* is actually used cataphorically, to anticipate on a subordinate clause introduced by *that*. Formally, the choice of the distal form makes sense because it makes the connection with the conjunction more obvious, but semantically no distance is expressed, on the contrary: in such cases, *the, thiu, that*, much like *nu*, points to the moment of utterance and to what comes next.

In conclusion, it seems that not only is there no privileged connection between *nu* and any distal marker (temporal or otherwise), but it seems that markers that can be regarded as incompatible with the notion of present (such as past verbal forms used to refer to events set in the past) are also incompatible with the presence of *nu*. That fact, more than anything else, implies that whatever semantic evolution *nu* may already have undergone in Old Saxon, its temporal meaning is not bleached in the texts we have access to.

4.3 Co-occurrence with words unrelated to temporality

4.3.1 Words for speech and speaking

At first glance, words denoting speech or the act of speaking seem particularly present in close proximity to *nu*, but it is hard to establish how significant the phenomenon truly is. For instance,

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[31] There are some exceptions to that general trend, however, for instance *nu the cuning* (*Heliand* 774), where *nu* is followed by a subject noun phrase referring to a person who is indeed far away.
[32] Similar examples include *Heliand* 4087 (similar to *Heliand* 2254), *Heliand* 5017 and *Genesis* 816 (similar to *Genesis* 653), as well as *Genesis* 565 (with a different phrasing).

the word *uuord* 'word' appears fairly often in clauses containing *nu*,[33] but it is actually less frequent in such clauses than in the general corpus, at least not when all inflected forms are considered. On the other hand, an expression such as *uuarun uuordun* 'with true words',[34] or simply *uuordun* 'with words', which typically occurs when the speaker is referring to their own utterance, echoing the style of the Gospels, is slightly more frequent in clauses containing *nu*.

As for *verba dicendi*, they are numerous and they have many inflected forms, which makes quantitative analysis difficult. Additionally, as with *uuord*, different forms can correspond to different types of use and thus to different distribution patterns. Thus, the most frequent *verbum dicendi* overall, *queðan* 'say', is primarily used to introduce Direct Speech and is accordingly considerably more frequent in narrative than in Direct Speech itself and very rare in clauses containing *nu* (only one occurrence, in the second person singular, present tense). Conversely, verbs that can be used by a speaker to refer to their own utterance (such as *seggean* 'say', or *biddean* and *frâgon* 'ask') occur slightly more frequently in clauses with *nu* than in Direct Speech or in the poems overall, and the trend is more strongly marked if one focuses on infinitive forms (which can occur in conjunction with a modal in particular) and on present-tense forms, especially first-person present-tense. Quotations (21) and (22) are fairly typical of the type of instances where *nu* co-occurs with *verba dicendi*.

> (21)   *Muot ik thi **frâgon nu**,*
> *sô thu mi thiu gramara ni sis,   god heƀanrîki?* (*Genesis* 789b–790)
> May I **ask** you **now** in such a way that you will not be angrier against me, God ruler of heaven?
>
> (22) *Bithiu scal ic iu **nu** te **uuârun   uuordun gibeodan*** (*Heliand* 1517)[35]
> Therefore I shall **now command** you **with true words**

In such passages, it seems that the speaker is using *nu* when they are asserting their control of the discussion or asking for permission to take the conversation in a new (potentially face-threatening) direction. Admittedly, such references to the ongoing conversation are very compatible with the temporal meaning of *nu*, so it is hard to determine whether *nu* is already taking on a new meaning here, or if it is merely starting to become conventionalized in some contexts that will eventually lead to the appearance of that new meaning.

4.3.2 Verbs of motion

One of the most frequent lexical forms found in clauses containing *nu* is the infinitive *faran* 'to go' (6 occurrences, to which one can add 2 occurrences of the inflected infinitive *faranne*), which can seem surprising as that form is not that frequent overall: only 21 in the two poems as a whole (vs. 52 for *seggean, -ian*, which only had 3 occurrences in clauses with *nu*). Finite forms of the verb, on the other hand, occur very rarely in clauses containing *nu*, with only 1 occurrence of the plural present form *farad*. There are also 3 occurrences of the semantically complementary form *cuman* 'to come' in clauses containing *nu*, which is again rather more than might be expected from the

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[33] 8 occurrences in total (i.e. if all inflected forms are considered) for a frequency of 0.0060, which makes it one of the most frequent lexical words in that corpus, with a frequency comparable to the pronominal forms *he* (7 occurrences) and *it* (9 occurrences).

[34] The phrase has two occurrences in clauses with *nu* (*Heliand* 1362 and 1517; frequency: 0.0015) vs. 12 in Direct Speech (*Heliand* 1362, 1517 and 406, 1390, 1447, 1503, 1933, 3104, 3851, 3939, 4042 and 4083; frequency: 0.0006).

[35] For similar passages, see *Heliand* 285b–286, 480–481, 1359–1362, 1417, 1436b–1437a, 1453, 1532b, 2129–2130, 2439b–2440a, 2990b, 3278b–3279, 3807b, 4563b–4564a, 4574b–4575, 4665b, 5020b, 5089b–5092, 5323b–5324, *Genesis* 762b, 814–816.

overall frequency of that form, though to a lesser extent. Instances where *nu* and *faran(ne)* co-occur show the beginning of a new journey, which is also a new episode in the text, see (23) and (24).

(23)   *[**Nu**] sculun gi an thana sîð **faran**,*
an that ârundi (*Heliand* 1888b–1889)[36]
Now you shall **go** on that path, on that mission

(24)   *"ik an thina hendi [befilhu,]" quathie,*
*"mînon gêst an godes uuillion; hie ist **nu** garo te thiu,*
*fûs te **faranne**."* (*Heliand* 5654b–5656a)
"I entrust my spirit," he said, "to your hands, to God's will; it is **now** ready for that, eager to **go**."

Sentences very similar to (23), occasionally also making use of the phrase *an thana sîð* 'on that path, on that journey', can also be found in the narrative, where *nu* is typically replaced by *thô* (*Heliand* 637, 728, 2235b–2236a; see also, with *eft* 'again' instead of *thô*, 5831b–5832). On the one hand, this complementarity confirms that, semantically, *nu* is still firmly attached to the present and *thô* to the past. On the other hand, it suggests that *nu* and *thô* are both becoming conventional ways of signalling the beginning of a new stage, and are thus starting to acquire discourse functions. It must be noted, however, that both *nu* and *thô* are used to refer to new events in the world rather than to a new stage in discourse as such.

4.3.3 Verbs of perception

Verbs of perception really test the limits of quantitative analysis: much like *verba dicendi*, they involve multiple inflected forms of various verbs, but occurrences are even fewer, making quantitative data virtually worthless. Still, it is worth noting that *nu* appears on a number of occasions when the speaker is calling attention to what the addressee can perceive of the situation (25) or of the utterance itself (26).

(25)   ***Nu** maht thu [**sehan**] thia suarton hell*
*ginon grâdaga;   **nu** thu sia grimman math*
*hinana **gihôrean*** (*Genesis* 557b–559a)[37]
Now you can **see** the dark hell gape, greedy; **now** you can **hear** it rage from here

(26) ***Hôriad nu** huô thie blindun* (*Heliand* 3661a)[38]
Hear now how the blind

There are also a small number of occasions where no verb of perception is used, but where the speaker is clearly calling the addressee's attention to something perceptible (usually visible) in the situation of utterance, see (27) and (28).

(27)   ***nu** gi ina ni findat hier*
an theson stêngraƀe (*Heliand* 5851b–5852a)
now you will not find him here in this stone grave

(28)   ***nu** he bluodig ligit,*
uuundun uuôrig (*Genesis* 634b–635a)[39]
now he lies bloody, sore with wounds

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[36] Manuscript M has *ne* instead of *nu*, but that variant makes little sense given the context. *Heliand* 122 and 4007 are very similar, and so is, to a lesser extent, *Heliand* 483.
[37] Other noteworthy instances include *Heliand* 2551, 3854 and 5578.
[38] For once, *nu* appears here in the narrative, as the narrator addresses the audience and introduces what he is about to tell about blind people.
[39] See also *Heliand* 4723 and *Genesis* 768b.

The temporal and contrastive meaning of *nu* is still perceptible in such passages. The speaker is in effect saying that Christ was in the grave before but he no longer is now (25) or that Cain committed murder and that now, as a consequence, he is no longer alive but lies bloody on the ground (26). At the same time, it seems that *nu* is more than a simple time locator here. It seems rather that it is used to present a new state of affairs, to draw attention to something which is surprising, shocking or jarring in some way.

In the examples above, the new state of affairs is physically perceptible, but there is also one instance in *Genesis* when the speaker uses *nu* in a similar way to draw attention to a jarring fact, newly perceived, except in that case it is understood intellectually rather than perceived physically (29).

(29)   ***Nu*** *uuêt ik, that ik scal an thînum heti libbian,*
forđ an [thînun] fiundscepi,   *nu ik mi thesa firina gideda, (...)*
                              Nu ik ni uuelda [mîna triuuua] haldan,
[hugi] uuiđ them thînum [hluttrom] muoda,   ***nu*** *uuêt ik, that ik hier ni mag êniga huîla libbian*
(*Genesis* 649b–656)[40]
Now I know that I shall live in your hatred, henceforth in your enmity, now I have done this crime (...)
now I know that I may not live here any longer

4.3.4 Modal verbs

As can be seen from examples (21) to (29) above, passages involving *nu* and verbs of speech, motion, perception or cognition very often also include another type of verbs: modal verbs such as *sculan* 'shall, must', *mugan* 'can', *motan* 'may' and *uuillean* 'will, want, intend'. In fact, the indicative present forms of those verbs are 1.7 times more frequent in clauses containing *nu* than in Direct Speech as a whole in *Heliand* and *Genesis*.[41] First person forms are especially more likely to be found in the same clause as *nu*. While modal verbs are not yet fully grammaticalised in Old Saxon, they already express meanings intimately linked to the speaker's attitude and beliefs, in particular regarding the speaker's will and ability to act in a certain way. Such verbs are in no way incompatible with the notion of present, but it is remarkable that they should be so overrepresented in close proximity to *nu*. One would expect them to be especially frequent in proximity to other markers of (inter)subjectivity rather than to a purely temporal adverb.

By far the most overrepresented forms are those for "I will" (*uuilleo, uuilliu, uuillio, uuilli, uuillik*).[42] Clauses with *nu* account for barely 6 % of all Direct Speech, and yet slightly over one third of forms for "I will" are found in that context (10 out of 29). Occurrences without *nu* convey rather more varied meanings than occurrences with it. Clauses with *nu* typically show the speaker in a position of authority, either as a speaker ("I want to tell you this"; e.g. [30]) or as another type of actor ("I want to accomplish this"; e.g. [31]).

(30)   ***Nu uuilliu*** *ik iu te uuârun hier*
mârien, huat ik mênde (*Heliand* 2439b–2440)[43]
Now I **want** here to make known to you truthfully what I meant

(31)   ***Nu uuilliu*** *ik thi an helpun uuesen,*
[nerien thi] an thesaru nôdi. (*Heliand* 2956b–2957a)[44]

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[40] One may also think of *Heliand* 285, where the speaker uses *nu* to present her new faith.
[41] 58 tokens out of 1,343 vs. 523 out of 20,546, i.e. a frequency of 0.0431 vs. 0.0254.
[42] Instances where *uuilleo* and *uuillio* are nouns rather than verbs have been removed from the data.
[43] See also *Heliand* 1532, 4665b–4666 and 5323b–5324.
[44] See also *Heliand* 3535b–3539.

> Now I **want** to be of help to you, to protect you in this time of hardship.

Clauses without *nu* can express similar ideas,[45] but they also occur when the speaker is using *uuillian* to refer to a future event or to express their (un)willingness to do what is expected of them (32).

(32)   *thoh ik sinnon mid thi*
at allon tharaƀon   tholoian **uuilliu**. (*Heliand* 4676b–4677)[46]
still I **will** always endure with you all your hardships.

The four instances of *uuilli* in *Genesis* show a clear difference between instances with *nu* and without it.

(33)   *"Ni* **uuilli** *ik is thi mîðan* **nu**,*" quað he,*
"helan holdan man,   hû mîn hugi gengit.
(...)   ***Nu uuilli*** *ik selƀo uuitan,*
ef thia mann under [im]   sulic mên fremmiat,
uueros uuamdâdi (...)." (Genesis 765b–772a)
"I do not **want** to hide it from you **now**," he said, "to conceal from a loyal man how my thought goes. (...) **Now** I **want** to know myself if the men commit such sins among themselves, if the people do offenses (...)."

(34) *"Ef ik thar findo [fiftig]" quað he,   "[ferahtara] manno,*
guodaro gumono,   thea te goda hebbian
fasto gifangan,   thanna **uuilli** *ik [im] iro ferah fargeƀan (...).*
                              Ef ik thar luƀigaro mag," quað he,
"thrîtig undar thero thiodo   thegno fîðan,
[godforohta] gumon: thanna **uuilli** *ik im fargeƀan allum*
that mên endi thea misdâd (...)." (Genesis 795–810a)[47]
"If I find there fifty pious people," he said, "good men, who have firmly attached themselves to God, then I **will** grant them their life (...). If I can find there," he said, "thirty pleasing thanes in that nation, God-fearing men, then I **will** forgive them all those sins and misdeeds (...)."

In all four occurrences, the speaker is God and therefore endowed with great authority. However, the clauses with *nu* are used to express God's unconditional will (as a speaker and as an actor) at the moment of speaking, whereas those without it are used to express what God intends to do later on if enough good men are found in Sodom. The two passages thus differ both in terms of temporality and in terms of actuality and strength of conviction. It is easy to see how such uses could open the way to *nu* as a marker of speaker involvement devoid of any temporal meaning, but both dimensions are still present here.

5 Conclusion

All the evidence points to a lack of semantic bleaching of *nu* in extant Old Saxon texts. For most of the individual words considered, the number of relevant occurrences is too low to be conclusive on its own, but the data show such a remarkable degree of convergence that there can be little doubt left.

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[45] As a speaker: *Heliand* 2753b, 3252b–3253a and 3829b–3830a; as another type of actor: *Heliand* 3082b–3084a.
[46] See also *Heliand* 4764 and perhaps 5478b. The presence of *sinnon* (variant of *simblon* 'always') would not in itself be incompatible with that of *nu*, since *nu* can have the meaning of "from now on": as noted above (Section 4.1.1.), the phrase *nu te aldre* 'now and forever' occurs in the corpus (*Heliand* 5013b) and the phrase *nu a*, of equivalent meaning, occurs in Old English (*Fates of the Apostles* 120).
[47] The presence of the adverb *thanna* (variant of *than*) would not be incompatible with that of *nu*, see above, Section 4.2.2.

Words whose meaning is highly compatible with reference to the moment of utterance tend to occur more frequently in clauses containing *nu* than elsewhere (even when one restricts comparison to Direct Speech, where such words are already more frequent than in narrative). Even more telling, words whose meaning is incompatible with reference to the present show a marked aversion to clauses containing *nu*: in particular, the adverb *thô* 'then' never co-occurs with *nu*, and the past tense can only do so in very specific contexts. As for distal markers more generally, such as *thar* or *the, thiu, that*, they can co-occur with *nu*, but they are more likely to occur elsewhere. In other words, it seems that *nu*'s temporal meaning is still strong enough to severely restrict its co-occurrence with reference to distant and past objects.

Admittedly, some patterns of co-occurrence show hints of possible pragmatic uses of *nu*, which may already be conventionalized to some extent. *Nu* already seems to be used in clauses showing marked speaker involvement, particularly when the speaker is taking control of the conversation, calling attention to their own utterance or presenting a new object of interest. However, such uses still seem tied to *nu*'s temporal meaning: there is no evidence that *nu* is ever used to mark speaker involvement without also making reference to the moment of utterance.

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Appendix

Table 2: Recapitulative table[48]

	Tokens in clauses with *nu*	Frequency in clauses with *nu*	Tokens in Direct Speech	Frequency in Direct Speech	Tokens overall	Frequency overall	MI score
forð	5	**0.0037**	32	0.0016	79	0.0016	4.38
noh	2	0.0015	27	0.0013	44	0.0009	3.3
lang[49]	6	**0.0045**	23	0.0011	51	0.0010	5.12
hêr[50]	18	0.0134	151	0.0073	175	0.0036	3.99
huat & *uuela*	2	0.0015	29	0.0014	29	0.0006	4.44
ik	42	**0.0313**	278	0.0135	291	0.0060	4.33
thu	29	0.0216	281	0.0137	281	0.0058	3.78
frô	6	**0.0045**	24	0.0012	24	0.0005	5.06
uualdand	6	0.0045	53	0.0026	145	0.0030	3.92
sus/thus	2	**0.0015**	8	0.0004	8	0.0002	5.06
sulic	7	0.0052	61	0.0030	99	0.0020	3.94
these[51]	26	0.0194	370	0.0180	474	0.0097	3.23
thô	0	**0**	14	0.0007	559	0.0114	/
than	11	0.0082	263	0.0128	559	0.0114	2.48
thar	3	**0.0022**	180	0.0088	385	0.0079	1.15
the[52]	32	0.0238	658	0.0320	2147	0.0439	2.7
uuord, all forms[53]	8	0.0060	146	0.0071	382	0.0078	2,87
uuordun	6	0.0045	66	0.0032	158	0.0032	3,60
queðan, all indicative forms	1	**0.0007**	33	0.0016	267	0.0055	2,02

[48] Clauses with *nu*: 1,343 words; direct speech: 20,546 words; overall: 48,856. Whenever the frequency of a given word is at least twice as high (or less than half as high) in clauses with *nu* as in Direct Speech, it appears in bold. The Mutual Information (MI) score is defined as: $\log_2$ (frequency of co-occurrence in the overall corpus) / (product of the respective frequencies of occurrence of each marker in the overall corpus).

[49] The entry combines the forms *lang, lango* and *leng.*

[50] The entry combines the forms *hêr, hier, hinan* and *herod.*

[51] The entry combines all forms of *these: thesa, thesan, thesara, thesaro, thesaru, thesas, these, theses, theson, thesoro, thesum, thesumu, thesun, thit, thius.*

[52] The entry combines all forms of *the,* except *the* itself, *thana* and *that,* which are ambiguous: *se, tha, thas, thea, them, themo, themu, then, thena, thene, thera, thero, theru, thes, thia, thie, thiu.*

[53] The entry combines instances for *uuord, uuorda, uuorde, uuordo, uuordon, uuordu, uuordum* and *uuordun.*

seggean, -ian	3	**0.0022**	23	0.0011	52	0.0011	4,12
seggiu, eo[54]	3	**0.0022**	9	0.0004	9	0.0002	5,47
seggean, all indicative forms[55]	3	0.0022	30	0.0015	94	0.0019	3,74
frâgon	3	0.0022	6	0.0003	11	0.0002	6,06
biddean, -ian	2	0.0015	7	0.0003	10	0.0002	5,25
biddiu	1	0.0007	1	0	1	0	7,06
faran, -ne	8	0.0060	17	0.0008	28	0.0006	5,97
cuman	3	0.0022	23	0.0011	54	0.0011	4,12
sehan	2	0.0015	12	0.0006	22	0.0005	4,47
gi-, gehôrean, -ian, -ien	2	0.0015	14	0.0007	27	0.0006	4,25
willian, all present forms[56]	15	0.0112	116	0.0056	123	0.0025	4,11
willian, 1st person present forms[57]	10	0.0074	29	0.0014	29	0.0006	5,52
mugan, all present forms[58]	17	0.0127	121	0.0059	146	0.0030	4,23
môtan, all present forms[59]	3	0.0022	40	0.0019	43	0.0009	3,32
skulan, all present forms[60]	23	0.0171	246	0.0120	264	0.0054	3,64

[54] Instances where *seggeo* is a noun ('man') rather than the first-person present form of *seggian* have been removed.

[55] The relevant forms are *seggiu, seggeo, sagis, sagad, seggiad, seggead, seggiat* for the present and *sagda, sagdas, sagde* and *sagdun* for the past.

[56] In addition to the forms listed in the next footnote, present forms include *uuili, uuilis, uuilt, uuiltu, uuil, uuilleat, uuilliat, uuillead* and *uuilliad*.

[57] First-person present forms include *uuilli, uuillik, uuilliu, uuilleo* and *uuillio*. Instances where *uuilleo/uuillio* is a noun have been removed.

[58] The relevant forms are *mag, maht* and *mugun*.

[59] The relevant forms are *môt, muot, most* and *môtun*.

[60] The relevant forms are *scal, skal, scalt, scaltu* and *sculun*.